

Jaydeep Sarangi, *Faithfully, I Wait: Poems on Rain, Thunder and Lightning at Jhargram and Beyond* (Cyberwit, 2017)

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Jaydeep Sarangi is a poet for all seasons, and his poems are the changeable days and nights of the seasonal cycles. His poems, too, are the ever-growing trees, planted in the earthy spaces of Jhargram. Jaydeep invites his reader into the sensuous forest of his community, a forest land where his 'roots lie', and his ancestors, 'the kindly ones', live.

'My days are carefree', writes Jaydeep, 'Red soil is my first love'. These are the first lines of the volume's first poem, 'Love and Longing at Jhargram' (7). In this volume, poet and land are deeply entwined through forest networks, what he calls his 'native links' (7), and the poems that emerge out of the lush landscape of the forest-skirted district town are the products of what might be called his 'vegetable love' of language. Jaydeep draws a powerful connection between poet and native land, in variegated metaphors that transform poet into forest tree. There are no pathetic fallacies here. The forest truly speaks its own language of emotion, and the birds are the historians of the place.

Jaydeep's Jhargram, so richly evoked in its 'dream-fresh' (7) and mostly green hues, is where he grows into his own as a poet. 'My laurels are made of forest leaves' (7), writes Jaydeep, yet he is quick to note the mutability of his poet-identity, admitting that he is 'fast losing [his] green leaves' (8). But the poet has rightly claimed his laurels. The very meaning of what it is to be a poet is close to Jaydeep's heart, and the poet in this volume lovingly invites us to witness love. Jaydeep concludes: 'Jhargram – This is where everything ends in love' (8). We cannot doubt him.

Jaydeep's poems reveal the cosmic shape of love and loving. In 'Mango Tree', love takes the shape of a newly-created luminescent moon:

Under the cool shade of the mango tree, I
Remember, we made earth's other moon.
Between the parallel lives. You taught me alphabets.
Punctuations. I cooked my poems in your earthen pots.
Tremors of love and loveliness travelled
Home and beyond.
For better, and for worse,
In sickness and health, bright is the Moon today. (12)

The poems also take on domestic form – the shape of earthen pots, of houses, and of gardens and temples – but they never take on the cosiness of the domestic. In Jaydeep's poems, people are worldly, they lead parallel lives and travel under alien skies, and as they each pursue their natural course, they are guided home. In 'For my Ancestors', Jaydeep reflects on the power of connection to place for the restless wanderer:

Mind is *guru*, at times, restless pointer
Useless as weapons after the war. I return in the night,
After the rain. Woods are fresh and green. (15)

Well-travelled, but never world-weary, Jaydeep prompts us to see our own journeys in the rhythms of language and love. In the same poem, Jaydeep asks us, 'How far is that land of love', that we all search for? We need not look far:

Between the alphabets, between the day and night
Temples and churches, love and more love. (15)

Jaydeep is perhaps strongest when he sees life and love in the very elements of the universe, as in his poem aptly titled 'Poems'. In this little ode, the poem is a votive candle that lights the dark corners of the mortal self: fire flickers to ember and words burn down into dreams of song:

The candle of poems
burns slowly, very slowly.
I watch them burn in me.
Like a ladder
moving up
between two ultimate pages:
life and death.
My words move.
Dreams are unhappy embers.
Each day is a song, somewhere. (21)

I thoroughly recommend to you Jaydeep Sarangi's volume of poems, *Faithfully, I Wait*, for its unique view of the world, of poetry, and of the poet's imperative to always see in a new light what is vital to us as lovers in a world that we continually and intimately craft for one another.