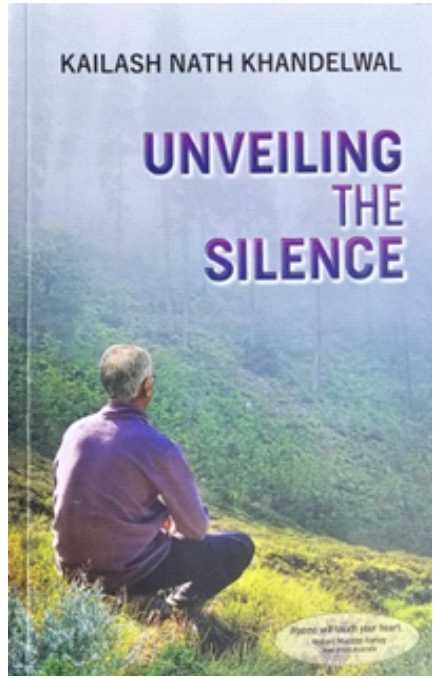
Kailash Nath Khandelwal. *Unveiling the Silence*. Gurugram: Global Fraternity of Poets, 2023, pp. xx +127, PB, Price: ₹350, $30, ISBN: 978-93-90663-53-8.

Reviewed by
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Poetry represents poet's imaginative experience. Sometimes lived experience causes fine poetry, and 'love-sickness' also results in producing creative genius. We find all these together in *Unveiling the Silence,* a collection of 70 poems by Dr. Kailash Nath Khandelwal. He is a poet of love, loss, hope, friendship, and spirituality. This collection begins with the poem "The Little Sparrow" which is a reminiscent of the poet's adolescence, full of passionate love. There are many love poems in this collection. "My Sheet Anchor" is dedicated to his love who is no more but her affection and advice are alive in the heart of the poet. Even the bounty of nature (in "Sad and Haggard") does not engross him and all beauty fades away in absence of his lost love (wife). Loneliness captivates him and it does not allow him to come out from the memory of his partner. Opposite to it, "On Being Alone" is a poem written on the benefits of loneliness. The poet presents both aspects of loneliness and proves that it is a mixture of both that makes one realise the importance of life. "A Sonnet" is another poem written on his wife:

> Visiting me from the heights of Heavens
> Where the Great Master had called her back
> To perform more pious duties than on the Earth. (lines 2-4)

Separation and union are the two sides of life that an individual faces in his/her life. The lessons learnt in separation are of great importance for the remaining life of an individual. We find such note in many of his poems in which "One to One" is

one of the finest examples in the collection. The poet is not happy leading his life alone, without his wife, the 'Guardian Angel':

> O, my Guardian Angel, I plead you
> To recommend my case in all earnest
> in the Eternal Court of the Master
> to bestow a little bit of merciful justice, ("One to One", 10-13)

He hopes to meet her "One to One in the Realm of Eternity" (24). "The Stars in Galaxy", "The Unfinished Task", "To My Heart's Desire" are also devoted to his wife.

The poem, "Life and Death" portrays vivid pictures of morally 'dead human beings', 'Brazen trophies, vain applause' and the 'Denial of the loved ones'. All these create a world of 'humiliating frustration' in which the 'modern men' flaunt as they are marred by materialism. Falling, and rising for falling have become their habit. The poem "Ungrateful World" has also the similar note. But the poet finds 'life in death', an echo of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". There is another poem on death - "An Ode to Death". In this poem, the poet has tried to revisit the Indian concept of death i.e. Shivam (beneficial) that relieves one from old age full of pain and suffering. He writes: "O blissful Death! / A balm to the suffering humanity / In this cut-throat competitive world" (1-3). The last three lines of this poem are very remarkable and emotional: "How I could wish to seek your / Caressing lap to lie down my head / And have the bliss of Eternal Sleep" (30-32).

Dr. Khandelwal believes in the philosophy of the *Gita* that action is more important in life. It is action that makes one's life heaven or hell. He has put this belief in the poem "God's Bounty". He escapes from exaggerating religious beliefs and particularly blind faith that generally one finds in society, not only in India but almost in all countries. What expressions one finds in his poems that come out from the poet's heart directly without far-fetched phrases.

"The Little Wren" is a very beautiful poem of sharp contrast. It begins with a 'kite' flying in the sky causing no jealousy in 'wren' unlike humans who are 'jealous', 'competitive' and think these negative values as 'their birthright'. They are unable to 'digest success even of a kin' and it has become habit of the modern people to rejoice in others' 'pain'. This naked truth of society is not acceptable by the poet. He believes in 'being too happy in thine happiness' (Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale"). For him 'Hope is the Sunrise':

Hope and trust
Are the sheet anchors
On which the citadel
Of positive existence rests. ("Hope is the Sunrise", 12-15)

He further writes in the same poem: "Those who don't embrace hope / Or hug faith, have nothing in life" (20-21). They are prone to take 'wrong decisions'. The poet compares hope with 'the water of Ganges'. It depends on an individual to be his/her own creator or destroyer.

His lofty thoughts, righteous actions and intentions
Make him strong and bring to him the blissful joy
("Creator and Destroyer", 3-4).

"A Prayer" is a beautiful poem, metaphysical in tone. It shows poet's spiritual consciousness. For him, introspection is 'the life blood' that transforms 'a brute' to a 'man' but he warns us about desires as "Human desires depress and cause sorrow" ("Of Desires" 13). He compares desires with "sharp-edged shafts that / keep the wounds forever open and green." ("Of Desires" 7-8).

The poem "Dream-Palace" signifies the changing nature of life. Sometimes 'hopes' overpower us and sometimes "There is another sight, quite disheartening" (8). Therefore, contentment is the best remedy: "Contentment is / God's greatest gift / It's a rare thing to achieve" ("Contentment", 1-3). Contentment makes one's life beautiful, if one perceives this way: "Life is not lived with a laden load / It's as light as is a rose, a perennial joy" ("The Beauty of Life" 1-2). There is no importance of sweetness without sadness. Both are essential to make one realise how to enjoy life successfully.

Sadness of life
Has its own music
The sweetness of which
Lightens the burden of
Thoughts too heavy on heart ("Song of Life", 11-15)

Through his poem "To Be Egocentric", the poet has bought to light the negative side of life as "Ego keeps you red-faced / Makes existence meaningless" (4-5). The poems on friendship are also remarkable. For the poet, "Friendship is a rare gem"

("Butchered Friendship", 1). But on the other hand treachery has become common in relationship these days. The poet does not escape from describing this veracity.

There are many other poems worth reading and enjoying. The fact is that a teacher-poet who after his experience of about four decades in higher education has produced this collection of poems that is without any more elaboration infused with so many good values that are equally useful for both young and old. This book deserves all applause. I am sure it will be well received by the poetry lovers.

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