

A Comment about “Haiku of the Present” (Authored by Santosh Kumar, Rochak Publishing, India, 2011)

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The author, Santosh Kumar, an Indian poet, says in the preface, “While writing this book ‘Haiku of the Present’, I have kept in my mind that we should not be enslaved to the 5-7-5 pattern. In fact, he cited the best haiku without kigo and 5-7-5 syllables from Ban’ya Natsuishi’s haiku collections. His policy of haiku is writing it in three lines without kigo and 5-7-5 syllables. Let’s examine some examples of his haiku actually. The first haiku of ‘Haiku of the Present’ :

Prince of Austria assassinated (8 syllables)
Furies take revenge (5 syllables)
First World War (3 syllables)

This first incident of World War I is written in three lines and it has neither 5-7-5 syllables nor kigo. But there is a function of omission in the haiku. “is” is omitted after “Austria” in the first line and “The” before “First” in the third lines. The theme of his haiku is not beauty of nature like typical Japanese haiku but human conflicts : war, racism, politics, nuclear weapons and so on. Kumar faces the severe aspects of present societies and modern civilizations so that he expresses them desperately in his haiku like this:

Nuclear weapon industry
The cruel system
To annihilate earth

But he still has some hopes for the world and human beings.

Shore to shore
lord’s kingdom-
vernal bees murmur here

This world is “our lord’s kingdom where vernal bees murmur from shore to shore” for Kumar. He seeks salvation through his meditations and carries it by haiku.

Jesus message
Acts upon us;
New person born

The poet relays his belief that we can be reborn through Christianity. He also writes in the preface “While writing this haiku book, I talked with God often.”

Moreover, he mentions Christianity mainly but also Japanese Zen in his haiku.

Zazen-seated meditation
Zendo-walking meditation
United in third line

He writes about Zen in the preface, "The haiku included in 'Haiku of the Present' are influenced by Zen meditation. The practice of zazen or seated meditation is indispensable for attaining salvation." The above haiku means his work is a form of zen meditation written in three lines. The third line of his haiku gives him a salvation."

In conclusion, he expresses many kinds of human conflict in the world in the first of "haiku of the Present" and after that, salvation through zen meditations. The next haiku represents his spirit concisely.

Haiku is
pilgrimage to world
and underworld.

Kumar's haiku is a pilgrimage to Christian salvation through zen meditations and a maxim written in three lines.