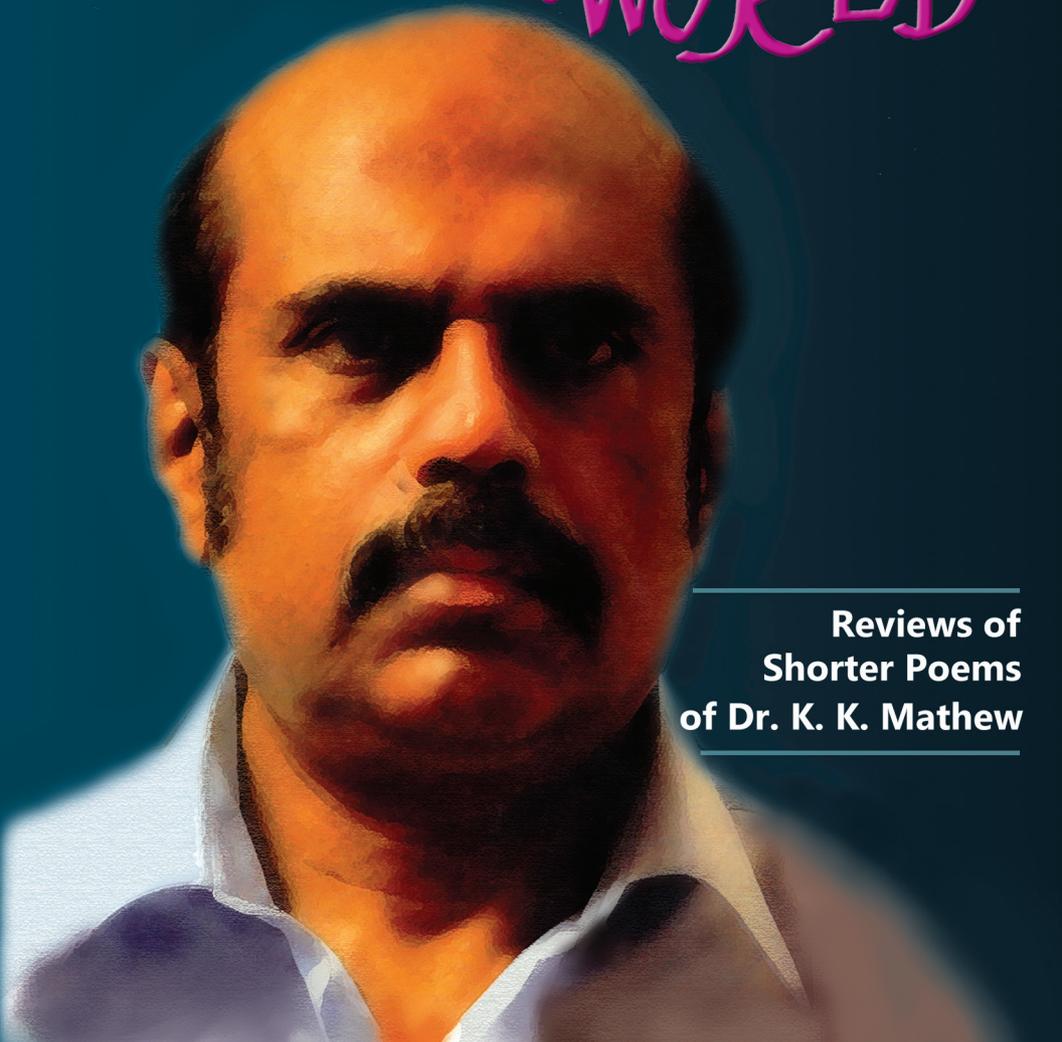


# WORLD WITHIN THE WORLD



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Reviews of  
Shorter Poems  
of Dr. K. K. Mathew

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*Reviews and Criticisms of*  
**THE SELECTED SHORTER POEMS OF**  
**DR. K.K. MATHEW**

Edited by  
**NIBU THOMSON**

*Published by:*



**International Chavara Cancer Research Institute**  
Nedumangad, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

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## REVIEWS AND CRITICISMS

### THE BOOK

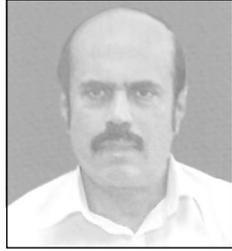
## THE SELECTED SHORTER POEMS OF DR. K.K. MATHEW

*Edited by:* Dr. John E. Abraham

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### THE POET

Dr. K.K. Mathew is a reputed physician and scientist. His scientific observations have attracted attention and approval at the international level. He is the recipient of many awards for outstanding service. Dr. Mathew is a noted poet in English. His main works are **To My Love and To My Sorrow, Jasmine and Mourning of a Soul, Light in Darkness, Poetry My Soul, Heaven on Earth, The Voyage and The Selected Shorter Poems of Dr. K.K. Mathew.**



Dr. Mathew is a noted novelist, story writer, spiritual thinker and orator. His novels are **Ente Sakhi, Tata, Neelaganthikal, Darshanam, Anarkham** and **Nere**. His writings include collection of stories **Mazha Deyvangal** and **Aramindriyam** and **Treatises Kurishinte Thanalil, Athmavinte Snehagita, Spiritual Medicine a Doctor's Confession, Doctor's Witness to the Mystery of God, Mind and Peace, Healing of the Soul, Love Beyond the Stars, Yesuvil Athma Sakshalkaram** and **Manasantharathile Rasapravarthanangal.**

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## FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

**W**e feel privileged and honoured to publish a text of criticism about the poetry of Dr. K.K. Mathew. The text contains a detailed analysis of a few poems of Dr. Mathew and a few selected reviews of "The Selected Shorter Poems of Dr. K.K. Mathew," (Edited by Prof. John E. Abraham and published by Christava Sahitya Samithi, Thiruvalla, January 2014, ISBN 978-817821-605-8), which have appeared in the national dailies and journals.

Dr. K.K. Mathew is basically a medical practitioner. He is also a prolific writer who writes both in English and in Malayalam. He has so far published twenty five books of different literary genres (novels, essays, collection of poems, short stories); of which Neelanganthikal (novel) won Christava Sahitya Academy Award in 1992, and **The Voyage** (Poetry) was nominated for Griffin International Poetry Prize in 2011. Besides, there are a number of innovative research papers in medical science, published in national medical journals and quoted in international publications, to his credit.

The book under study is a collection of the shorter poems of Dr. K.K. Mathew and is the seventh publication of his poetry. The book contains 158 short poems, grouped into five sections namely; Emblematic Poems (32), Poems on Nature (26), Facetious Poems (28) Whimsical Poems (42) and Devotional Poems (30). The book was well received by the public which must be considered as a great achievement, for in these times people care little for poetry.

A few of the poems in the collection got entry into some magazines of national and international repute. Three poems- 'Easter Lilies', 'Encounter with a Snake' and 'Spider Gods' were reprinted in **Underground Flowers**, A Poetry Quarterly (Vol. 2 Issue 1) and 'Cockroaches Never Die' in **Sofia Echo** (Autumn, 2014).

The poems were highly appreciated by some eminent persons and Dr. Mathew got a number of letters of appreciation from a number of reputed literati.

Dr. Mathew is closely associated with our work and we are greatly indebted to him for his good wishes and services to our institution.

We place on record our sincere thanks to the contributors: Dr. N. Parvathi Devi (Research Guide, M.G.University Kottayam) Dr. M.R. Joshi (Prof. (Rtd) Barktullah University), Prof. S.K. Sharma (University of Allahabad), Mr. G. Gopikrishnan (Banking Ombudsman), Dr. Yoosaph A.K, Prof. John E. Abraham Rev. Dr. Anniyil Tharakan (Professor Emeritus) and Dr. Nibu Thomson who undertook the arduous task of editing the book.

We hope that the reader will be benefited greatly by this book and these critical reviews will open up new vistas of the underlying meanings of the shorter poems of Dr. K. K. Mathew.



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# RANDOM REMARKS

Dr. N. Parvathi Devi

Among the Indian English poets, Dr K.K. Mathew stands apart, mainly because of his unique way of presentation. He does not attempt detailed descriptions, he gives only suggestions or hints, and the reader gets the satisfaction of solving a riddle by himself. His inherent love of Nature, his sympathy for animals, birds, and insects, his well-concealed philosophy in the poems, his sense of humour, his robust faith in God, his social criticism, unconcern for physical beauty and his philosophy of adult love are some of the other qualities that mark him out from the rest.

The poet has been a lover of Nature since his boyhood. 'The Boy Who Dreams of Open Fields', 'The Child That Was Me', and 'Childhood Memories' seem to be autobiographical poems. Many other poems also bear testimony to the poet's love of Nature, for example, 'Days in 'Summer', 'Kinds of Rain', 'Sunlight,' 'River's Dream', to name a few. The poet loves to be alone in the world of Nature and at such times, he is never lonely.

If Wordsworth, the great Nature poet, could enter into spiritual communion with Nature, the poet Dr K. K. Mathew identifies himself with Nature because he feels that the eternal spirit in him is the same as that of Nature. Therefore he endows the caterpillar with the power to hear the clarion and fly to sunlight and life; he thinks that the moth may be trying to find her way "Back to light and back to the original". The poem

'The River' refers to landscapes as if they were human bodies and the rivers and water pocket's are compared to veins in the human body, an instance of Chrema morphism.

It seems that the poet has a special love for rain ('Rain is Me' is already mentioned). Rain and love go hand in hand with the poet. The part of rain in renewing love cannot be underestimated. (Renewal of Love) "I shall come to you with the rains". Rains evoke passion in the poet. He tries to expatiate on different kinds of rain". The best of its kind is "the deep rain your heart knows", that is the rain of love and the poet says "one can smell it flowing in the sky". In 'Heart Gone Dry', the poet speaks out how rain "infuses new life in Nature" as well as in Man.

There is no riot of colour or shape in the poems of Nature. That does not mean that the poet is immune from them; only that he does not indulge in excess of sensual appreciation of Nature. The poet notices the "green stems of grass" and the small bowl of hills "(The Boy Who Dreams of Open Fields), as night becomes deep "the flowers go black one by one". (The Fugitive), "A day will come when the mangoes // glisten and gleam through the green leaves", and the unripe mangoes are sour and bitter (The Mangoes at the Top). The poet can hear "the corn growing" (At Dusk) and when the tree becomes old the fallen leaves would make "a carpet of colours on the earth".

But the obvious quality of Mathew's poems on animals and insects is the accuracy in description. The poet seems to be very observant regarding the physical features as well as the habits of the animals and insects. The ants "feel every surface with antennae like doctors examining the patients with stethoscopes." Or the cat smoothens its "ruffled fur with rough wet tongue" and opens its " sulphur eyes" in the dark. One can have any number of examples, say 'The Lizard', 'The Caterpillar', 'The Moth', and 'Cockroaches Never Die'.

The poem 'Each Flower Has a Moral Lesson' needs special mention. Here the poet underscores his dictum that Nature is a teacher of Dharma, Righteousness. That Nature can be a teacher is an idea as old as Sremad Bhagavatham, a holy text of the Hindus. The Avadhootha, a wandering monk, says that he has got 24 (twenty four) teachers in Nature, and he learned valuable lessons from them. But here, the poet goes further and says that each flower is a teacher of Righteousness (Dharma). This establishes a relationship between the inner being of man and Nature.

The poems on adult love are seldom descriptive, they are rather suggestive, and often negative in tone. The persona in these poems is a male, with the lone exception of the poem. 'The Scared Woman'. He seems to be a rejected lover or a deserted husband. He is a person who has not attained fulfilment in love, the woman concerned seems to be at fault. He finds her love inadequate, insincere, devoid of that pure love with self-abandon.

The persona does not claim himself to be handsome. He knows that he is not much to look at (Mirror Image). But his love is deep and sincere. He would take any risky job, if he has her love, but his lady love rejects his love and turns away. The persona seems to be the mouth- piece of the poet when he remarks "Pain and Love go together". In the poem "This Is Love", the poet explains in his own inimitable manner that love is divine, that it falls from heaven like flakes of light, man wants to make it his own, he wants to possess it, and the moment he becomes possessive, selfish, it ceases to be love, and it is lost for ever. Man looks at his empty hands with pain. Love is selfless and divine, but so far, man has not been able to grasp it.

'If' and 'The Happy News' are two poems deserving special mention. 'If' is the most suggestive of all poems, and 'The Happy News' depicts supreme domestic happiness sanctified by Gods'

presence. Most of the poems of Dr. K.K. Mathew are open ended; the poem 'World Within the World' is an example.

*World within the World* is an astounding poem with multi-dimensional meanings. At the spiritual level, it testifies to the well-known proclamation of Adhi Sankara "Brahma Sathyam Jagath Midhya". This world is unreal, a shadow, while the real, the truth is Brahma, "Pure Consciousness". And this pure consciousness is present in every living being, we call in it 'Atma'.

In the Second Canto of 'Kadopanishath', it is said " അന്നോ രണിയാൻ മഹതോ മഹിയ/നാത ത്മാസ്യ ജ്ഞോർന്നിഹിതോ ഗൃഹായാം. This Atma, the smallest of the small, and at the same time, the biggest of the big or the greatest of the great, resides in the heart of every living being. So, a living being is a world within a world, the external covering of the physical body and the internal spirit that activates it.

The physical body itself is a world within a world, because it is made up of cells that are born, live and die in course of time, with new cells taking their place. The cells, in their turn, are made up of atoms, and an atom itself is a microcosm with motion inside. So the cosmic structure itself is that of a world within a world at various levels.

The first few lines of the poem present us with a motion picture of a flower gradually blossoming at dawn, when the Sun is reddish orange before it gradually grows into silver white at noon. The day spinning around, the children playing in the corner and people crossing the streets remind us of the earth spinning on its axis moving round the Sun. We are also amused at the fact that for the children at play and the people who are busy moving, the earth is a stage where they enjoy themselves in their present role, unaware of the past or the future. Time,

the producer of change, is noted (marked) by the changing seasons. But there is not much change in our way of life, in our actions or motions. We move fast and think that everything else is also moving fast, like small children who consider the way side trees and plants during their rides. (drives). But the fact is that both Nature and human nature remain the same through ages, while seasonal changes in Nature mark the slow motion of the earth, and the changes that happen to the physique of a being are termed 'growth' or 'development'. The comparative permanence of the earth is in sharp contract to the state of flux of the beings on the earth.

This co-existence of the real and the unreal, the object and the image, the temporary body and the eternal spirit, and the interdependence of both (or each on the other). Is brought out in these very few lines packed with cosmology, spirituality, and Physics.

*This world is the shadow of another;  
There is a world within this world  
Like the petals of a flower,  
Uncurling toward the face of light,  
Reflecting light in colours bright,  
Upon a world within a world.  
The children play in the corner  
While people cross the streets  
And the day spins around them,  
Fixing the shimmering day like a stage.  
At this moment, at this point, the world  
Is felt in the changing seasons.  
Images rush past as we rush past them.  
Time is defined as the measure of change.*

The poem is a sonnet, though neither Italian nor Shakespearian. It has a free rhyme scheme, that enhances its lyrical quality, and a couplet marking the end like a full-stop with a finality of its own.

As the title signifies, the theme of the poem *Poem Is Born* is the genesis of a poem. The poet is said to be a hunter and the poem is his prey. So, the first movement is that of the hunter, the poet, following his prey, noticing the trail. The poem, his prey, is almost within his grasp, and the poet is mad with ecstasy. At that critical moment the tables are turned. The poem becomes the hunter and charges against the poet, and the poem is born.

The poet is a hunter and the poem the prey.  
The hunter sees a mark, a print  
On the sand of time, he follows it  
From the present to the forlorn past.  
He follows it through the thicket;  
A trail of blood leads him deeper  
Into the golden gates of the present.  
Finally the moment of uncertainty,  
The instant madness, the moment of ecstasy,  
The hunter approaches the poem-prey;  
The victim changes out of the debris  
To devour the hunter in the realm of his thought,  
The hunter becomes the hunted; a poem is born.

The poet's obsession with the theme of the poem, the compulsive aspect of creative writing is a common idea. The novelist Kesava Dev used to compare a writer to a pregnant woman. Whether she likes it or not, the child will come out at the right time; it can't be avoided. Similarly a writer cannot

forgo writing. The novelist Rajalekshmy also expressed the same idea by way of explaining her decision to commit suicide in a note left behind, it was reported so in the newspapers those days.

The imagery of the hunter and the hunted seems very apt in this context. The pangs of creation and the fear of death are equated in the last lines. The birth of the poem marks the death of the poet as far as that particular theme or idea is concerned.

*Cockroaches Never Die* - God has gifted the species cockroaches with infinite power of survival. The poet sprayed poison on the cockroaches in his store room the previous night. Now twenty one of them lay dying on the floor. As he was looking at them an antenna of a cockroach appeared from a crevice. After it, there appeared a full-grown cockroach, that had no fear. The cockroach seemed to be a pilot, an army unit sent in advance to survey the field and assess the feasibility of an attack.

The poet gives a philosophical twist to this common experience. While he stands there looking at the pilot cockroach, he realizes that this is how unhappy events happen to man quite unawares. We think that our plans of removing the things that harm and hurt us have worked out. But, in no time we realize that we are mistaken, really the harmful things have become stronger and more powerful instead; and they will certainly find a way to us. Misfortunes are sure to happen to us in spite of our best effort to avoid them, if it is the will of God.

This is a poem of acceptance; as the saying goes "Man proposes, God disposes".

I stood in the store room  
Staring at the dead cockroaches;

Twenty one of them lay on the floor  
Twisting and curling and writhing,  
Bizarre figures dying from the poison  
Sprayed on them last night.  
As I watched, an antenna appeared  
From a crevice on the far corner  
Waving with curiosity and hope.  
After a minute, the figure came out,  
A full grown cockroach showing no fear.  
It was posing like a pilot  
Of a fully grown army below.  
I stood perplexed and forlorn.  
This is the way things happen to us;  
We push back things to the core  
That threaten to harm, to hurt.  
But in the end they come out  
Sheathed, protected, empowered.  
They always find a crevice  
That shows them the way,  
Back to the air, to the light, and to us.

The thought content of the poem *Infallibility of Time* is similar to the answer of Yudhishtira, the hero of the Mahabharatha, to the question of a yaksha. A yaksha is an extraordinary being, neither human nor god, but having certain superhuman abilities. The Yaksha asks a series of questions to Yudhishtira, and the last question is; what is the most surprising thing in this world. Yudhishtira answers that the most surprising thing in this world, is the attitude of human beings towards death.

A man sees death snatching away the people around him almost every day. He knows that man is mortal, and therefore people cannot escape death. Yet, he never thinks that death can

happen to him at sometime or other. In his case, he is not aware of the possibility of death.

In Indian thought god of death is identified with time. God is considered to be the embodiment of time. Time is a determining factor in man's life. What seems to be good for a person today may turn out to be bad for him to-morrow. Time is infallible, hence identified with god. You may try to remain young and active, but there is no escape from death. It will come, when it is due.

*Rebels* is an original attempt at re-interpreting the story of the fall of angels from Heaven. Satan, the archangel, accused God of nepotism and with the support of some angels he rebelled against God. God put down the rebellion and threw out Satan and his followers from heaven.

In the Bible, the fall of angels from heaven takes place before the creation of Man. The poet antedates the creation of man in this poem. The poet says that the angels fell not because of any sin or vice, but because of their love for Man.

The angels are deprived of their freedom of movement, first of all. With drooping wings they are taken to the square where they will be judged and beheaded. The condemned angels don't have the courage of their leader, and therefore they will not speak out in self-defence that their only sin is their love of humanity. They gaze at human beings with loving misty eyes, as a final act of love.

The poem is actually a piece of social criticism. In our present human society, the philanthropists are honoured only by word of mouth. They are seldom loved or given credit for their work. Their leader may get some consideration, but not the genuine social workers. Soon they will be an extinct species. Love of humanity is a sin in the present society.

The poem reminds as of the Greek story of Prometheus, who stole fire from Heaven and gave it to human beings. He was cruelly punished for this offence.

*The Boy Who Dreams of Open Fields* is a nostalgic poem celebrating the soothing touch of Nature. The valley of peace is in between two hostile countries, protected by barbed wire. The boy crawls through the barbed wire to lie in the lap of Nature. The barbed wire affords no real protection. The hostile countries, the conflicting interests of the world chase one another like dogs. It is only the innocence of childhood that can enjoy the beauty of God's creation and find unmixed peace in the lap of Nature. The boy, used to sleeping in closed rooms, dreams of the open fields. It is high time man shook off his money-madness and selfish desires and took rest in Nature, found peace and happiness in Nature. Loving Nature is the same as loving God, so man fulfils his life's work when he learns to love Nature.

Love of Nature seems to be a major theme in the poems of Dr. K.K. Mathew. This poem may be autobiographical, the boy could be young Mathew wandering in the open fields, and dreaming of those days in later years.

Who is the fugitive? Pure, unalloyed happiness, Truth? It seems to be a play of hide and seek. As usual, the object of his search has given him the slip. His search in the woods is not quite futile, since it furnishes him with a negative answer that he "no longer lives there". We wonder whether he has lived there, and if so, when?

The searcher finds the old longer paths lined with trickles spreading away into the woods beyond. "The old longer paths" is a key phrase meaning the traditional paths of bygone ages. The hundred paths await exploration, so, they lead to the unknown. Darkness spreads over the landscape gradually as

night deepens. The dynamic image in the last line, "The flowers go black one by one" is superb.

The poem is a beautiful allegory. It describes Man's eternal search of God, and the goal of life, or the meaning of life. Man is in search of the meaning of life. The question is why this life on earth? What for? What is its purpose? Right or wrong is valid only if there is the embodiment of righteousness or Beauty, Truth and Goodness. It is the duty, or the natural urge of a human being, both as the representative of a race and as an individual, to be in search of this supreme reality.

The poem reminds us of both Shelley and Keats. The poet here is lacking in optimism. Shelley exclaims: "If winter comes can Spring be far behind". The picture of the pursuing lover on the Urn of Keats is eternally in the near-fulfilment position, as the searcher of this poem seems to be.

In appearance a very harmless poem *Night on a Highway* depicting an ordinary night on a highway. But the poem contains social criticism at two levels, one at the world level, and the other at the human level.

The cars and trucks move at great speed, only to wait at the check post throughout the night. The speed of the vehicles may stand for the so called progress of the world, as a result of the development of science and technology and industrialisation. Is it really progress? Will it continue steadily? Or is it merely for stopping and sleeping at the check post till dawn, making the hurry at night quite meaningless?.

Man is busy with his work and other activities, making his presence known with sights and sounds. But this puffing up is only for a brief period. Soon he will be waiting for his turn at the check post of death, to be held close to the earth, to take rest in a long sleep.

This subtle satire is the real beauty of this poem.

*The Mangoes at the Top* is a piece of advice to the greedy and the hasty. Mango may stand for any gain. A person's willingness counts for the success of any endeavor. He should carry out the job without any outside compulsion. Once he decides upon making the attempt, he should be very careful about even the minute details. That is not enough, he has to be lucky also. Then, there is another equally important factor in making any attempt worthwhile, that is Time. A timely gain or achievement is like a ripe mango, beautiful to the eye, and tasty to the tongue. If the mango is not ripe, it will be sour and fit only for spitting out. The same is true in the case of an untimely gain also, fit only for rejection.

Every mango, every gain, may not be within your reach. A person should not be greedy. He should not try to reach it and get his skin scratched. He should leave it for others to seize it. Let those who are more deserving get it. That is practical wisdom.

"Rest content with what you have" is a piece of sound advice that looks more eastern than Western; but it doesn't ever approve of half- hearted attempts.

*Expecting Their Return.* Here the poet is an outsider, otherwise he would have entitled the poem 'Expecting your Return'.

The poem depicts an invasion that took place long back. The invaders came and settled down by the river. They occupied the best and fertile land and drove the original inhabitants into the inland, the unexplored forest area far away. Some of the original inhabitants fled, leaving everything behind, perhaps the majority did like that. But still, there were some who refused to be driven away. They stood their ground, resisting the

invaders as best as they could. They thought that those that fled would come back. So, they waited for their return, though there was no information about them. The invaded tribes were divided into two groups; one fled, and the other remained. The two groups took two different paths. The poet seems to support those who remained because, they are said to be enjoying a more powerful Sun, and a wider Sky, though they must guard themselves against unexpected dangers.

Invasion, though the 'word' is not mentioned is clear from the first two lines, and the poem suggests invasion at various levels, not merely invasion into other countries, or regions, but also into cultures, ideas and faiths which, of course, has far-reaching effect. Even recently there has been instances of vandalism, that is to be deplored. The poem is a keyhole that helps us have a peep into History.

*The Proud Dancer* illustrates the use of subtle irony.

The first three stanzas depict Nature with its ease and comfort. The cat needs four feet to walk and leap over the wall. But God has given it the required four feet. It need not make any effort to get four feet. Rain falls through the air and finally disappears into tunnels. It has no ambition to be otherwise. The bird has only two wings. But it can fly across the sky when there is a drifting wind, and the bird is satisfied with its God-given gift of two wings. Man's pity for them is unwanted and misplaced.

The dancer's case is different. The dancer is an artist, and an artist has to aim at perfection. So, she has to give up ease and comfort, and struggle to perfect her art. Man is shown in contract to Nature. Nature is not to be pitied, only Man is to be pitied. Man alone has to struggle and strive for perfection.

Here the same old question arises. Was the loss of Paradise a blessing or a curse?. Is the necessity for striving after perfection

something to be pitied, or proud of? Certainly to be proud of. Hence the proud dancer.

*Spider Gods* smells of some old custom among the primitives, that worship spiders. Spiders are sacred to them, and the tribes perform a kind of dance, to the tune of drumbeats, by way of praying to or worshipping their spider gods. The spiders are said to be the spirits of the dead. The first line of the poem gives the impression of the place as a cave, with long passages. The cave seems to be semi-dark, and the roof of the cave is clustered with spiders, that are always spinning perhaps the dancers wear masks denoting beasts.

Passages extend to the mouth of the echo;  
Spiders are poised overhead, in the shadows.  
They are spinning and spinning always,  
They are sacred to us, they create the universe.  
When times are bad and little flesh to eat,  
We hold the skulls and dance with drum beats  
It's our way of praying to the spider gods.  
The spiders are the spirits the dead.  
They spin the sun, they spin the sky,  
They spin the moon, they spin the earth.  
We are beasts dancing, and dreaming,  
Trying to love, trying to make  
Our homes in this little world.

Apart from being the description of some custom among some primitive tribes, the poem deserves the reader's attention because of the mention of the spider as a teacher or guru in the Bhagavatham'. A scholar claims that he has learned from twenty

four teachers from Nature. The spider is one of them. The spider is a sort of prototype of the creator, in his opinion. The spider spins the net using some material from its own body. It sits at the central point of the net and eats the small creatures that get stuck to the net. When it wants to move away from the point, it absorbs the net into itself. Then, there take place both creation and destruction. So the spider is an example of the same power being both the creator and the destroyer. Thus, the poem reminds us of 'The Bhagavatham'.

The reference is to the 21<sup>st</sup> 'sloka' in the XI part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Canto of 'The Bhagavatham'.

യഥോർണ്ണനാഭിർ ഹൃദയാദുർണ്ണാ സന്തത്യഃവക്ത്രതഃ/തയാവിഹൃത്യഭ്രയസ്താം ഗ്രസത്യേവം മഹേശ്വരഃ

A small creature, the spider, seems to be created by God in order to illustrate His play, that is, creation and dissolution of the Universe. Spider is denoted by its Sanskrit name 'Urna naabhi'.

*Beautiful But Transient* is a very short poem, but very important since it seems to proclaim the poet's testament of beauty.

The poet confides to the reader that he loves beautiful things, that are transient, things that leave no mark when they pass away. It is his conviction that "Beauty is worth nothing when it's past". The poet doesn't care much for physical beauty, he stresses the necessity of having inner purity.

The last line of the poem reminds us of the famous Keatsian line 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever;' Keats recreates the thing of beauty he sees again and again, he visualises it before his mind repeatedly, and this makes it a source of permanent joy. Here the poet enjoys the beautiful only with his naked eyes. He sees only its physical beauty; he doesn't try to internalize it and make it a part of his real self.

*Excuse us, Mr. Judas* is a very significant poem since it speaks out that we neither love Christ, nor we follow the christian way of life. Judas was a saint when compared with modern man, the so called believer in Christ. Judas betrayed Christ only once. We betray our saviour everyday, everywhere, all over the civilized world. "We keep no faith in anything". We lack faith in ourselves. Judas repented, we don't repent. We move from one crime to another. Actually we deserve the fate of Judas. But Christ waits outside to ask us each again, "Do you love me?" A more pathetic picture of Christ can never be envisaged by any poet at any time.

When we read the last lines of the poem a series of events flash before our mind. The life and death of Christ, His teachings, His message of Love, and we exclaim, "What a Waste!" Look at the modern man, loveless, faithless, selfish to the core, unfit even for committing suicide.

*My Grandson* - The child's simple notion of heaven is amusing and at the same time depressing. It proves how deep is the involvement of our children in material, sensory pleasures. Their ignorance of justice, love and kindness is hopelessly deplorable. Could we call it a new generation poem?

*If* - An intensely personal, but tragic love affair is hinted at by means of subtle suggestions that take the reader along Egypt and Greece, Israel and India, and through history and science, past and present.

The reader visualizes the non-committal Pilate washing his hands, Socrates walking up and down to hasten the effect of hemlock, Cleopatra, Helen and Draupati proving how feminine beauty can be disastrous and destroy mighty empires.

If we had not shared our love that day a great personal tragedy would have been averted. 'That day' might be in the long past, yet, it still stings, and so, the poet doesn't want to speak of it in so many words.

Kipling's poem 'If' is positive in content, unlike this 'If' which evokes negative emotions. Kipling's 'If' is not personal, it is a piece of advice, that helps a person to become a real 'Man'. The poem states the qualities that make a "Sthitha Pranja" (a man with equanimity) which is described in the second chapter of the 'Bhagavad Geetha'. But the title reminds the reader of Rudyard Kipling's 'If' which is similar in structure.

*The Happy News* presents a very intimate scene between a loving husband and his wife. The wife has told her husband the news that she is in the family way. That makes both of them cry together, of course not with sorrow, but with joy. The discovery that the wife is pregnant opens up new vistas of joy and pleasure. They get colourful dreams of the future. The husband showers affection and care on his wife. He is thrilled at the enlarging womb of his wife, perhaps wonders whether it is a boy or a girl. Whatever it be, a child growing inside the mother's womb is a wonder of wonders. The prospective parents feel the presence of God, the life-giver and this indoor blissful domestic scene is in harmony with outdoor Nature, which is always Spring, the symbol of joy and beauty.

The advent of every child should be treated as if it were the advent of Christ.

Of all the poems which deal with man- woman relationship in this collection, this poem stands out unique, since it conveys positive energy to the reader.

When you announced the news,  
we wept not with sorrow,  
but with a thousand colourful dreams.  
I watched your body change,  
with wonder and eagerness;  
every day love and passion growing  
on your maturing inward world .  
God's presence we felt and,  
Spring was at our door all the time.

*Now I Know.* Like a pencil drawing, with a few deft strokes the poet brings out the difference between the young and the old, ie, the immature and the mature in their political philosophy, way of life, and attitude in social behavior. The poem appeals to the sense of humour of the reader. Yet the concluding words state a basic truth. The reason for the young distrusting the old is that the old people are wiser and better-knowing. The speaker himself has to become old in order to understand this truth. Could we call it one of life's little ironies?

*Encounter with a Snake* begins with an accurate description of a baby snake sleeping on a rock. It seems to be part of the rock, till it stretches its full length at the approach of the poet. It is only barely a yard, a baby snake, and is very graceful because of its small size. The poet feels that he need not be afraid of it.

This poem reminds us of another poem on snake by D.H. Lawrence. On a hot day, a snake came to the poet's water-trough, and when the poet came with his pitcher to get water, the snake was already at the trough. The snake was not in a hurry, it drank peacefully, and looked at the poet vaguely. The

poet liked the snake, and thought of it as a guest that came to his water-trough for a drink. The poet felt honored at its choosing him as its host. Its slow, dreamy manner gave it an air of a god, and it slowly withdrew into its hole.

Resting on a rock, he was asleep,  
Or numb with wind, or dead.  
His loops angular; circles sinking in,  
On themselves, until he seemed a rock.  
Merely dreaming or resting conveniently.  
Now, the head raised, but no strike,  
No evasive maneuver; seemed polite.  
He was pale, also skeletal and  
The thin horror anemic with winds,  
Or sleep. In a few seconds, he was  
Full-stretched; barely a yard, a baby.  
I was grateful for his mini size,  
And for his venom. His head  
Small will grow to a colourful 'V' on it.  
Now, I can walk unwary smiling,  
Until he begins to grow fast  
And the wind will then pick up  
His noisy, dry music from the valley.

And when its back was turned, the poet picked up a clumsy log and threw it at the snake. It did not hit the snake. The snake crawled away with undignified haste. The poet immediately regretted his violence, his action seemed to him a sort of pettiness and the snake, the uncrowned king of the underworld seemed to be more cultured than human beings. The snake had a fascination for him.

Both poets are captivated by the beauty of God's creations, even if it be a snake. The baby snake rouses the poet's attention

as it is natural for anyone to like babies or children.

The dignity of the snake is what appeals to D.H. Lawrence. The snake is not thankful to the poet for the drink, it drinks the water as if it were its birthright to drink water. It intends no harm to the poet, just like the baby snake that is polite. Both poets seem to proclaim that love is the basis of life, and not hate.

The poem *Daffodils* seems to be a counterpoint to William Wordsworth's poem with the same title. The poet consciously intends it to be so, a fact which is proved by the lines ten to twelve of this poem. There are only a few daffodils here, yet, they are a feast to the eye, and the poet admits that he has liked them, because they are new and simple. But he knows what is in store for them. His wife will put them in flower pots and decorate the window-sill.

The reader can sense the poet's disappointment at this modern way of city people bringing Nature indoors, instead of going out and enjoying Nature in its full glory and splendor.

*To Jesus* - A paean to Jesus, giving emphasis to His basic principle of LOVE. In a few well-chosen dynamic words, the poet brings out the supreme sacrifice of Christ, His teachings, and the expected result of His advent.

Every stanza of the poem bears the imprint of 'Love'. The first and the last stanzas have a perfect rhyme scheme. The glory of God's son is highlighted by the shame He was forced to bear on earth. He appeared as a mortal though He was ever to reign over the heart of human beings yet to be born.

Jesus is the embodiment of pure love, strong faith and strong love. All praise to Christ. All glory to Christ. His love for man was ineffable. The reader joins with the poet in his prayer, "Let

that type of pure, unselfish, ineffable love be installed in the heart of every human being”., which is the expected result of the advent of Christ, the uncrowned King of human psyche. Every line of this poem plays upon the reader’s heart strings.

All praise to Him of Nazareth,  
The Holy One who came  
For love of man, to die a death  
Of agony and shame.

On the earth as a mortal He appeared,  
God’s well-beloved son;  
He came to the guilty to bless  
With mercy, love and glory.

Great is pure faith, Jesus taught  
The gracious message of love,  
To banish from the groaning earth  
All forms of wrong and shame.

Boundless love He bore mankind,  
Oh, may at least a part  
Of that strong love descend and find  
A place in every heart.

**E***aster Lilies* - The lilies are the first to sprout in the spring season. Hence it is treated as a symbol of resurrection and hope. The bulbs have been buried under the earth for a long time, but all that time they have been dreaming of the promised resurrection. Easter reminds us of the resurrection of Christ, and the annual re-birth of the plant indicates a change for the better. The present deterioration will not last long. There will come a time when goodness, truth and beauty once again reign over the human heart. Hence the poem is one of robust optimism.

If the 'Easter Lilies' are a human parallel in enacting the cycle of birth and death, the caterpillar is like a human transforming himself into a divine. The caterpillar has got only one purpose in life, eating and eating. That facet ends somehow, and the caterpillar falls into a long sleep in its self-made cocoon. The poet calls the cocoon its crypt. Then it hears the clarion, and it comes out of the cocoon, a transformed creature with bright angelic wings. The words 'crypt' and 'clarion' remind the reader of the resurrection on the Last Day of Judgment. The caterpillar gets the blessed life of a butterfly, and the transformation instils hope and faith in the reader. A simple phenomenon in Nature is used as the illustration of a great philosophical truth, that when man stops his enjoyment of carnal pleasures and begins to enquire "Who am I?" in solitude he gets transformed into a holy man.

The Easter lilies, their bulbs closed tight  
 Beneath the still unbreathing soil.  
 You can't rouse them, to bring back  
 That Easter garden of violet deaths  
 And golden resurrection slipped  
 From our childhood days with ease.  
 Even the faded heat sinking down  
 Through the earth cannot wake up  
 The lilies and raise them back to life.  
 But tuned to the reappearing sun,  
 Patient for some promised resurrection  
 Each year, they are the first to rise.

*The Moth* reflects the old adage, "Brahma Sathyam, Jagath Midhya", meaning God alone is real, and this world is unreal. The moth is a shadow, since its presence is known only

by its flutter, and it aims at light as if light itself is a shadow. Its life lasts only for one or two days, and at night it aims at light, without seeing the light, and hence its flights are futile. The poet feels that the insect may be trying to get back to light, the original holy light.

Everything in this universe  
Is an unreality of a reality,  
And the moth is a shadow,  
An embodiment of a fast flutter,  
Aiming at light as if light itself  
Is, but a transient shadow.  
She was born yesterday and  
Today she lives, and tomorrow,  
There will be no trace of her.  
Now she is plain, stripped of  
All, but blind approximate flights.  
She bats at every street lamp;  
May be trying to find her way  
Back to light and back to the original.

Here, the moth stands for the present generation of human beings. Their hurried activities are vain and futile. At every artificial enjoyment they present themselves in a hurry, and they are ignorant of the true import of those activities. The concluding lines are an example of subtle irony. Batting at every street lamp is not the way to go back to the original. The moths are attracted by man-made light at night, and day light has no charm for them. The poet seems to sympathise with the modern youth for leading futile meaningless lives, and that too without realising the truth.

The poem is divided into three parts. The first six lines forming a separate section, the next three lines another section,

and the last five forming the final section. Could we say that the poet is trying to evolve a new sonnet form?.

The first section describes the moth, the second section points out the short duration of its life and the final section tries to discover a reason for its existence. The old type of sonnets present a situation or a proposition in the first part, and the second part is an analysis or solution or explanation of the first part. In thought content the poem 'Moth' follows the old style.

*Butterfly* - Presents the epicurean philosophy in a modern way. The poem seems to be spoken by a flower to a butterfly. The butterfly has finished enjoying the honey of the flowers, and the flower makes her adieu. She won't regret his absence, might remember him for a brief period, and after that will enjoy life to the lees. After all a flower has got only a short life. Next morning, when the sun rises high in heaven, it droops down. So let it enjoy its life fully, while it lasts.

*Butterfly* signifies a person who is not serious, a flirt in love. The poem seems to suggest that modern people, both men and women, are not very serious about anything. Among them steadfast lovers are rare. The smooth flow of the poem as if it were a liquid, is its chief attraction.

Toss me a kiss and take your leave with a smile;  
Spare me sad regrets, my heart is light.  
I will remember you, but briefly after,  
Perhaps, a moment or an hour or a night.  
I will not mourn your going away,  
Or wait steadfast for your coming.  
The wind blows, the wine still flows,  
I will never lack partners in the dance.  
We will enjoy life to the lees though,

Our lives will extend only a few hours;  
The end comes soon, and we are done.  
Tomorrow, the sun will cease our dreams  
And will drink us like the dewdrops.

*My Little Bird* - Freedom is the most precious thing a being wants. The poet's pet bird, a real beauty, which has been loved, nourished, looked after, and protected in the best manner possible, has flown away. The bird won't get the love and care and safety it got from the poet. But it has got the freedom to fly in the limitless sky, whenever it chooses to do so. This freedom to live one's life as one desires is supreme happiness.

The poet understands the feeling of the bird, but he is sad that the bird has to face dangers and to be needy.

*Rain is Me* - Rain occupies a prominent place in the corpus of Dr. K.K. Mathew's Nature Poems. In this poem the poet identifies himself with rain. The mighty rain' descends on earth, as gentle drops at first, and then it gains momentum as it falls on houses, trees, hills, and valleys. It falls on the poet, from head to foot and socks him completely until the poet realizes that rain and himself are one and the same. This harmony between Nature and Man is unprecedented.

Poets use Nature for various purposes. Some times they use Nature as a back drop for an emotion. Mahakavi Kalidasa uses rain to reveal the perfect symmetry of the body of Parvathi, while she is doing penance in 'Kumara Sambhavam'. The famous actor- director Raj Kapoor is reported to use rain as the backdrop of love-scenes in his films. Mathew also envisages a relationship between Rain and Love in his poem 'Renewal of Love'. In the

second stanza of the poem, the poet proclaims 'Rain is life and flesh in the world... I shall come to you with the rains'. In yet another poem 'Kinds of Rain', the poet tries to analyze the different types of rain. He says that there is a kind of "deep rain your heart knows", and "one can smell it flowing in the sky". The poet has a special love for rain and rivers.

*When Your Lover Deserts You* is a poem with a Falstaffian sense of humour. The options given as to what a person can do when his lover deserts him seem to be stock stories in motion pictures. The poet is laughing at the usual sentiments of the rejected lover. In the last sentence he pretends to laugh at himself.

This Falstaffian humour endears both the poem and the poet to the reader.

*The Tree* - The tree presents a father figure. We see it in all its pride, "majestic and lofty" with plenty of fruits and children cheerfully gathering under it for picking up the fruits hurled down by the wind. It braves the wind, winter and the changes in the weather with a song in its heart. But there will come a time when old age approaches it; leaves dry up, branches become thinner and the tree itself will have an aged look.

The father, the master of the house in his prime, protecting and sheltering his family, looking after them in the most admirable manner, has now become rather old and thin, yet, he stands with his head high. The reader is all admiration for the tree, as it reminds him/her of his/ her own childhood and younger days under the able protection of a loving father.

"that is the way of nature", is the key sentence of this poem.

The tree stands majestic and lofty,  
Waving its thousand hands to the passer-by,  
The abounding leaflets dancing every hour  
And fluttering a song of the unknown.

Fruits swell in summer days  
And drop when winds are blowing,  
While children with cries of glee  
Seek them at the foot of the tree.

When stars are quivering bright  
It holds the winds at its breast;  
The summer's songs at its lips,  
And the winter's sighs in its heart.

A day will come, that is the way of nature,  
Time shall waste the mighty tree,  
When its aged branches throw  
Thin shadows on the ground below.

Leaves will drop in multitudes,  
Dripping colors, they fall  
At the flutter of an eyelid,  
Making a carpet of colors on the earth.

*To Meet an Opening World* - What exactly is our life for?.  
As the physical body of the child grows with the passage of time, the child's mind also grows into that of an adult. The adult thinks of his childhood with nostalgic love. When you think of the past, you are the focus and love converges, or tends towards one point, you yourself. Two questions are under consideration; Can nostalgia alone evoke love in us?, can't expectations winder our horizon?.Should we think only of ourselves always? Should we indulge only in selfish love?

Should we try to love the world, our fellow beings? Can't we look at the world with expansive love?.

Giving is not an option, it is life. You have to learn yourself to give to others, your fellows, your friends, your life-partner. Of course you may receive from them also. This giving and taking is what is meant by life. Life becomes more easy and comfortable and your world goes on looming larger and larger. It is this expansive love that you should practise; you should learn to receive thankfully and give gracefully as well.

The imagery used is the contrast between a convex lens and a concave lens.

"Music is the food for love", sang Shakespeare. Here too, the connection between music and love is obvious. Imperfect music is the growing disharmony and the resultant disillusionment between the lover and his love.

The lover accuses his love of having made wrong moves, of having possessed wrong ideas and of having persisted in running after him. The lover finds out that the woman he loves is not what he has expected her to be. The courting ceases abruptly with the recognition that her music is imperfect. The memory of the days of his courting frightens him. Perhaps the discovery of her imperfections leads him to think of the might have beens, had he not found them out in time.

In structure it is an inverted Italian sonnet, the sestet coming first, and the octave afterwards, both rhymeless.

*What Remains?* Can be considered a companion piece to 'Imperfect Music'. The poem must be read again, remembering the last line, "But I know love is a sword and truth its compass", to grasp its meaning.

The misery of human life is unrequited love and its pains.

Even if you fight against your emotions and conquer them, you are not the victor. The memory of your courting days is enough to destroy your peace. You could seek solace in the philosophical thought that life in this world is an illusion.

Suppose you attain equanimity. You are impartial, consider everybody equal, pooh-pooh social stigma. But you realize that love is a sword and truth its compass. When all is said and done, the truth remains that love is a sword, that love is injurious. Yet, despite its hurting man's thirst for love remains. Man wants to love and to be loved.

*Do You Know a Place?* glorifies God, the master-creator, in a unique manner. It is a highly imaginative poem.

Do you know a place where  
the bones are assembled  
with their incredible spaces,  
their inter locking moves?

Do you know a place where  
you learn how to use them  
how to get accustomed to  
their moves behind the neck?

Do you know a place where  
in a building like a greenhouse  
where the wind lifts you out,  
over the tiny surf?

Here you need no reflection  
above glass, you could give lessons  
as you ride above memory,  
steer this shadow over wrinkled air.

The poet imagines a dream factory where life is produced and incorporated into the inactive body and makes it active and living. In other words, the process of creation is conceived of, like putting together of the limbs gathered at each section by the conveyor belt system, thus making the skeleton first and then filling it with nerves, flesh and blood, and then enlivening it with creative energy.

The poet imagines all this to be happening in some ethereal space, that might resemble a sort of green-house. The question is whether you know a place where this is done.

In simple logic, this process is done within the mother's womb or inside an egg. So, the question can be answered without any profound thinking. That is what an Anatomy professor does in a medical class.

But do you know your mother's womb?. Do the hatched chicken know the inside of the eggs where they had been before they came out of them?

Actually, who made all these arrangements inside the mother's womb, the fitting of the joints with flexible movements, the safe- deposit of the heart inside, the mind with an over-all control? Who does all these. The master-creator, the master-craftsman. How can you desist from marvelling at His skill?. How can you prevent yourself from admiring at His rich variety of productions.

The reading of the poems of Dr. K. K. Mathew is a rich, rewarding experience. First of all, they deal with ordinary human situations, picking fruits from the mango-tree, the power of survival of the pests in spite of Man's best efforts to destroy them, a stray baby snake on a rock, to name only a few. The poems echo the sincere feelings of a real humanitarian. They portray Mathew's deep sympathy and concern for the oppressed and the underdog. The poet is comprehensive in his attitude to his fellow beings. They include not merely human beings alone, but insects, birds, and animals that come across

in our everyday life. 'The Birds', 'Cat' 'Ants', 'The fate of Animals' are a few poems worth-mentioning.

The poems of Mathew are replete with eternal human values, sympathy, kindness, friendship and love. The poet has a very high concept of love and marriage. He advocates perfect harmony between man and woman in marriage. It should be a soul to soul intimacy and not cupboard love, or a relationship in which man or woman regards his/her partner as consumer goods.

Physical beauty in human beings has little attraction for the poet. The poet notices it in Nature and animals and insects also. It is the inner purity of human beings that the poet is interested in. The poet's inherent love for Nature makes him empathize with it. He admires Nature and all God's creations. This admiration and love for God's creations is the basis for his faith in God. The poet's healthy faith in Christ is the predominant quality of his poems. I qualify his faith with the adjective "healthy", because he is not a fanatic. His poem 'To Jesus' is a paean par excellence. If I were a poet, I would rest content with only one poem like that to my credit.

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From 1960 to 1995, she worked as a Professor of English at various colleges under the N.S.S. management. She serves as a research guide at M.G. University Kottayam and has a number of Ph.D. recipients as scholars to her credit.

Dr. Parvathi wrote the column 'Food for Thought' in **Yuvaksarathi** and now handles 'Grandma's Corner' in a children's magazine, **Nava Sarathi**. She was one of the translators of the book **Tagore Kritbikal** (Works of Tagore) published by D.C. Books.

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# BOOK REVIEW

Prof. M.R. Joshi

**D**r. K.K. Mathew, though a medical practitioner of a high repute, has a rare wisdom of weaving his experiences into inspiring poetry. He is gifted with splendid imagination. His poems are so well knit that imagery and feelings cannot be segregated.

Some of the poems of this collection describe Nature, its flora and fauna. The poet's observation is so sharp that even the small insects like ants and butterfly become the subject matter of his narration. Sometimes he is engrossed in emblematic poems and sometimes he can be seen writing witty poems. In his devotional poems, he is generally philosophical, and sings of love, God, soul, etc. The memory of death, grave, journey of after-life, etc. keep him bridled in his personal life and elevate him to the status of a good and generous citizen and a helping doctor.

This volume captioned as "The Selected Poems of Dr. K.K. Mathew" acquaints us with a variety of themes and techniques and it must have been really a Herculean task for the Editor, Prof. John E. Abraham to thrash out only 158 poems out of the lot and arrange them properly for the lovers of poetry. I have known Prof. Abraham for the last fifty years and his talent of critical approach has been well exhibited in his editorial performance. He and the poet deserve admiration for this wonderfully crafted collection.

In this collection, the editor has given preference to the emblematic poems keeping them in Part 1. The poems, though simple in reading are deep in meaning. Some of the lines are almost like quotes representing the universal truths. " Time is

defined as the measure of change" in **World within the World**, or **The Poet is a Hunter and the Poem the Prey** in **A poem is Born**, or Death begins when one is born and one lives in its presence" in **Infallibility of Time**, or " There is the one half we know, but there is one we know not" in **The Other Half** Some of the lines quoted above carry with them the poet's study of the scriptures along with the conclusions drawn from the world of practical experiences. In these poems the poet does not lose sight of the ultimate truths and it is perhaps, the right way of living. His last line in the last poem of this section, **Renewal of Love**-And in the darkness awaits the return of the day" promises that the poet has an optimistic attitude towards life. It is as true as that, "The spring comes through autumn."

The creepers, flies, elephants, and cats are not very fascinating for the philosophical poets, but here the way they have been treated bring credit to the poet and his keen observation of their behavior is really remarkable. Some of the poems in Part II convey the philosophy of life symbolically; for example, the lines in **The Moth**. "She was born yesterday and / Today she lives, and tomorrow/ There will be no trace of her". Is it not true for the human life? Life is short and one should always remember this. The span of life should be coloured with golden deeds.

As in the poem of Part-1 - **Renewal of Love** so also in **Dying Season** of the Part-II - the poet is full of optimism. He says- "Tomorrow brings in new hopes and aspirations." It is this optimism that awards the poet a zeal to look forward and keep busy for the welfare of the society. The poems of this section show the linguistic excellence of description.

Now in Part-III, I am stuck at the poem, **Guest** Outwardly the poem is simple in language but it speaks of the chain of unending generation i.e. how the baby is born and after becoming adult how he replaces his father in the days to come. This has been the way of the world for ages. The other poem

**When Your Lover Deserts You** shows yet another quality of the poet's wit. When the poet's beloved deserts him the loser patient becomes busy in writing poems so that, may it be temporarily, he may forget her. The poem, **Modern Women** is a satire on so called modern women, as they seem to be running fast to leave the men behind. They are now addicted to smoking and drinking which in the past were regarded as vices not only for women but also for men in the society. This section of poems shows the poet's talent of humour and satire.

Part IV according to the editor consists of whimsical poems. They are in fact, the experiences and memories of the past. **Adulthood** is a fine poem of life's journey. In **What Remains**, the poet again sails on the philosophical mood and speaks out the truth "Life is illusion," and then nothing remains. As against the poet's optimistic attitude expressed in some of the earlier poems, I find him sliding in disappointment in **Hope** and **Recollections**. The last poem of this section, **The Old Year is Gone** leaves me with a memory of **Ring Out\_Wild Bells**, a poem written by Tennyson, wherein the poet suggests to bid farewell to the past and rig in the new.

Part V- Devotional Poems are generally devoted to the Prophet and His power. The first poem of the Section is **To Jesus**. In this poem the poet says that the other names of Jesus are Love, Mercy and Grace. The poem **He Awaits Outside** speaks of God's omnipresence. The poem **Death** is the song of optimism and courage. The poet says that Death is a must and one should not be afraid of it. Rather one should be happy to celebrate the spring of rebirth.

Keeping in view all these poems of this collection, I estimate that the poet seems to be well- experienced, thoughtful, having his devotion towards God. In nature poems the description of Nature, though simple in language, ultimately sings the praise of God. Even in philosophical mood sometimes, he instead of flying on the wings of fancy, keeps him rooted on the earth. He

writes what he sees and feels and when he comes to the hard realities of the life on earth, he tries to win them over with his optimism. He shares his experiences with his fellow-beings and encourages them to live a dauntless life.

These poems touch varied sides of life. I find that the poet is no where complex or confused, neither in his language and thought nor in his style. Rather his poems generally are thought-provoking. From these poems I judge the personality of the poet. He should be a straight-forward man, an idealist or a moralist. He looks at with two angles i.e. on the earth and beyond this earth.

Dr. Mathew, a famous Medical Practitioner having many awards to his credit deserves congratulations for finding out time to write such absorbing poems of varied themes and techniques.

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*Prof. Joshi is an experienced reviewer. (The Hindustan Times) His reviews are based on principles.*

***The Selected shorter  
Poems of Dr. K.K. Mathew***  
**Some Random Reflections**

Prof. Susheel Kumar Sharma

Let me begin by citing Indrajit Hazra who in his humorously serious write-up on poetry in the daily *Hindustan Times* complains that contemporary poetry is not worth reading:

Do kids read poetry any more? Hang on. Let me start again.

Do people read poetry any more? I mean, poems written by living poets and not just by dead ones that have gone through the spin-cycle of textbooks, of epigraphs at the beginning of books, and of overuse? (I'll shoot the next man who uses 'Where the mind is without fear and head is held high').

Ninety-four per cent of poetry, like 94% of every other thing out there, is rubbish. Most of what's poetry written by living people is just outpourings without any sense of craft or intelligence.

Likewise the usual complaint of the publishers these days is that poetry books do not sell well. As a result of this they do not encourage poets to publish their works. If one goes by what has been written by Indrajit Hazra the publishers' complaint seems to be genuine. However, one has to read between the lines: Indrajit has candidly admitted that he does not read poetry but at the same time he has admitted that he does not understand much of poetry. It is quite obvious that a person who does not understand a particular piece of writing will neither spend time nor money on it. But, is it not a fact that a book of engineering is not meant for a general reader nor is a book of medical science meant for an engineer?

Poetry of late has emerged as a strict discipline meant not

for general reading public but for specialists or at best for those take keen interest in it. Further, if one approaches a publisher for getting something else published one gets the same refrain from the latter, "Books don't sell". Yet one finds that the market is full of publishers and so is the case with poetry writers and readers; one is surprised to see the number of poetry sites both for the experienced and novice writers/readers on the Web networks. The issue therefore goes beyond the expectations of the readers and the publishers; the publishers want to make a faster buck and the readers want to understand without exerting themselves.

There has been no time when writing and judging a piece of writing was a very simple affair. Had that been so, Greene would not have died of hunger and poet laureates like Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718), Laurence Eusden (1688-1730), Colley Cibber (1671-1757), William Whitehead (1715 -1785), Henry James Pye (1745-1813) and Alfred Austin (1835-1913) would not have been consigned to oblivion by getting a mention in just one or two lines in the books of literary history. Were the contemporary people including those with literary sensibility fair to poets like John Donne, Thoreau, John Keats, Edgar Allen Poe, Emily Dickinson, Kafka and Wilfred Owen to name a few? Were poets like Andrew Marvel, John Keble, Byron, William Morris and A E Housman not overrated during their own ages? That is why the famous Sanskrit poet Bhavabhuti said that he was writing for a *samandharma* (a person having the same taste) who might be born after he had spent his life. Literary sensibility is an ever changing idea and literary judgements too are motivated by personal likes and dislikes. The cases of Shelley and Keats are before us. They have withstood the test of time and have proved their contemporary critics wrong. A literary giant like Ezra Pound is able to refine an artist like Eliot who in turn rescues a poet like John Donne from the book of oblivion.

As far as obscurity in contemporary poetry is concerned it is not a new charge. Most of the writers in all languages have

been obscure not only in their own age but even later. The students of English literature are familiar with the obscurity of Milton, Donne, Blake, Browning, Pound, Eliot, Dylan Thomas, John Berryman, Robert Lowell, **William Carlos Williams**, **E.E. Cummings**, **Wallace Stevens** and Sylvia Plath and the like. Poetry of late is more a matter for a trained reader rather than general public like a book of medical science is not meant for an ordinary reader though it deals with issues related to his/her health. For many poets their “ideas and art are more important for commercial purposes” than communication with their readers. Readers are no less to blame – most of the modern poetry is obscure for a large number of the common readers for the kind of intellectual insight and training that is needed to appreciate it, is missing in most of them. It will be easier to understand the process by citing an analogy of modern car: is a car of 21<sup>st</sup> century a more complicated machine or a simpler machine as compared to one of 19<sup>th</sup> century? Efforts are made to understand its complexity and also rules are framed to make its movement safer and smoother according to needs of the machine. There are no corresponding efforts in the field of appreciation of art including poetry. The reasons are many and varied.

Can the awards be considered to be the criterion for judging the value and permanence of a work of art? The literary awards conferred on so many litterateurs are no parameter to decide the merit of a work/writer. The politics behind most of these awards is no more a hidden fact; a person coming from Eastern Block (communist countries) who debunked his nation was usually awarded with Nobel Prize. Should I take the names of writers like Boris Pasternak, Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, Czeslaw Milosz, Gao Xingjian, Elfriede Jelinek and Mo Yan to prove my point? Similarly the Lenin Prize (considered to be equal to Nobel Prize in the communist countries) was awarded only to a person coming from their Block and having leftist leanings. The literary aesthetics has also evolved according to politics of those

involved. Therefore, we have schools like Classical Aesthetics, Romantic Aesthetics, Black Aesthetics, Marxist Aesthetics, Feminist Aesthetics, Post-colonial Aesthetics, Dalit Aesthetics and the like. Similarly the mark of best seller is no criterion for considering a book great. Though Mayo's *Mother India* was reprinted twelve times between May and December in 1927, the year of its first publication and thirty-three times between 1927 and 1931 yet Gandhi described it as "a drain inspector's report". The politics of publication houses and a dubious nexus among the big publication houses, reviewers, media houses and critics in Indian context has already been exposed incredibly well by M Prabha in her *The Waffle of the Toffs: A Sociocultural Critique of Indian Writing in English* (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH, 2000, ISBN: 81-204-1359-8). In such a confusing scenario it is better to trust one's own literary judgment.

In the light of the above it is necessary to explore as to what one understands by poetry. The comments by various poets and critics on the nature of poetry broadly fall into the following six categories:

### Comments related to rhyme and metre:

1. Poem: a composition in metre; a composition of high beauty of thought or language and artistic form, in verse or prose; a creation, achievement, etc, marked by beauty or artistry. *Chambers Student Dictionary*
2. Poetry is emotion put into measure. **Thomas Hardy**
3. Poetry is a rhythmical form of words which express an imaginative-emotional-intellectual experience of the writer... in such a way that it creates a similar experience in the mind of his reader or listener. **Clive Sansom**
4. I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definitions of prose and poetry; that is prose; words in their best order; - poetry; the *best* words in the best order. **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

5. Poetry is the rhythmical creation of beauty in words. **Edgar Allan Poe**
6. Writing free verse is like playing tennis with the net down. **Robert Frost**
7. To break the pentameter, that was the first heave. **Ezra Pound**

### **Comments related to language and imagination:**

1. Poetry is the language of the imagination and the passions. **William Hazlitt**
2. Poetry is the language in which man explores his own amazement. **Christopher Fry**
3. (Poetry) is the lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake. **Lord Byron**
4. Poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful. **Rita Dove**
5. (Poetry is) a literary expression in which words are used in a concentrated blend of sound and imagery to create an emotional response [www.iclasses.org/assets/literature/literary\\_glossary.cfm](http://www.iclasses.org/assets/literature/literary_glossary.cfm)
6. Poetry is a search for syllables to shoot at the barriers of the unknown and the unknowable. Poetry is a phantom script telling how rainbows are made and why they go away. **Carl Sandburg**
7. Poetry is rhythmical, imaginative language expressing the invention, taste, thought, passion and insight of the human soul. **Edmund Clarence Stedman**

### **Comments related to subject matter:**

1. Poetry is the revelation of a feeling that the poet believes to be interior and personal which the reader recognizes as his own. **Salvatore Quasimodo**
2. Poetry is man's rebellion against being what he is. **James Branch Cabell**

3. [Poetry is] a kind of ingenious nonsense. **Isaac Newton**
4. Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. **Percy Bysshe Shelley**
5. Poetry is the deification of reality. **Edith Sitwell**
6. Poetry comes nearer to vital truth than history. **Plato**
7. .... poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. **Aristotle**
8. Poetry is the journal of the sea animal living on land, wanting to fly in the air. Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted. **Percy Bysshe Shelley**
9. Poetry is, at bottom, a criticism of life. **Matthew Arnold**

#### **Comments related to the impact of poetry on the readers:**

1. Not to transmit thought but to set up in the reader's sense a vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer – is the peculiar function of poetry. **A.E. Housman**
2. Poetry is an echo, asking a shadow to dance. **Carl Sandburg**
3. A good poem is a contribution to reality. The world is never the same once a good poem has been added to it. A good poem helps to change the shape of the universe, helps to extend everyone's knowledge of himself and the world around him. **Dylan Thomas**
4. Poetry is all that is worth remembering in life. **William Hazlitt**
5. Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood. **T. S. Eliot**
6. Poetry is a deal of joy and pain and wonder, with a dash of the dictionary. **Kahlil Gibran**
7. Poetry is thoughts that breathe, and words that burn. **Thomas Gray**
8. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth. **Samuel Johnson**

9. Poetry should... strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance. **John Keats**
10. Poetry heals the wounds inflicted by reason. **Novalis**
11. Poetry is the art of substantiating shadows, and of lending existence to nothing. **Edmund Burke**
12. The poem is a little myth of man's capacity of making life meaningful. And in the end, the poem is not a thing we see—it is, rather, a light by which we may see—and what we see is life. **Robert Penn Warren**
13. There are three things, after all, that a poem must reach: the eye, the ear, and what we may call the heart or the mind. It is most important of all to reach the heart of the reader. **Robert Frost**

### **Comments related to the process of composition:**

1. Poetry is the spontaneous outflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origins from emotion recollected in tranquillity. **William Wordsworth**
2. Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things. **T. S. Eliot**
3. A poem begins with a lump in the throat, a home-sickness or a love-sickness. It is a reaching-out toward expression; an effort to find fulfilment. A complete poem is one where the emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words. **Robert Frost**
4. Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something. Don't use such an expression as 'dim land of peace.' It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer's not realising that the natural object is always the *adequate* symbol. Go in fear of abstractions.' **Ezra Pound**

5. As a guiding principle I believe that every poem must be its own sole freshly-created universe, and therefore have no belief in 'tradition' or a common myth-kitty or casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets, which last I find unpleasantly like the talk of literary understrappers letting you see they know the right people. **Philip Larkin**

### **Comments related to relationship between poet and readers:**

1. Most people ignore most poetry because most poetry ignores most people. **Adrian Mitchell**
2. Modesty is a virtue not often found among poets, for almost every one of them thinks himself the greatest in the world. **Miguel de Cervantes**
3. Publishing a volume of verse is like dropping a rose-petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo. **Don Marquis**
4. I've had it with these cheap sons of bitches who claim they love poetry but never buy a book. **Kenneth Rexroth**
5. Poets aren't very useful. / Because they aren't consumeful or very produceful. **Ogden Nash**

All these definitions/comments/observations contain some truth but none so far is comprehensive enough to include everything in it. The success of a work of art lies in the fact whether it is able to exercise the reader/viewer either emotionally or mentally/intellectually - and this exercise is always an individual's exercise. Similarly a "good poem should involve, intrigue, or engage us, and above all should 'move' the reader". Generally one responds to a poem because it captures an experience or expresses an idea one recognises, often one which is common to us all: falling in love, loss of love, the joys and pressures of life, or significant life events such as war or death or is able to point to an oddity that makes us laugh.

But our understanding of these experiences and their explanations are always individual and therefore unique. This is what makes every poet unique and this is what he/she tries to share with his/her audience/readers.

If one goes by theories of communication not only the speaker has to make some effort to encode the idea but even the listener has to exert himself/herself to decode the idea. In the process something is lost while encoding and something is also gained while decoding; as a result of which there is no fixed meaning; the idea is always a different idea and the meaning is always a meaning of a reader. Once we realize that there is no “the meaning” it becomes easier to read and understand poetry with confidence. This new type of sensibility is needed to appreciate this kind of poetry.

K K Mathew is a prolific writer who does not like to revise his work. The book in question is a selection of his shorter poems. While generally a book of poems has fifty poems this book has five parts containing in all 158 poems most of which are meditations on various issues. The second section of the book has 26 poems under the title of “Poems on Nature”. It contains poems of varied size on creatures like snake, lizard, birds, ants, cat, elephants, butterfly, caterpillar and moth and objects of nature like seasons, landscape, monsoon wind, rain, flower, dusk, river, summer, lilies, sunlight, daffodils and the tree. While Wordsworth saw ten thousand daffodils at a glance the doctor poet saw only some in the farthest corner of his garden. Daffodils are not found in India but the doctor has them in his garden shows his elite upbringing but he has no control over his wife who will transplant them in a flower pot to decorate the window sill of her kitchen. The doctor reports this transplantation mechanically without any emotions.

The third section of the book “Facetious Poems” contains 28 poems on varied concrete subjects like beggars, guest, patient, a cheat lover, modern women, rope dancer, scared women,

Judas, black beauty, birthday, grandson, nurse, bacteria, teacher, dragon and drunkard, and abstract subjects like mirror image, eating habits, no, “now I know”, scapegoat, “nothing is amiss” happy news, if, “no time left”, there is a way, departure and lessons in love. Technically speaking the one on bacteria could have gone into the second section. “I Have No One to Blame” is a good reflection on one’s works without being acerbic to anyone – one has to accept life as it is at some point of life. The narrator’s acceptance of life is not a willy-nilly acceptance but based on wisdom. The other two sections of the book are “Whimsical Poems” and “Devotional Poems”.

By training the poet is a medical professional (a scientist) therefore he looks for the definite measures and proper definitions of the terms, concepts and themes. For example, what is this world? What is time? Unlike a scientist Mathew describes the world in terms of petals and flowers and time “as the measure of change.” (“World Within World”) Similarly he uses concrete images in describing the birth of a poem. One can very easily perceive the experience of a doctor who helps a mother in giving birth to a child by delving deep into blood and brings happiness to the mother and that of a poet who hunts for a poem and ultimately gains the game. (“A Poem is Born”) For Matthew every action that takes place around us is an event to understand the mystery called life. For example, spraying poison to control the breeding of cockroaches in the modern day households is a common phenomenon. But for the poet this becomes an occasion to understand the phenomenon called life and the way things take place there. (“Cockroaches Never Die”) Yudhishtir in the *Mahabharat* was surprised to see one behaving as if one were immortal knowing fully well that one has to die some day. Likewise the poet is baffled to see that one is not ready to accept old age as a natural phenomenon despite knowing that the cycle of death begins from the moment one is born. One’s desire to remain young forever is just a

wishful thinking. (“Infallibility of Time”) As a doctor the poet must be coming across some psychic cases as well. “The Dog Fear” describes one such case where the persona instead of fighting his fear becomes its slave and in turn loses his life. “My Friend Where are You” depicts the only life one is condemned to live in these awful times when it is difficult to find reliable friends/companions. “We Find Our Lives” is a highly symbolical poem of the life’s journey. “Rebels” is a poem with Christian overtones of a conflict between vice and virtue and phenomenon of fall and redemption. “A Song for Forgotten Love” is again a poem of Christian ethos. It is a lament for the contemporary violence, hatred, crime and all negativity that pervades the society; it also suggests a way out – love a panacea for all the ills.

There are also some poems which are merely statements of facts given out without any artistry. “The Murders at Work Everywhere” is one such poem. The entire poem constitutes of statements like “They are murdering the people... They have hunted them down, and killed them... They are killing them now.... They know thousands ways to kill them.” In contrast to this is “Spider Gods” which abounds in oblique statements like “Passages extend to the mouth of the echo... The spiders are the spirits the dead.... We are beasts dancing and dreaming....”

The poet is good not only at narration but also at description. The poems like “Night on a Highway”, “A Woman Returning After Many Years” “The Teacher”, “Nothing is Amis”, “The Scared woman” “When Your Lover Deserts You”, “Beggars”, “Ants” and “An Alzheimer Patient” are good descriptions while some like “Mangoes at the Top”, “Expecting Their Return”, “Strangers”, “The Bird of Love”, “Mystery on the Surface” are narrative as well as reflective. Some like “What is He”, “Bacteria Every Where” “The Happy News”, “No” are reflective poems while others like “The Proud Dancer”, “If”, “My Grandson”, “Now I Know”, “On my Sixty Seventh Birthday” and “Excuse

Us, Mr. Judas" are meditative and instructive poems, The poet must be familiar with great writers in English and their influence can very well be felt in his poems. "Beautiful, But Transient" echoes Keats' "Beauty is Truth Truth Beauty All ye need to know." Echoes of other poets like Wordsworth, Robert Frost and Emily Dickenson may also be felt and traced.

Search for one's identity is a perennial quest. "What is He?" deals with such an important issue in a very symbolical way. The poet replies that the identity lies in the transitory shape of water and ever changing form but the other issue of identification of potentialities remains unanswered. Identity is nature of a being, death and rejuvenation are some of the recurring themes in K K Mathew's work. The lessons taught by him are very simple: accept victimhood, accept defeat, accept death and show no resilience. The poems like "The Murders at Work Everywhere", "Merging with the Leaves", "Dying City". This motif is there even in his poems on nature. The objects of nature like a majestic tree will also die one day:

Time shall waste the mighty tree,  
When its aged branches throw  
Thin shadows on the ground below.  
Leaves will drop in multitudes,  
Dripping colors, they fall  
At the flutter of an eyelid,  
Making a carpet of colors on the earth. (82)

The poet uses several personal symbols as well. For him, a cockroach stands for misery; sparrows for free souls; boy for the careless soul; man for mankind and the first man and room for this world.

The poet has grown up in the ethos of Indian philosophy and the impact of the same can be very easily traced in his poems. "World within World" is a beautiful example where

one finds the persona grappling to find reality which lies hidden behind the veil of Maya. What is interesting is that this veil is not straight but circular; though everything appears to be taking shape and taking place normally there is a design which needs to be decoded in order to understand the phenomenon. Science provides a methodology to understand this but the doctor turned poet is neither satisfied with the technique nor with the language of science and therefore he takes refuge in the world of poetry. The poet is realistic to the core and finds that events in the world may find a different turn if one makes a right choice. The poem "If" shows that the course of human history would have been different if some of the important persons had acted differently.

In Mathew's work one finds his firm faith in God and His manifestation in day today activities and works. For example, in "The Happy News" the persona feels God's presence every moment, as a child is maturing from birth to a full grown person. Some of Matthew's poems are didactic in nature. "Reformed Drunkard" is one such poem. The poet does not suggest a way to reform a drunkard, or to give up drinking. The poem suggests improvement in his behaviour very subtly, through the calm and happy face of his wife and her adoption of him as her favourite child. In "No Time Left" the poet recollects the past days of his boyhood, adolescence and youth. He being old is to complete so many unfinished tasks as he is aware that the "due date will arrive soon." (108) In "There is a Way" he humorously suggests that there is way to deal with one's bad habits, to win the hearts of fair girls and to avoid unwanted guests. The traditional ways of teaching, powdering one's face and hoodwinking a person saying that one is going abroad, do not help. But the persona assures that there is way to deal with all such cases, though he may not know it and he may not be in a position to spell it out.

At times Mathew is also acerbic in tone. "Lessons in Love" is a good example of it. The poet in this poem talks about the women who change their lovers are also "happy like the moon" though the Bible suggests punishment to such persons. Matthew also tries to give a reasonable answer in terms of the science when he says, "Absence makes the heart grow/ Fond of others." (112)

The editor of the volume should be commended for digging out some pearls from the store house of the doctor turned poet and for spreading a lavish feast before the readers from which they may choose their dish to their fill.

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Dr. Sharma started his teaching career as a Lecturer in English at I. K. S. University, Khairagarh in 1983. In 1985 he moved to G. B. Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Pantnagar which he served first as an Assistant Professor (1985 to 1996) and then as Associate Professor of English (1996 to 2001). For two years (1993–1995) he was at Chitrakoot University of Rural Development, Chitrakoot as a Reader in English. There he was also the Dean, Faculty of Languages and Social Sciences for about one year (1994-1995). Dr. Sharma joined the University of Allahabad as a Reader in English in 2001. Since 11 December 2003 he has been serving there as a Professor of English.

Prof. Sharma has published four books, thirty-five research papers, five interviews and twenty-eight book-reviews. He is also on the editorial panel of some journals. Some of his work can be viewed at <http://allduniv.academia.edu/SusheelSharma/Papers>. He has completed three research projects and has successfully guided three master's and four doctoral research candidates. He has participated in about ninety National and International Conferences/ Seminars and presented papers there-in. He himself has also organised many conferences, seminars and workshops. He has also lectured in various Universities on diverse topics on different assignments. Dr Sharma is a creative writer too. Some of his poems have been published in Canada, France, Ireland, Scotland, the UK and the USA. The Door is Half Open has been received very well. Some of his poems have been translated into Assamese, French, Hindi, Lithuanian, Serbian and Turkish languages.

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# EXISTENTIAL ENCOUNTERS OF THE SATURATED SELF: AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF MODERN MAN IN K.K. MATHEWS' POETRY

Dr. Nibu Thomson

Poetry lies in producing consciousness of a pleasurable knowledge which is uncommon. The **Selected Shorter Poems of Dr. K.K. Mathew** contain 158 poems on different topics. The poet sees ordinary things differently from others. There is beauty in every living creature. Beneath this rugged earth, there lies harmony and only the poet can see the 'deep'. Dr. Mathew perceives pleasurable knowledge in every object and sings about a mystery or truth, he finds in a stream "as the rains wet its dry mouth" or in "absurd music that will not stop very soon" or in the quiet that finally touches his palms. The poems of Dr. K.K. Mathew reflect his attitude towards nature, life and religion. As in "A Poem Is Born" the poet dwells deep into plants, animals and human beings like a hunter to ransack its mysteries and meanings. The 'instant madness' of the poet opens for him the golden gates of poetry. The charm and the ecstasy of the world are captured with his power of imagination. The distinct chords of life are harmonized to evoke a universal sound of music which appeals to everyone. The poet uncurls human life in different poems and these poems reflect his profundity of observations on life and human existence.

Having experienced the hypocrisy and cruelty of the world, Dr. K.K. Mathew is indignant. His poems are enough to reckon misery, and express the hopelessness of life. They reflect the

disappointment and frustration. Love and joy are suppressed by selfishness and by restrictions created by the society. He laments the outworn and disintegrating civilization. His poems reveal the world and its changing nuances through different symbols which are generally unusual and strange. The author's world view is essentially pessimistic. He talks about the limitedness of contemporary human beings and his helplessness when the world denies him the opportunity to fulfill his aspirations and dreams.

Reverberating the philosophies of Plato and Sankara, the poet begins the poem "World Within the World" by showing the 'shadowiness' of the worldly existence where men stand 'perplexed and forlorn'. This world is the shadow of another. There is another world somewhere and we do not know anything about it though we feel its presence everywhere. Like the petals of a flower uncurling, this world moves towards it and reflect bright colours of the world within.

'Cockroaches Never Die' is about the essential tragedy of existence which haunts every human being. When one problem is solved, another more severe and more complicated, makes its appearance. It is "a pilot of a fully grown army below". Our sorrows will never end. Like the mariners in Tennyson's 'The Lotos Eaters' we are destined to say

"Is there any peace  
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?"

Sorrows never end and life is full of afflictions and troubles, pains and miseries, sufferings and distresses, grief and sorrows from which there is no escape. In the poem "The Dog Fear" the poet brings the image of dog for presenting the fear and anxiety of human beings. Man is entangled within his self unable to open his heart and strive for better things in life. In contemporary society everything frightens him: Nature, friends and even children.

Mathew invokes two scathing things which will never leave him: death and fear. Even though man wants to be young and bright, he can not escape the infallibility of time.

“Death begins when one is born and  
One lives always in its presence”.

The poet laments the death of his friend in the poem “My Friend , Where Are You”. The poet’s friend has completed the allotted span and disappears. Shops and endless streets become gray and meaningless without his presence. In “Merging with the Leaves” old age is compared with “soft, dried leaves clinging to the bare branches”. Though many of his friends have gone into the depths of death, he still attaches himself to the branches, waiting for an impatient wind to shake him off.

“Our lives will extend only a few hours ;  
The end comes soon, and we are done”.

Like his friends, the poet will fly into eternity and his life also will follow death.

In “Butterfly” and “Moth”, the poet talks on transience of human life. Death ceases our dreams. In “Butterfly” dreams are compared to dew drops which are dried up by the rising sun. Human beings are like moths.

“She was born yesterday and  
Today she lies, and tomorrow,  
There will be no trace of her”

The poet remains desolate in the valley of despair watching the city dying. In “Dying City” the poet communicates to the reader a sense of anarchy and futility that he finds everywhere. Poems like “The Proud Dancer”, “The Room” and “New Day Brings No Promises” present poet’s disillusionment with Nature and life. Trapped in the prison of the world and snapping like a banner in the wind, man tries to perfect his imperfect life every day. Nothing remains hopeful for the human beings where

everything is stained and polluted. His love is finished; brain is ruined and has to remain like empty flowerpots which keep the memories of earlier seasons. For him new day brings no promises except greying yellow atmosphere.

“It is gray, gray, gray everywhere;  
Gray devoid of brightness and colors”

Like T.S. Eliot, he expresses the disillusionment of an entire generation and the poem remains as an important document of social criticism of the world to which the poet also belongs. In “Fugitive” poet draws the picture of an embarrassed and confused modern man who searches the meaning of life:

I stand alone confused and perplexed  
A hundred paths spreading away,  
Each one into the woods beyond,  
Into the vast community of shadows

'Now I know' and 'I Have No One to Blame' show the gradual realization of reality. The poet grows into maturity and understands that “youth is a stage”, and becomes practical. Mathew also questions the negative attitude of people who always like to use the word 'NO'. This world is known for people who open the garbage can at night and cover up the ugly and rotten by the 'stylized gray colour'. Human beings are continuing their litany of cruelties on the hills of Lebanon and in the valleys of Kashmir.

K.K. Mathew depicts people bereft of love and concern for others as prime reason for the disintegration of morality and values. The poet sings and sighs when he sees news items describing slaughtering of innocents. Comparing the cruelties of the present world Judas could have been a saint. The poet effortlessly produces a deconstructive version of Judas. The poet canonizes the cursed Judas as a saint because he had gone wrong only once in his life whereas contemporary human beings have stooped and degraded as murderers and exploiters a

thousand times without remorse and repentance: "We are all betrayers taking silver".

Poet emphasizes the importance of love in "Rope-Dancer", one of the best poems in the collection. The poet needs the clapping hands of his lover to walk the tight rope of life. His dreams and aspirations take flight only when he is loved. Life is a circus and love is the balancing rod:

If life is a circus, and I am an act,  
No money on earth could get me there  
Only your love could bring me to it;  
Clap your hands, surely I can do it.

Like Romantic poets, he displaces humanity by external nature as poetic subject matter . With a keen eye he sees everything in Nature; even the minutest details do not pass unobserved by the poet. He is fascinated by birds, animals, rains and winds. Rain is the most powerful pervasiveness for the poet. In "Rain Is ME" he says "I am the rain". Like Edward Thomas who writes,

"If love it be towards what is perfect and  
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint" (Rain)

Dr. Mathew is also aware of the different kinds of rain and the rain invokes different feelings in him.

"The deep rain your heart knows  
But how deep I don't know"

The last two poems in the sequence of Emblematic Poems take an unusual twist in poet's approach to life. The poet comes out from his darkness to open the doors of love and affection and to prolong his dance and song. He is hopeful for a mystic union with his beloved, and awaits the brightness of the coming days. In the poem "He Waits Outside", the poet pictures an 'unknown' figure waiting outside. It knocks at the door. The poet wants to hide from Him. But finally runs into His arms. It reminds us of the Biblical verses:

Where can I go from your spirit?  
Or where can I flee from your presence?  
(Psalm 139: 7-9)

In Francis Thomson's *Hound of Heaven* God is after man and man tries to flee from Him:

Mathew's poem is quite different from Walter De la Mare's "Someone" where the poet does not meet the person who has knocked at his 'wee, small door'.

Mathew is very spiritual and for him, God awaits outside and it is useless to hide from Him. Even death for the poet is the celebration of "the spring of rebirth". His nature poems also bring back the readers from the depths of despair to the mountains of hopes and happiness. Echoing P.B. Shelley, the poet dreams for a spring season which 'comes whistling down 'the mountain path',

"Today relieves yesterday's pain and  
Tomorrow brings in new hopes and aspirations".

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**“POET A MAKER OF ORDER”:  
A REVIEW OF THE SELECTED  
SHORTER POEMS OF  
DR. K.K. MATHEW**

Dr. Yoosaph A. K.

“**A** poet is essentially a maker, a maker of order”, says John Peck and Martin Coyle in their attempt to define poetry. This meticulous observation on poetry underscores the poems of Dr. K. K. Mathew, whose creative endeavour has been rendered into five distinct categories by Professor John E. Abraham. The first section of his dynamic poetry is appropriately labelled as “Emblematic” by the editor. This part is an emblematic beginning to the entire collection of poems in which a lot of symbols have been carefully delineated and the idea of multifarious worlds within a limited world is worth noticing.

“The World Within a World” becomes a shadow of another world or, in other words, the microcosm definitely fits in the reflection of a macrocosm. Thus the poems go out of the platitude ; in the next poem, where creativity of a poet is discussed, the poet is likened to a hunter while his poetry to a prey. Of course, this comparison throws out a lot of considerations, as to how a victim is deliberately born out of a hunter and quite wonderfully the poet looks at how the hunter gets transformed into a hunter. In fact, one gets easily reminded of Ted Hughes’ “Thought Fox”.

Throughout this section, the reader comes across different delineations of a lot of ordinary experiences. For example, how the common man thinks about time in “Infallibility of Time”,

wherein one hopes for being young and bright, asserts simply the fact that man always thinks alike. This section is replete with simple but apt phrases and images that exhibit a unique interpretation of the experiences of life. Sometimes the poet seems to present some mystical experiences as in the poem "My Friend, Where Are You?", the theme of which concentrates on a search for someone unknown, which could be taken as a search inward so as to locate him or her as a divine presence.

Life goes on with its fits and starts, along with our exposures to multifarious depletions, similar to the corrosion of love among humanity. This concept is exemplified further in the poem on the fall of Adam and Eve from heaven, which was "not from sin, not from vice, / But from love of humanity". From this corrosio, the poet moves on to a search for the missing person whose fading figure gives us the impression of being a fugitive, chased by the poet by walking towards the tree where "the flowers go black one by one" (p. 32). His poems abound in quite distinguished themes, all contemporary and significant that too gets focused on a lot of ramifications.

The selection and grouping of the poems has a fixed chronological order in which the editor has done a commendable presentation of the passage of thoughts threaded through distinct themes. In this respect the theme of a fugitive gets to the next state of being a refugee whose shelter is one's soul itself, however, locating the loss of some sort of internal presence. Thus the ordinary spectacles narrated in the poetry have some common denominations in the daily life of human beings. Mr. K. K. Mathew is not only a poet in this sense, but an avid observer of life which has made him look at his surroundings with a difference - which makes all the difference!

Travelling through the various nuances of meaning of the poems in the collection, one gets amazed by the variety of themes as well as the subtleties which make these attempts quite innovative and enchanting. Going further to the second section

of the anthology, it enumerates the poet's encounter with nature. Unlike Wordsworth's "return to nature" theory, Mathew tries to address the commonalities without any philosophical or for that matter, jargons which are bound to be mystical in nature. Instead, he proposes some ideological hiccups which may in turn make the poems more relevant to the contemporary world whose "use and throw" culture is getting deeply rooted in the young minds.

"Why does one write?" is a pertinent question that we often tend to mix up with all sorts of other unanswerable questions and thus quip with unnoticeably. However, Mathew takes it seriously and provides the readers with the feast that they expect to relish upon in all the sections of the collection. Of course, the experiences are always the same, but when they appear in new form with new language we enjoy more than what we have experienced ourselves. This is the success of a writer very often, and in this respect, Mathew can easily say that he has savoured it in great quantity.

To go for some examples in the second section of the anthology, we can take into consideration the first poem that tells us about a snake with the title "Encounter with a Snake" which gives out "the dry music for the valley". A lizard's picture is drawn in another poem in which the lizard is compared to a "small dinosaur" who nature is "a balance of cowardice and quietness". Birds bring memory alive with their voice being listened to and their presence recalled. These are certain sights that the poet feels his nostalgia for, though they make great impact upon the readers. The poems included in this section are quite conveniently placed by the editor whose genius is also a noteworthy presence in the categorization of the poems as well as putting the readers in the middle of a significant position.

The poet is anxious about birds and animals whose rights are quite in line with the rights of men, if not the less. In his

simple language, he asserts that “their sad future disturbs me”. He is perhaps lamenting their future in comparison with that of human beings and it is observable that he is emphatically worried about the dying seasons, landscapes that shed “drizzling darkness” in the background of our lives. One may get reminded of Eliot’s *Prufrock* when “*Rain is Me*” is read. Similarly, Wordsworth’s picture of the daffodils (“one thousand I saw”) comes up suddenly to mind when Mathew uses the phrase “in a cluster” in the poem of the same name.

The third section is named “Facetious” that too discusses the common ideas about life when we closely observe it. Look at the poem “the Beggars” where he observes the “dried milkless breasts” of the beggars with their empty and insignificant downtrodden life. “Mirror Image”, “No”, “Now I Know”, “My Grandson” are some of the noticeable poems in this section.

“Rains fall on the dried earth / Making grass fresh and glistening; / Above the tree rises the day” starts one of the poems in the fourth section, “Whimsical”. This section too, similar to the inner predicaments and external observations, delineates how one’s life has got myriad of experiences unutterably frozen through years. Fear, mystery, nostalgia, recollections are some of the subjects that this section is made up of.

Devotional poems are wonderful poems dealing with various subjects; the section starts with the poem “To Jesus”, which has a charismatic charm wherein the boundless love represents Jesus. Every poem in the section draws pictures of devotion, divine love, mixed with philosophy.

In fact, Mathew’s poems exude a sense of being human to the very core, whose very nature is bound up with human qualities. The poems make themselves readable in their thematic structure, style of writing, imagery, and the choice of words. Another significant point one may have to notice is their

shortness and simplicity. Each poem is complete in itself and confines to single pages. The contemporary readers have to go for this comfort while reading the poems of K. K. Mathew whose genius hoists the flags of peace, love, sympathy, empathy, devotion and a lot more. The layout, texture, and the visual qualities of the book are something one may fall in love with at the very first sight.

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# RECURRING VISION OF TRANSITORINESS

Rev. Dr. Anniyil Tharakan

**S**tephen Leacock's expletive that poetry has fled off its grove in the West is not so such a gloss on Western poetry as its spirituality. Long before Leacock put his fingers on the West, his mentor Oswald Spengler in the nineteenth century prophesied the decline of the West in his much celebrated oeuvre of that name, adding that the East still retains a wisp of spiritual vision as its substratum. Bede Griffiths filled up the missing lines when he argued for a marriage between East and West, thereby making the mankind on both sides of the hemisphere restore its creative roots. These lines written by a busy doctor who spends most of his time in a medical practitioner's clinic exemplify the restlessness of the soul to break out of its humdrum existence into the freedom of art. They sum up his pause in the strenuous journey which wends its way down life's inclines encircled by gloom and angst.

Victor Cousin has concluded that India is the cradle of world-civilization from the complexity of its philosophical thought-patterns, which he found absent in other Eastern cultures like China and Egypt. Cousin was interested in the Indian philosophical thought that packed the Vedas and the Upanishads alike. India's sages have found the phenomena like Fire, Sun, Sea, Dawn exquisitely beautiful and intuited further that they are unified by a noumenon that underlies them, an idea which Teilhard de Chardin has mystified profoundly in *The Phenomenon of Man*. Dr. Mathew hopes to take a Kierkegaardian leap into

*the World Within*, and the poem leaves one with the vision of the not-yet-unfolded underlying world. You have shadows falling on the wall. Plato would tell you that the shadows are a pointer in contrast to the subsisting ideals that make up the archetypal realm of the inner world.

Perhaps Dr. Mathew is brought out of the Platonic Cave by the sheer force of the hunter-hound that hunts down the soul and drives it into the brightness and brilliance of the faith, wherein he sees himself reborn as a poet. Thompson in the nineteenth century tried to reincarnate himself as the hound of heaven and Mathew stalks him behind with his poem as game. Before Thompson, Dante found it as symbol of God's transcendence. When at one point in his journey through Purgatory, Dante, while trying to scale the hill, is intercepted by three beasts, and Virgil tells him that he has to overcome them with the Hound that is Christ. Christian God is the Pugilist (Eliot), thou-mastering-me-God, revealing his power and glory in the brute beauty and valour and act of a kestrel (Hopkins).

Throughout the gamut of his poetry, Dr. Mathew weaves into the fabric of his work a recurring vision of transitoriness of this worldly life. With it comes his undying interest in dilating upon death as a reminder to the reader to set things aright. Because the early Fathers of the Church, Eastern and Western alike, were averse to the idea of death of Christ being projected as a significant motif, they do not poetise on it in their work. Upon the vast canvas of the third century Ephrem's Syriac poetry, you see Christ's death hardly mentioned. Christ's Birth and Resurrection occupy his mind, the more so his Nativity. In showcasing the fleeting nature of life on earth, Mathew thinks that he provides a warning to the world of the day. He claims that it is a prophetic voice crying in the wilderness that is heard in his work. When he pushes such an idea beyond a point, there is that danger for the Christian in him to switch over to Buddhism that thrives on discourses on ephemerality of

existence, and to slide into a willing suspension of the belief that the world is part of the Messianic kingdom redeemed by Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and that it is the only realm where redemption is worked out in this life. In Christian thought, the world is the paradise regained, which is a million times loftier and holier than the paradise lost caused by the Fall of Adam, an idea which led Shakespeare to wax eloquent upon the beauty of creation in *Hamlet*. *Death* dies in a whimper: *Resurrection* breaks out with a bang.

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**Rev. Dr. Anniyil Ninan Tharakan** devoted himself to teaching at Mar Ivanios College and St. John's College, retiring from the latter as its President in 1998. He was a visiting resource person to the UGC Academic Staff College, Trivandrum, and to the University of Kerala to teach M.Phil classes, and has currently been doctoral research guide of the university.

Anniyil Tharakan was educated at the University of Kerala, and the University of Notre Dame in the United States of America. As a student at School, he studied Aramaic, or West Syriac, and later learned Latin and Greek. He did a baccalaureate and a licentiate in Philosophy (B. Ph. and Ph.L.) in 1962-5, and undergraduate and graduate degrees in Theology (B.D. and L.D.) in 1965-9 at Papal Athenaeum, Poona. At Notre Dame, he was a research scholar, who studied Eastern thoughts influence upon nineteenth century literature. The University conferred on him doctorate in English in April 1987. Following his retirement he took to the study of Sanskrit and rendered into English verse the Sanskrit poem *Saundaryalahari*.

His works include **Quester by the River and Other Poems** (Cross Cultural Publications, USA- Foreword by Dom Moraes), **Mathew Arnold and the Bbagavad Gita**, **The Canticle of the Beloved** (Won Atma Vidya Award in 2009), **Indian Thought in English Poetry** (Bharatheeyadarsanam English kavithayil). The book won the much-coveted literary award of the Kerala Sahitya Akademi (the Kerala State Literary Academy) in literary criticism for the year 2011. In 2014 Dr. Tharakan was conferred the KCBC Guru Pujya Award for his contribution in the field of higher education.

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# The Selected Shorter Poems of KK Mathew

Gopikrishnan Kottoor

It was Professor John E Abraham's excellent interpretation of the poems that drew me to an in-depth reading of KK Mathews poems and made me publish a few in our e zine [www.undergroundflowers.com](http://www.undergroundflowers.com). I would have otherwise missed the beauty of his craft, as I had not heard of KK Mathew and was only cursorily going through the book that was mailed to me. I endorse Prof John's views completely. Here is a fine, sensuous poet, who has earned or has been gifted with subtleties of poetic taste, vigour, and candour. His nature poems, heaven poems, and poems on creatures of God, leave you thinking, startle you with pleasant surprise, and often leave you wondering, wanting to read him more. Often the poems, become those you want to go to, a second or a third time, for consolation, or for poetic contentment. That is the kind of gift he has which makes you treasure his book on your poetry shelf, knowing there are treasures hidden in there which you'll get on reading them over. Along the green stems of his innocence blow rapturous flowers as in 'The Boy Who Dreams of Open Fields' which brings about a vision of the need for peace of mankind without barbed borders. It can any day be placed alongside John Lennon's 'Imagine'. 'Spider Gods', 'Merging with the Leaves', have Wordsworthian nuances of observation and philosophical bearing. I'll agree with Professor John that poems

like 'Encounter with a Snake' or 'The Birds' are among those poems that wake the best of poetic wisdom and nostalgic delights in KK's untainted poetic heart. I only wish that KK continues to engage in his poetic showers with greater and more bountiful success.

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**Gopikrishnan Kottoor** is an award winning poet. His prizes include the All India Poetry prize, British Council, (Special Prize, Best Theme, Second Prize, General Category, and three times commendations). He has been included in *The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Indian Poetry in English* (UK), *The Golden Jubilee Anthology of Indian Poetry in English* (National Book Trust), *Special issue on Indian Poetry in English, Verse, Seattle, USA*, and other significant anthologies. He attended the MFA (Poetry) Southwest Texas University, USA on a McCormick scholarship. His poem 'Father, Wake us in Passing' was translated into German and read across Universities in Europe on a Residency from the University of Augsburg, Germany. He is the founder editor of Poetry Chain. He presently edits the ezine [www.undergroundflowers.com](http://www.undergroundflowers.com). He has published twelve books and his oeuvre includes poetry, novels, children's books, plays, transcreations, poetry editions and translations. He often reviews poetry for the Hindu literary supplement. Presently he is working on a play **King Martanda Varma and Devasabayam**, a socio historical challenge on the life of Devasabayam, executed by the king for his conversion to catholic faith. He works as General Manager in the Reserve Bank of India, Trivandrum.

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# **DR. K.K. MATHEW'S POETRY: AN ARDENT ELIXIR OF AN EXQUISITE SENSIBILITY**

Dr. John. E. Abraham

**T**he book under review contains 158 shorter poems that Dr. K.K. Mathew has written during the last ten years. Mathew is a prolific writer. He writes when he is inspired and his art is an unpremeditated one, and in his poems he pours out his heart in full throated ease.

The poems are fine and sincere, sharing the poet's varied experiences at different points of time and place. Each poem makes an emotional and intellectual statement very convincingly, although each has a distinct approach and presentation quite different from the others. There is no special poetic device to spark off what the poet means, yet he holds the reader tautly. Each poem has a strong crux, a message, or comment. To the poet, the poems are an exercise more than an act, a search rather than a deliverance, a maneuver on himself by his self. His lines bloom into monologues that create many states of enchantment.

All senses are keen and alive in Mathew. He does not miss the small murmur when "the wind picks up its hammer and pounds the trees into black foil". He smells the rain "flowing in the Sky". He sees "the thick forest ablazing". He feels even the invisible bacteria swimming everywhere. Voices of the unborn tomorrow and the dead yesterday meet and merge in him.

Some poems are spiritual. But they are not mysterious and complex. In fact they make us aware of the presence of God

nearby; a god knocking at the wee door or one walking in the yard and asking permission to enter ones heart. Mathew is a true Christian and glorifies the love and sacrifice of Jesus (To Jesus). For him, God is omnipresent and omnipotent. He knows the potential grace of God. He prays to God for a moment's indulgence to sit by His side and sing a dedication of life.

There is not any theme untouched by the poet. The historical evolution of mankind from slavery to freedom and equality, find a place in poems like 'The Fugitive', 'The Saviour Has Come'. 'Expecting Their Return' examines dialectic between the ideas of home and exile in which the speaker is trying to identify himself only through his rapport with the other.

Dr. Mathew is a medical practitioner and a number of poems like 'An Alzheimer Patient', 'To be a Nurse', 'Reformed Drunkard'...have themes directly related to medicine. The drunkard's wife "Wears a calm, happy face " now, after the reformation of her husband. She looks on him with pride and considers him as her favorite child; a scene the doctor might have seen and experienced many times in life. Even the images used in some poems like "doctors examining the patients with Stethoscopes" (Ants), "veins which springing from the heart return again" (The River) are typically of a medical professional's.

The metaphor of 'waiting' is an image which occur frequently in religious and mythological tales of the East and the West. Woman of Canterbury in T.S. Eliot's play, **Murder in the Cathedral** 'wait' close by the cathedral. John Milton says "They also serve who only stand and wait" (On His Blindness). The image of 'waiting' is aptly used by the poet in the poem 'Night on a Highway':

At the check-post, they wait listlessly;  
The strands of clouds moving over them,  
Like arms, hold them close to the earth.

The poem 'Drinking the Sun' brings out clearly a comparison between the old things and the modern. Those old days of ploughing and tilling have now become a thing of past, a memory, a dream. But in these times of mechanized farming, smoke fills the field. The poet nostalgically revives the calmness, the beauty of those by gone days when

The exhausted oxen,  
Bowling over the still water of a stream drinking the sun.

Poems like 'Renewal of Love', 'Dying Season', 'The Monsoon Wind' also are highly nostalgic. "The intricacies of voices and place", "the memory floated upon the west borne rains by the winds", "the lips that remember the kisses"..... find the perfect echo of the aching desires and unknown raptures.

About the stylistic quality of Mathew's poems, one thing constant throughout his early poetry is his craftsmanship. Sometimes, but not often, it seems to be merely a delight in craftsmanship. In these shorter poems there is a concurrency of a definite style which suggests that the poet has ultimately found a style that is expressive of himself. He seems to be willing to speak about himself, but at times obliquely only. He disagrees with Eliot's view that poetry should be impersonal. Mathew is able to form a distinct poetic personality. He has learned, as Yeats was forced to learn, that the subject of poetry at its best is to be an 'expressive personality.'

The themes that recur in Mathew's poetry are sense of innocence, love, faith, friendship, sanity and identity; with a few remaining in the realm of desire and dream. In addition to these, the poet is concerned with socio-political themes. 'The Boy Who Dreams of Open Fields' is perhaps a representative of a large section of humanity who aspire for a world without boundaries. The boy sleeps within closed doors, dreaming of open fields.

'Adulthood' and 'The Potential Grace' note that learning

about loss, is like the loss of innocence, a necessary part of maturation. They express a sense of loss very desperately, and undergo a paroxysm of burning resentment, loss of identity and love.

There are a number of poems dealing with fear. In 'Dog Fear', fear chases the poet always, and finally the poet becomes a 'bone' in its mouth. This is an obsessive emotion. Freud defines neurotic anxiety as fear "in regard to a danger we do not know". The disorder is vague and indefinable, but no less frightening and oppressive.

In 'The Fugitive', 'Homecoming', 'Expecting Their Return' and a number of poems, the basic metaphor is that of life as a voyage. The poet does not give into abstraction as he does in his longer poem, 'The Voyage', where perhaps it can be taken as a weakness. But here, in these shorter poems, images are very concrete and they convey different meanings in different situations.

Image is the most important part in poetry because the stronger the image the less one has to depend upon the detail. Rain, sun, trees and rivers are the poet's favorite images, and the meanings they convey vary according to the situations in which they are employed. There is a persistent resort to suggestiveness in language and overtones of meaning, and dreamy associations.

Mathew has an affinity to gray color ('Something Gray', 'Lavender Gray'), and this grayness stands in the poems to symbolize decay and desolation.

*"I see the gray sky and drabness in the horizon"* (New Day Brings No Promises)

Sometimes the image is used in paradox as in "maturity within the graying yellow." (This Room).

Mathew's poems are sensuous as well as nostalgic. He feels the beauty of the migrating birds (The Birds) and enjoys the voice left behind by his guests of the last season.

*My guests of the season have flown off,  
Seeking better climate and more food,  
But they have left behind their voices .  
It is in the shadows on the lawn , around me.*

Most of the poems are symbolic or allegorical. 'The Encounter with a Snake', at first ,will appear as one with a simple theme; the poet's casual encounter with a baby snake resting on a rock. Now, he "can walk unwary, smiling." But within a year it will grow to be a fully grown serpent.

*And the wind will then pick up  
His noisy, dry music from the valley.*

Then the poet has to be very cautious. The poem takes a different meaning, when we consider the snake to be a critic who will embolden himself in future to criticize the poet. Snake is the symbol of sex and in that way, the poem assumes a different meaning.

Of all the poems in the collection, remarkably the most mysterious and allegorical one is 'The River'. The river has "the cast of silver and is always without waves, without people, without sails". But it reflects "the vacuous clouds" and angels are "arising from the light among the shadows". It can be a holy river like the Jordan, the Alph, the Ganga or the River of Arrow, through which Heaven's light is reflected on the earth. It is a "world within the world" and "the day spins around it".

Mathew's poems discuss a wide variety of themes. Some deal with the diverse objects of Nature and celebrate the poet's love and affection for creatures which maybe for an ordinary person unimportant and whimsical, an unworthy subject for poetry. Mathew through a sequence of paeans, sing the enduring beauty and charm of these objects: a young snake, pale and skeletal; a lizard with deep gray eyes; a cat with "Sulphur eyes where myriad stars are shining. Mathew is a poet who enamours with his simplicity but amazes with his sublimity.

In 'Nature Poems' Mathew is superb, and he creates a world full of color, sound, and aroma of the different seasons. Rain has different forms for him, until he becomes the rain and the rain is he. (Rain Is Me). The moth is "trying to find her way back to light and back to the original". The sun and the earth fail to raise the Easter lilies to life but "some promised resurrection each year they are the first to rise..." It is a world of color, enchantment, music, desire, dream, hope, faith and an ardent elixir of an exquisite sensibility; a world from which the reader will be reluctant to come out.

Mathew's poetry can be termed as 'lyricism in reality'. It is dynamic and frozen at an indeterminate point in space and time. In reality, the poems are half lyrical and half satirical. Mathew transforms the duller activities of everyday life, and makes them exciting and fascinating. He offers convincing explanations of what really matters in this world. He has shown that creative calling with all its frustrations and unanticipated triumphs, is profoundly natural and heavily related to the sources of life. He has a hunger for embracing the world and new experiences.

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# WORLD WITHIN THE WORLD

## Reviews of Shorter Poems of Dr. K. K. Mathew



Anniyl Tharakan



Nibu Thomson



N. Parvathi Devi



M.R. Joshi

The book contains in-depth studies of **The Selected Shorter Poems of Dr. K.K. Mathew** by critics and scholars, and reviews published in the national dailies and journals.



A.K. Yoosaph



Gopikrishnan



John E. Abraham



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