

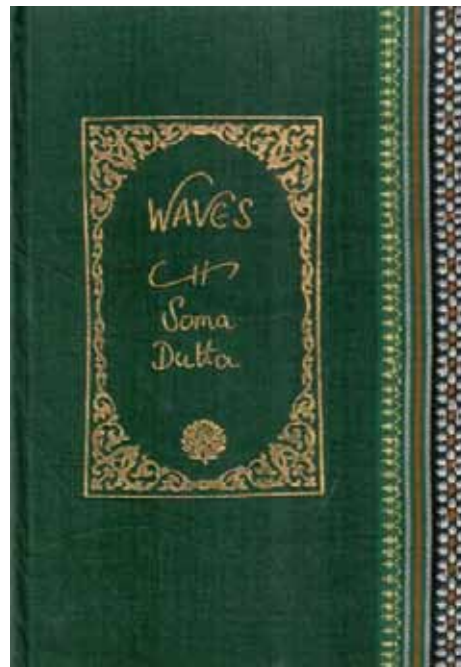
# WAVES

Waves is the second anthology of seventy six poems by Soma Dutta who has been educated at Calcutta and IGNOU. She has also been a teacher and an administrator at a public school at Bhilai.

The poems that stand out in the anthology are 'Plastic Menace', 'Beware', 'The Largest Democracy in the World', 'Isolated and Homeless', 'Envy', 'Dyslexic', 'First Night' and 'The Quilt of Sleep'. They show the poet's sensitivity and concern for the individual who faces the challenge of living in the post- millennium era.

'Plastic Menace' and 'Beware' are companion poems focusing our attention on the degradation of the environment in the contemporary world. While the first poem brings out the havoc caused by plastic, the second poem begins on a dramatic note, "Green land ice is melting/ Melting at an alarming rate/ Pay a heed to this news/ Before it becomes too late"(p 68). One cannot blame a teacher for adopting a stern tone in the classroom. Melting of ice has been taking place at such a rate that the earth may suffer an irreversible damage.

'Largest Democracy in the world' is an ironic portrayal of India, the largest democracy in the world. We are proud of living in a country where we forget to pay taxes on time but complain loudly if we are deprived of necessities like water or electricity. We also keep our home neat and tidy but throw our garbage in the neighbor's vacant plot. At the end of the poem, the poet asks a question, "Am I a Pessimist, a bitter critic/ an enemy of the nation? No, I love my Country from the core of my heart/ I am an injured and wounded Indian" (p 14).



*Waves by Soma Dutta, Writers Workshop, Kolkata, 2009, p.104, hard-back Rs.200.00*

"The wounded Indian" also figures prominently in poems, like 'Isolated' and 'Homeless'. There is a most moving portrait of a man suffering from AIDS in the poem 'Isolated': "He feels twilight has appeared/Memory is still alive/ Though his days are numbered." (p.27). 'Homeless' is again a poem full of gloom and despair. It shows the plight of a farmer after the flood in Kosi "Whatever I gathered in life/ Kosi took everything in her cruel bosom, bare/ Empty handed, in the relief camp/ I stare with blank vision and despair"(p.53). That it happens when the nation is on the verge of celebrating the sixty years of the republic makes it doubly disenchanting and depressing.

While 'Envy' is a dramatic poem contrasting the attitude of a house wife with that of a working woman, 'Dyslexic' shows the plight of a young learner who "kept on struggling with letters and numbers/ Which always danced before his eyes/ In his desperate efforts to put

them together/He was puzzled to see them fall and rise"(p.65). The end of the poem, when the disabled child becomes a celebrated painter, reminds one of the Aamir Khan's memorable film Tare Zameen Par.

'First Night' shows the predicament of a young bride whose sailor husband keeps on moving across the seas and the bride has no choice but to recall the first night and wait patiently for her husband's return. 'The Quilt of Sleep' is again a dramatic poem that shows the hectic life of the contemporary woman who has to fight hard to balance the demands of home with the work place. The plight of the woman of our time is most beautifully expressed in the last four lines of the poem:

Managing the work of ten hands  
with only two

Thus becoming fed up of daily  
schedule

I want to take shelter in the lap  
of sleep

Intoxicated by sweet dreams,  
relaxed, peaceful.(p.97).

All in all, Waves is an anthology of poems that makes us wait for the next volume of Soma Dutta. In keeping with the spirit of the age, her poems are more in the spirit of a dialogue than a song.



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