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**BOOK REVIEW.** Kamla K. Kapur's *As a Fountain in a Garden*. Chandigarh, India: Tarang P, 2005. 62 Pages. (Paperback, \$6.59). ISBN 10: 8170103525.

*By Dr. Nilanshu Kumar Agarwal*

Percy Bysshe Shelley's expression, "Alas! I have nor hope nor health, / Nor peace within nor calm around," from "Stanzas Written in Dejection" displays the anxiety of his pain-stricken anguished heart. The same dark clouds of dismal despair hover round Kamla Kapur's celebrated anthology *As A Fountain In A Garden*, which is the elegiac tribute to her husband Donald Dean Powell, who committed suicide, leaving Kamla in the midst of 'pregnant emptiness' of the world. The poems in the collection were written over a period of four years after the suicide of Donald, who was disappointed for not finding a proper appreciation of his creative works.

Kamla's agony makes her cry in 'full-throated ease': "and left me/ here,/with this/ absence,/ this gift/ of grief". The poems are nostalgic about the past. The nostalgia of Kapur for her husband's activities is sure to wring the drops of tears from readers' eyes. 'Smoke and Ash' brings out this obsessive affection of the poet for the past experiences in quite a lyrical manner: "I tried to formulate you, know you, own you./But all I could do was take you/ into my heart, give you/ a home here." Such expressions will definitely touch the innermost chords of the receptive reader's heart.

In a way this collection of some thirty one poems from the pen of such a sensitive poetic voice, who lives half the year in the remote Kullu valley of India and the other half in California, has helped her in finding a release for her emotions of despair and pain. The poems are thus cathartic or therapeutic. The poetess confessed this to me in an interview:

I don't know how I would have survived the experience of my husband's suicide without processing it through poetry.... without the outlet of poetry I might have fossilized in my grief, or developed a chronic habit of sorrow or even bitterness, and certainly a debilitating regret and guilt.... The discipline of crafting a poem with patience and honesty gave me the perspective and the detachment to pursue a subject that was very painful for me. Making art in this sense is the highest spiritual activity of humans, for it takes one through and beyond suffering.

The collection exhibits that the language of the poems has come out spontaneously without any forced strain. There is hardly any touch of artificiality in them; she has coughed out her real emotions in these lyrics without the interference of any synthetic element.

After this emotional sojourn through her poems, the reader finally finds an artistic ‘Epilogue’, appended with the volume. Despite its self-explanatory nature, Epilogue is also written from the core within and can be called an ode in prose. For example, mark this lyrical utterance: “The realization that I was a survivor was accompanied by a deep disappointment in myself. I felt I had not loved Donald enough—how could I have? Here I was, still eating and breathing and writing. I felt I did not feel enough”. Payson R. Stevens in ‘Publisher’s Preface’ to the volume admires the book as “ a courageous work filled with profound wisdom and searing beauty”. The book is published well and is a veritable feast for any book lover on account of error-free printing and fascinating cover design along with its artistic and emotional content.

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