

FROM HOMECOMING

Written by : R. Parthasarathy





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*I am no longer myself as I watch
the evening blur the traffic
to a pair of obese headlights.*

*I return home, tired,
my face pressed against the window
of expectation . I climb the steps
to my flat, only to trip over the mat
Outside the door. The key
goes to sleep in my palm.*

Contd...

*I fear I have bungled again.
That last refinement of speech
terrifies me. The balloon.*

*Of poetry has grown red in the face
with repeated blowing. For scriptures
I, therefore, recommend*

*the humble newspaper: I find
My prayers occasionally answered there.
I shall, perhaps, go on.*

Contd...

*Like this, unmindful of day
melting into the night.*

My heart I have turned inside out.

*Hereafter, I should be content,
I think, to go through life
with the small change of uncertainties.*

NOTES

- Rajagopal Parthasarathy was born in 1934 at Tirupparaiturai near Tiruchchirappalli. He was educated at Don Bosco High School and Siddharth College , Mumbai and at Leeds University , UK , where he was British Council Scholar in 1963 - 64.
- He was Lecturer in English Literature in Mumbai for ten years before joining Oxford University Press in 1971 as Regional Editor in Chennai.
- He moved to New Delhi in 1978. He is Associate Professor of English and Asian Studies at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs , New York , USA .

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- His works include *Poetry from Leeds* in 1968 , *Rough Passage* brought out by Oxford University Press in 1977 , a long poem and edited *Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets* published by Oxford University Press in 1976 which went into Sixteenth Impression only in 2002.
- His translation into modern English verse of the 5th-century Tamil epic, *The Tale of the Anklet: An Epic of South India* brought out by Columbia UP in 1993.
- It has received significant awards including the Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize in 1995 and The Association for Asian Studies, Inc. - A.K. Ramanujan Book Prize for Translation in 1996.

Contd...

- As the poet-persona returns home, he thinks he is no longer his former self.
- He watches the evening blur the traffic to a pair of fat headlights.
- He finds himself quite tired. His face is pressed against the window of expectation, as if he were going to make some discovery on reaching home.
- He climbs the steps to his flat and trips over the doormat just outside the door.
- Meanwhile, the key in his hand seems to go to sleep.
- He fears that he has done badly once again.
- I is terrified at the latest refinement of his mother tongue.
- The balloon of poetry seems to have grown red in the face with repeated blowing.
- So he no longer recommends the scripture but only humble newspapers in their place.
- He finds that his prayers are occasionally answered in the newspapers.
- He thinks that he will perhaps go on like that, unmindful of the day as it melts into night.
- He has turned his heart inside out, as one turns one's pocket inside out. And he will go on through life with the small changes of uncertainties that he has found there.

Contd....

- R.Parthsarthy's poem "Homecoming" portrays a picture of his native state, Tamil Nadu as he returns after his sojourn abroad.
- He perceives a marked change in his native language.
- He comprehends that it was his lack of familiarity with the native language that rendered the language alien to his perception.
- His persistent use of the foreign tongue dispossessed him of his inherently rich native language.
- His association with English appears to be like imprisonment as he wrestles with English chains.
- His mother tongue is emblematic of his rich Dravidian heritage that he cherishes. In his chains, that disable him to move freely, he falters, he stumbles.
- He also stumbles as he has lost his ground.
- His native language is now relegated to other concerns.
- At the time of Thiruvalluvar, the language was an insignia of the rich heritage.
- He senses that the language has begun to deteriorate as it is adulterated, and declines owing to the lack of use. The language proves to be an effervescent medium with the savant Nammalvar who handled it as it were a bull held by its horns.
- She penned several devotional songs that were par excellence, and therefore favorites with the masses. In the present situation, the language is like a dead animal, infested with fleas at Kodambakkam.
- The figure of speech enhances the theme of stagnation and decay.

Contd...

- In section III titled 'Home coming' the poet portrays his experience with the present problem of settling down to a mode of living life fully with contentment.
- Rough passage is from England to Bombay to Goa (Exite), then to Calcutta (Trial).
- In this poem he finally comes to Tamil Nadu (Home Coming).
- The poet looks for relationship through reflection and gains the knowledge that the self can perceive itself only in relation to others.
- About this section Parthasarathy himself explains "In attempting to formulate my own situation, perhaps I stumbled upon the horns of dilemma.
- From the beginning I saw my task as one of acclimatizing the English language to an indigenous tradition."
- The poet is conscious of the hiatus between the soil of the language he uses and his own roots.
- Parthasarathy also admits this "Even though I am Tamil speaking and yet write in English, there is the over whelming difficulty of using image in a linguistic tradition that is quite other than that of my own."
- Parthasarathy advises Indian English Poets to return to their respective linguistic traditions.