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Book Review of Dr. O.P. Arora's 'When You Walk Alone' by Dr. Dalip Khetarpal

Loneliness is a profound emotional state marked by feelings of isolation and disconnection from others, extending beyond physical solitude. It engenders a deep sense of emptiness and a yearning for meaningful connections, impacting individuals irrespective of their social circumstances. Despite the technological advancements enhancing connectivity, loneliness persists as a significant societal issue. Factors like

social isolation and a lack of genuine connections contribute to its prevalence, affecting both mental and physical well-being, including feelings of sadness and anxiety, and even impacting the immune system.

Addressing loneliness entails fostering genuine connections, nurturing supportive relationships, and engaging in activities that provide joy and fulfillment. Recognizing and addressing feelings of loneliness are crucial steps toward achieving emotional well-being and cultivating a sense of belonging in one's life.

In Arora's current anthology, various poems delve into the complexities of human nature and the environment. For instance, "Harmony" contrasts angelic qualities with darker human tendencies, emphasizing the importance of balance in life. "Human Spirit" celebrates resilience and the indomitable will to strive for freedom and justice. "Life is Thrilling" captures the essence of living with purpose and overcoming challenges. 'The Temple of Divine' symbolizes a profound connection to nature and the divine, while other poems in the anthology explore themes ranging from wielding power with compassion to the enduring struggle between conflicting forces in life.

Contextualizing the title of the anthology, 'When You Walk Alone', the poem, 'The Genius', p. 72, who likes to walk alone embodies the poet's solitary journey, diverging from the familiar paths trodden by the crowd. While others seek solace in companionship, he finds kinship in the elements, sharing laughter with clouds, winds, and rains. His gaze extends beyond the mundane, fixated on distant horizons, contemplating the mysteries of existence. Amidst the cacophony of shallow discourse, he remains reserved, offering pearls of wisdom beyond their comprehension. Immersed in perpetual exploration, his mind churns with the complexities of life, nature, and the cosmic order. Yet, his endeavors are met with ridicule and scorn—dismissed as the ramblings of a

troubled mind. Undeterred, he brushes off their insults, unwilling to waste his essence on futile debates. For the Genius, time is a precious commodity, better spent in the pursuit of enlightenment than in futile attempts to sway retarded minds. Again, the poem "You are Never Alone" p. 80, explores the theme of interconnectedness and the idea that one is never truly isolated from the world around him. The poet begins by describing a solitary walk, but soon realizes that he is accompanied by various elements of nature. The breeze whispers in their ears, the trees dance and flutter in apparent celebration of his presence, and even the clouds join in, offering a refreshing drizzle. Birds add to the lively atmosphere, flying joyfully and inviting their friends to join. The poem suggests that despite moments of solitude, there is always a sense of connection to the natural world. It conveys a comforting message that one's experiences, both joyful and sorrowful, are shared by the world around them. Critically examining the poem, one might argue that while the sentiment of interconnectedness is heartwarming, it may also present an idealized view of solitude. In reality, moments of loneliness can be profound and isolating, and the presence of nature, while comforting, may not always alleviate feelings of isolation. Additionally, the poem could be seen as anthropomorphizing nature, like P.B. Shelley, William Wordsworth, John Keats, etc., attributing human-like qualities to elements such as the breeze, trees, clouds, winds, and birds. While this personification serves to create a vivid and engaging scene, it may also, from one point of view, oversimplify the complexity of the natural world.

The first poem, "Harmony," p. 11, is a Shakespearean sonnet that beautifully explores the duality of human nature and its impact on both interpersonal relationships and the environment. It vividly contrasts the potential for angelic qualities, such as love and harmony, with the darker side of humanity, characterized by acrimony, greed, and violence. The poet skillfully weaves together themes of human behavior,

environmental responsibility, and the consequences of disharmony. The call for nurturing euphony and living in harmony with both man and nature adds a poignant touch, emphasizing the importance of balance for a fulfilling life. 'My Sapling' p.19, which is in the Villanelle form, the speaker reflects on the journey of nurturing a sapling planted on their birthday, which has now grown into a large tree. Despite feeling a loss of vitality, the tree's presence brings comfort and joy. The speaker cherishes moments with the tree, finding solace in its shade and support during lonely times. The tree's growth symbolizes renewal and the power of love and companionship to overcome challenges. In 'The Cloud' p. 16 (Burns' Stanza Sequence), the poet passionately laments humanity's tendency towards desecration and hatred, urging unity and respect for nature's gifts. It emphasizes the commonality among all people, regardless of differences in appearance or beliefs, and calls for the shared enjoyment of the abundance provided by nature. The poem advocates for living in harmony with nature's balance, rejecting greed, and embracing the divine melody of existence. Ultimately, the poem serves as a poignant commentary on the fragility of hope and the sobering reality of unmet expectations, urging readers to confront the harsh truths of their circumstances while still holding onto the possibility of growth and transformative power of nature which could be possible only if man respects, preserves and lives in harmony with it. 'To Man,' p. 17, (Burns' Stanza Sequence) also illustrates this idea: 'Nature, lavish/ Liberal, why desecration?/ Mother's rape, devilish'. Further, 'For all men, resources abound,/Like ocean, freedom too unbound,/Divine melody, feel the sound./Nature's balance,/The principle, live and astound,/No greed, just dance'. Both the poems have a touch of mysticism, connoting how the poet has evolved from the mundane to the sublime.

'Flying with the Clouds' p. 52, encapsulates the dualities of human experience, juxtaposing the serene beauty of nature

with the harsh realities of life. The imagery of hills, vales, and clouds evokes a sense of transcendence and freedom, as the speaker describes flying on the "clouds' tails" and being enraptured by the beauty of the landscape. However, this idyllic scene is disrupted by the intrusion of harsh realities. The barking dog from the nearby apartment serves as a jarring reminder of the mundane world, pulling the speaker back from their reverie. The abrupt transition from the sublime to the earthly is mirrored in the final lines, where the speaker is confronted with the stark challenges of life: a friend dying from cancer, financial troubles, and personal anxieties. Through this contrast, the poem explores the tension between escapism and reality, highlighting the fleeting nature of moments of transcendence and the persistent presence of life's struggles. Despite the allure of the natural world, the speaker ultimately finds himself back in the "dark" of reality, grappling with the complexities of existence.

The second poem, "Human Spirit", p. 12, that stresses the indomitable spirit of man is a Petrarchan Sonnet that applauds the strength of the human spirit in the face of challenges. The poet uses powerful imagery to depict the resilience of the human spirit, contrasting it with the fragility of empires and the mightiest creatures. The poem celebrates the indomitable will to fight for freedom and justice, suggesting that even in defeat, one's legacy and impact can transcend time. The comparison of the individual to a phoenix rising from the ashes adds a symbolic layer, portraying the enduring nature of the human spirit. The same indomitable spirit is displayed in 'Defying them', p. 40, wherein poet says, 'Defying implants, man has moved mountains/defying spirit has dug out depths of the deeps./Promethean will can upstage the demonic villains/Gandhian grit can surely his own destiny beep'. Sans idealizing the strength of the spirit of man, the poet keeps his grip tight on ground reality and boldly admits the dominance of evil over the good that has always been weak. In 'Humanity loses', p. 64, the poet says, 'Born in

violence, take to violence/bereft of beauty, love and essence.../They don't choose, your world chooses'/whoever wins, humanity loses...'

Dr. Arora's anthology showcases his unparalleled infusion of mysticism into poetry, challenging norms with revolutionary fervor. His practical mysticism focuses on attaining divine knowledge through nature. "Temple of Divine", p. 14, epitomizes this connection to nature, where each soul reflects divine essence. External rituals pale against the inner journey towards spiritual growth. "The Poet", p. 23, depicts the mystical awakening, where time halts, disturbances fade, and creativity flows freely, echoing ancient wisdom. "Avatar," p. 24, critiques the quest for external salvation, revealing the persistence of darkness. "The Sunset", p. 84, exalts the beauty of nature, capturing the speaker's awe as the sun bids farewell in a vibrant display of colors, evoking tranquility and wonder. Furthermore, there is a subtle sense of connection between the speaker and the sunset, as if they share a moment of mutual understanding and appreciation. The sun's smile, metaphorically depicted, suggests a sense of companionship or shared experience between the natural world and the observer. Critically examining the poem, one might appreciate its ability to evoke a sense of wonder and appreciation for nature's beauty. The vivid imagery and emotional depth invite readers to reflect on their own experiences of witnessing sunsets and the profound impact such moments can have on one's perspective. The depiction of the sunset as a divine experience is emotionally resonant and also breathes an air of mysticism.

"Mystical Prance", p. 95, offers a poetic depiction of a transformative experience that serves as a wake-up call from the divine. The speaker describes a passage through a cover of smoke, symbolizing a state of slumber or spiritual lethargy. However, amidst this haze, the speaker's soul perceives a mystical prance characterized by a faint, flickering green light.

This encounter is portrayed as magical and haunting, leading to a profound realization that shakes the speaker awake from his spiritual stupor. The poem suggests that this encounter is not merely an ordinary event but a direct intervention from the divine. The appearance of a heavenly glow and the sublime, dazzling halo of the Creator conveys a sense of awe and reverence. This encounter serves as a reminder of the presence and power of the divine in the world, prompting the speaker to reevaluate their perspective and priorities.

Critically examining the poem, one might appreciate its evocative imagery and spiritual themes, which invite readers to contemplate the mysteries of existence and the role of the divine in human life. The use of poetic language effectively conveys the sense of wonder and awe experienced by the speaker during their encounter with the mystical.

However, ordinary readers may find the poem's reliance on abstract and metaphorical language somewhat opaque, making it challenging to fully grasp the intended meaning. Additionally, the poem's brevity and lack of specific details about the mystical encounter may leave some readers craving a deeper exploration of the speaker's thoughts and emotions. But overall, "Mystical Prance" offers a poetic exploration of spiritual awakening and divine intervention, inviting readers to reflect on their own encounters with the transcendent and the transformative power of mystical experiences. These lines from 'The Eternal Flame' p. 93, also has a strong undercurrent of mysticism: 'In my new avatar, life at tranquil ease/Laughed at my old self, my soul in peace/The Eternal Flame, my divine guide/Love and Hope flew through my veins...'

In "I Wonder," p.22, the Dr. Arora reflects on the fleeting nature of life and questions the pursuit of worldly desires. He ponders why people chase material rewards, questioning if the ultimate prize is truly worth the sacrifices made. The poem contrasts the allure of superficial pleasures with the deeper, divine aspects of existence. His mystical sense encourages

introspection and suggests that true fulfillment lies beyond the pursuit of transient pleasures. "Moksha", p. 63, contemplates the concept of Moksha, or liberation from the cycle of birth and death in Hindu philosophy. The poet engages in a conversation with a sage, seeking understanding about how to attain Moksha. The sage's response is cryptic, yet profound. He suggests that Moksha is achieved not through conscious effort or action, but rather through the natural course of existence. He implies that death itself is the gateway to liberation, as it brings an end to all earthly pain and suffering. This idea challenges the poet's preconceptions, leaving him stunned and bewildered.

The sage's explanation aligns with the mystical Hindu belief in the cyclical nature of existence, where the soul undergoes repeated cycles of birth, death, and rebirth until it achieves Moksha and merges with the divine. By emphasizing the inevitability of death and the soul's ultimate return to its cosmic origins, the sage underscores the transient nature of worldly existence and the insignificance of individual desires and actions in the grand scheme of the universe.

The poet, with his feet deeply rooted in reality, struggles to appreciate the sage's message as it reflects the human tendency to seek control and understanding in the face of life's mysteries, particularly when confronting profound concepts like death and liberation. The poem invites readers to ponder the nature of existence and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, suggesting that Moksha may ultimately be attained through acceptance of the divine order and the recognition of one's interconnectedness with the cosmos.

In "Eternal Darkness", p. 51, Arora provides a critical analysis of the human condition, emphasizing the prevalence of ignorance and darkness in society. The poem suggests that many individuals are content to remain in a state of blindness, symbolized by oxen moving in circles, perpetually grinding away without true insight. This darkness is described as their

"divine light," indicating their rejection of true enlightenment and the embrace of ignorance. The poem warns against challenging this status quo, noting the risks of becoming a "teaser" who seeks to awaken others from their ignorance. Such actions, it suggests, are met with harsh backlash, including violence and persecution.

Arora highlights the stark contrast between light and dark, civilization and savagery, beauty and ugliness, and other polarities, underscoring the profound divide between enlightenment and ignorance. Despite the potential for transformation, the poem suggests that societal inertia often prevails, with individuals reverting to their comfortable darkness even after brief moments of illumination. Overall, "Eternal Darkness" serves as a critique of complacency and the reluctance to confront uncomfortable truths, portraying the struggle for enlightenment as both necessary and perilous. Though the poet has an innate mystical sense, he is alive to materialistic tendencies of the people for whom mysticism, though a necessity, is a distant dream and only its seamy side are often seen by them.

"Awesome Creation," P. 49, offers the evasive nature of enlightenment and spiritual fulfillment. The narrative follows Narada's encounter with God, who responds to Narada's perception of the world's sadness and despair. God offers to bring those yearning for heaven to a grand temple, where devotees pray for liberation from earthly suffering. However, when presented with the opportunity to ascend to heaven, the devotees are initially eager but soon become hesitant and bewildered. God then turns to the humble beggars, inviting them to experience the beauty of heaven, yet they remain reserved and solemn. Through this encounter, God showcases the complexity of human desire and perception, ultimately affirming the diversity of creation. The narrative serves as a reflection on the human condition and the elusive nature of spiritual fulfillment.

"Thus Spoke the Sparrow", p. 43, critically examines themes of fear, mortality, and the freedom of existence through the perspective of a sparrow. The sparrow urges the narrator to embrace life boldly, emphasizing the inevitability of both birth and death. The sparrow challenges the narrator's fear of death, suggesting that it is a natural part of life and not something to be feared. Instead, the sparrow encourages the narrator to live in the present moment, seizing the day without worrying about an uncertain future.

The poem delves into existential questions about the afterlife, with the sparrow musing on the possibility of the narrator becoming a sparrow in their next life. While the sparrow acknowledges its skepticism towards the transfer of souls, it posits that God has an infinite supply of souls and the ability to create new worlds. Through the sparrow's perspective, the poem highlights the freedom and simplicity of existence in nature. The sparrow revels in its ability to fly and its lack of material concerns, contrasting this with the narrator's confined and burdened existence. On the whole, the poem offers a critical reflection on the human condition, challenging notions of fear and mortality while celebrating the freedom and vitality found in the natural world.

"Celebrating Life", p. 46, explores the coexistence of joy and suffering through vivid imagery and poignant language. Initially advocating for a positive outlook on life, the poem juxtaposes this optimism with the grim realities of oppression and inequality. Through the portrayal of children fleeing from war and the depiction of individuals as victims of systemic injustice, the poem confronts readers with uncomfortable truths about the human condition. Ultimately, it presents a critique of societal inequality and challenges conventional notions of celebration and resilience in the face of pervasive suffering.

Dr. Arora, a genius in his own right, often inadvertently demonstrates intelligence, wisdom, mystical vision, foresight,

insightfulness, analytical skills, acumen, a universal outlook, liberal thinking, compassion, catholic sympathy, love, peace, and harmony for the betterment of humanity—while acknowledging the harsh realities, contradictions, chaos, dichotomies, societal pressures, existential dilemmas, moral quandaries, man's ferocious ego, all-pervasive warring elements, and life's formidable challenges. In "Ever on the Crossroads," p. 32, the poet contemplates the perpetual conflict between opposing forces in life, such as compassion versus compulsion and defiance versus submission. The poem evokes a sense of fatigue from life's hurdles, depicted as roadblocks and steep rocks. Yet, through metaphorical shedding of burdens and defiance of societal norms, the speaker discovers a newfound freedom and completeness. He embraces a liberated spirit that transcends earthly limitations, experiencing boundless possibilities and connection with the cosmos. In essence, the poem critically examines the internal and external struggles inherent in the universe and human existence, ultimately celebrating the liberation found in releasing societal expectations.

In a universal feature like "Pain", p. 33, the poet delves into the enduring bond between himself and pain as a constant companion, depicting pain as an ever-present force in human life. Despite attempts to avoid it, pain persists, relishing the suffering it causes. The speaker acknowledges its persistence but refuses to surrender, engaging in a relentless battle. The poem contemplates the inevitability of pain and the resilience needed to endure it, while also questioning the effectiveness of resistance. Ultimately, the poet chooses to confront pain, viewing it as a test of strength. Overall, "Pain" critically examines the complex relationship between suffering and resilience, emphasizing human endurance in adversity. "Sweetness" p. 35, critically examines the deceptive allure of various forms of sweetness, illustrating how they often lead to negative consequences. The poem warns that what initially appears charming and appealing can ultimately result in harm

or downfall. Through historical and mythical references, it portrays how figures like Solomon, Caesar, and Antony were lured by the sweetness of different temptations, only to face ruin. The overarching message suggests that sweetness, whether it be in the form of love, power, or beauty, has the potential to blind individuals to reality and lead them towards destruction. Overall, "Sweetness" offers a cautionary reflection on the seductive nature of certain pleasures and the dangers of succumbing to their allure.

"This Is Life", p. 36, encapsulates the journey of navigating through life's complexities using the metaphor of a maze. Initially, the protagonist approaches life with confidence, likening it to solving puzzles and riddles. However, as he delves deeper, he becomes overwhelmed by its intricacies and find himself trapped in a cycle of confusion and disillusionment. The desire to escape grows stronger, paralleling the longing of a bird in a cage. Seeking guidance, he turns to an angelic figure, hoping for clarity. The response he receives, that life itself is the maze, highlights the inevitability of its twists and turns. Ultimately, the poem portrays the inherent uncertainty and challenges of existence, suggesting that acceptance and understanding are a key to finding peace within life's labyrinthine paths.

"The Path," p. 37, delves into the complexities of individual journey and the societal pressures that influence them. The narrator reflects on his life's journey, characterized by struggle, passion, and the carving out of their own paths. Initially filled with pride and determination, he embarks on their journey with the expectation of smoothly gliding towards their goals. However, as he traverses miles and explores various paths, he finds himself at a standstill, nowhere closer to his destination. The narrator laments the absence of drummers, metaphorical figures who once boasted of their own paths and pressured others to follow suit. Now, these drummers are nowhere to be found, leaving the narrator lost

and seeking guidance. The disillusionment deepens as he realizes that even those who once seemed confident and authoritative in their paths are now lost themselves.

The poem critiques the societal pretensions and sermons that obscure the true goal of the individual journey. Each path appears as a baffling maze, with seekers drifting from one to another without clarity or direction. The narrator perceives a sense of mockery from the Creator, who seems to revel in the ignorance and confusion of humanity.

In contrast to the masses' contentment with conformity and mediocrity, the narrator stands as a symbol of enlightenment and evolution. He urges others to open their minds, rise above narrow boundaries, and confront the darkness that surrounds them though their efforts may be met with resistance and hostility from those entrenched in their comfort zones. Ultimately, "The Path" portrays the struggle of the individual against societal norms and expectations, highlighting the challenges of navigating one's own journey amidst the chaos and conformity of the world.

"Be Yourself", p. 39, acknowledges the inherent flaws and complexities of humanity. It highlights the deceptive nature of distance, which can obscure these imperfections and lead to misguided perceptions of others. The poem urges introspection and self-discovery as a means to truly understand oneself and reach new heights of personal growth and enlightenment.

In 'With Love and Compassion', Pg. 15, one witnesses the poetic form of Kyrielle, whose message emphasizes the importance of wielding power with love and compassion rather than with hatred or brutality. It warns against the consequences of abusing power, urging rulers to govern with empathy and understanding. The poem highlights the need to respect both humanity and the natural world, advocating for

the preservation of life and harmony through acts of kindness and compassion.

"Life is Thrilling," p. 13, is a Rondeau that captures the essence of living with vision and purpose. The poet draws inspiration from Richard Branson's pioneering spirit, emphasizing the thrill of pursuing one's dreams. The reference to Branson's accomplishments, such as the Miracle Garden, adds a concrete and uplifting dimension to the poem. The contrast between the darkness of the pandemic and the triumph of life, symbolized by the resilience of doctors and scientists, reinforces the theme of overcoming challenges. The repeated refrain, "Life is thrilling," echoes the optimistic tone and serves as a reminder of the excitement that comes with embracing life's journey.

"Let Life Flow", p. 29, advocates passive acceptance of life's challenges and injustices, suggesting that one should allow events to unfold without interference as one has no control over them. It portrays life as a mix of sweet nectar and poisonous blows, implying that even gods accept both. This indifference extends to the suffering and struggles of others, but this seems to promote detachment and apathy, overlooking the importance of empathy and compassion, as it were. This also seems to foster fatalism and may discourage addressing societal issues or promoting positive change, countering the poet's deep sense of love, concern, and compassion for the larger humanity and a desire to induce revolutionary changes in society. In "My Heart Poured Out," p. 31, the speaker's earnest emotional investment in giving love is met with varied and ultimately negative responses. This highlights the stark contrast between their innocent intentions and the reality of human nature, where ego and hatred overshadow kindness. The speaker's disillusionment with others' lack of empathy reflects a profound sense of alienation. Through metaphors like feasting on a tiger versus twisting faces at a dove, the poem emphasizes the disparity between

aggression and gentleness. Ultimately, the speaker retreats inward, feeling disillusioned and disgusted by their experiences, offering a critical examination of human relationships and the challenges of navigating a world where genuine love is often met with skepticism and rejection.

The poem "Celebrating Life" p. 50, presents a juxtaposition of contrasting themes – the celebration of life and the grim realities of suffering and oppression. Through vivid imagery and poignant language, the poem captures the essence of both joy and despair, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of existence.

At first glance, the poem appears to advocate a positive outlook on life, symbolized by Rishi's 'cheery fife' and the exhortation to 'Think positive, avoid all strife.' This initial portrayal suggests an idyllic state where happiness reigns supreme, and life is characterized by blissful contentment. However, this optimistic facade is quickly shattered by the stark depiction of children fleeing from the horrors of war. The imagery of 'struggling to run away from the shells' and the 'fear of death written on their faces' evokes a sense of profound suffering and anguish. The abrupt transition from celebration to confrontation with the harsh realities of life serves as a powerful rhetorical device, challenging the reader to confront uncomfortable truths. The juxtaposition of joy and sorrow underscores the fragility of human existence and the inherent contradictions within society. The poem forces us to question the validity of celebrating life in the face of pervasive suffering and injustice.

The speaker's poignant question, 'What is positive about life?' encapsulates the central dilemma posed by the poem. Despite the insistence on maintaining a positive attitude, the harsh realities of oppression and exploitation render such optimism hollow and superficial. The portrayal of individuals being treated as 'dirty rats' and 'door-mats' by the powerful

highlights the pervasive nature of systemic inequality and the dehumanizing effects of unchecked power dynamics.

In conclusion, the poem offers a poignant meditation on the complexities of the human experience. Through its evocative imagery and incisive critique of societal injustice, the poem challenges conventional notions of optimism and resilience. By confronting readers with uncomfortable truths it urges us to reevaluate our understanding of life and grapple with the inherent contradictions and injustices that define the human condition.

'Emptiness,' p. 59, reflects on the emptiness that pervades modern life, drawing parallels with the epic narrative of the Mahabharata. The narrator likens their existence to the intricate web of characters and conflicts within the Mahabharata, where identities and roles are fluid and subject to change.

The theme of masks and facades is central to the piece, as the narrator grapples with societal expectations to conform and hide their true self. Despite the pressure to wear a mask for survival, the narrator ironically points out the absurdity of masking oneself behind multiple layers of identity.

The pursuit of materialism and superficiality is critiqued through imagery of hollow hearts and shallow souls adorned with cosmetic enhancements. The contrast between external appearances and internal emptiness is stark, as individuals engage in superficial rituals and seek validation through external accolades.

The narrator's own emptiness is, ironically, laid bare, despite attempts to conceal it with material possessions and societal status symbols. Even as they participate in the superficialities of modern life, the narrator remains acutely aware of the hollowness beneath the surface.

The piece concludes with a reflection on the futility of worldly pursuits and the transient nature of human interactions.

Despite the exchange of empty pleasantries and promises, there is a sense of disillusionment as the narrator observes the emptiness that lingers in the aftermath of superficial encounters. Overall, the poem offers a scathing critique of contemporary society's preoccupation with appearances and materialism, urging readers to confront the emptiness that lies beneath the veneer of modern life.

'A Different Treat', p. 60, reflects on the stark contrast between experiencing victory and defeat, emphasizing how each outcome presents a distinct emotional "treat" for the individual. The narrator highlights the profound impact that success or failure can have on one's emotional state, suggesting that they are fundamentally different experiences that cannot be equated.

When victorious, the narrator describes a sense of exaltation and fulfillment, soaring high like a bird among the clouds. Success rejuvenates the spirit, allowing one to transcend barriers and embrace new opportunities with enthusiasm. In contrast, defeat leaves the narrator shattered and dispirited, struggling with feelings of inadequacy and disillusionment. The narrator rejects the notion that positive thinking or philosophical quotes can fully alleviate the pain of defeat, emphasizing the genuine anguish and frustration that accompany failure.

The prose captures the intense emotional turmoil of defeat, depicting a sense of hopelessness and isolation as the narrator grapples with their inner demons. Despite the efforts of well-wishers, the narrator feels as though the universe itself is conspiring against them, amplifying their feelings of despair and loneliness.

Overall, the piece offers a poignant exploration of the emotional highs and lows that accompany success and failure. It underscores the importance of acknowledging and

processing one's emotions authentically, rather than relying on superficial positivity to cope with adversity.

Bees Suck the Nectar 69 shows longing for the rosy future: 'I am now a bewildering shadow/but I am the glorious past/painful present, famished future too.../My region, sentimental sighs apart, no exception/woefully epitomizes human history since inception./Bees stormed wherever they smelt the flowery Eden/sucked the nectar, drained in full, left it barren.'

'O Life Please', p. 47, delineates most artistically, poetically, and holistically the infinitely complex and mysterious nature of woman in just a few words: 'But you, certainly, a tricky maze/ interesting, fascinating, tempting/ yet, very baffling, deftly deceiving/ the only opening, camouflaged/ hidden in a mystical, thick haze...' 'On the dotted line', p. 55, elucidates the bright and darker sides of history: if you scan the pages of history –/one side, so grand, so glorious,/ the other, so mean, so ugly...

"You Did Nothing," p. 73, which presents a moral dilemma, delves into the complexities of inaction and its consequences. The speaker grapples with the notion of atonement, questioning the necessity of punishment when he perceives himself as an angelic figure who has committed no wrongdoing. However, a deeper introspection reveals their culpability lies in his passivity, his failure to confront and combat evil. The poem paints a vivid picture of the insidious nature of evil, likening it to a formidable creature with multiple heads like the Hydra or far-reaching tentacles akin to an Octopus. In the absence of proactive goodness, evil is allowed to thrive unchecked, disrupting the natural order and defying divine benevolence.

The speaker's acknowledgment of their "unpardonable sin" lies not in any direct malevolence, but in their complacency, their failure to act as a counterbalance to the forces of

darkness. This inertia allows evil to flourish, causing suffering and desecrating all that is pure and sacred.

Through poignant imagery and introspective dialogue, "You Did Nothing" serves as a critique of the passive bystander, highlighting the moral imperative to actively oppose evil and uphold the principles of goodness. "Man or Dracula," p. 74, a satirical poem, presents a scathing critique of humanity's propensity for violence and bloodshed throughout history. The poem highlights the paradoxical nature of mankind's existence, juxtaposing the ideal of peace with the reality of incessant conflict and carnage. The reference to the insatiable hunger for blood since the dawn of humanity sets the tone for the poem's exploration of mankind's dark side. It condemns the pervasive presence of violence across different epochs and geographies, portraying it as a stain on human civilization.

Drawing from historical events such as the Mahabharata, the conquests of Alexander the Great, the Crusades, and modern conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Ukraine, the poem underscores the recurring pattern of aggression driven by greed, ego, and power. Each mention serves as a reminder of humanity's capacity for destruction, regardless of the era or context. By likening mankind to Dracula, a figure synonymous with bloodlust and malevolence, the poem suggests that humanity's actions are not merely flawed but inherently monstrous. The comparison implies that humans are even more reprehensible than the mythical vampires, as their atrocities are committed not out of necessity but out of choice.

Furthermore, the poem challenges notions of progress and enlightenment, arguing that despite advances in technology and ideology, humanity remains mired in a cycle of violence and brutality. It rejects excuses such as democracy or authoritarianism, asserting that every war is an act of barbarism regardless of its pretext.

In its indictment of mankind as worse than Dracula, the poem confronts the hypocrisy of lofty ideals juxtaposed with base instincts. It condemns humanity's penchant for war and domination, ultimately questioning whether the label of "man" truly applies to those who perpetuate such horrors.

"Joshimath", p. 85, is another piece of pungent satire on the greed and insatiate lust of man: 'Greed and lust of man, ever anti-Nature/Civilisations are sunk, time and again, no wonder...' "Man, Incurable," p. 89, offers a scathing critique of human behavior and its impact on the natural world, society, and individual well-being.

The poem begins by highlighting the destructive power of mankind, portraying how even a small action can have far-reaching consequences that disrupt the delicate balance of the planet. It delves into themes of arrogance and greed, depicting man's belief in his dominion over nature and his reckless exploitation of resources for personal gain. The pursuit of glamour, grandeur, and artificial pleasures is condemned as shallow and ultimately self-destructive. The poem critiques society's obsession with material wealth, status, and instant gratification, which often come at the expense of genuine human connection and spiritual fulfillment.

The fallibility of human nature is a central theme, with the speaker lamenting man's tendency to repeat the same mistakes despite promises of change and redemption. Despite facing the consequences of his actions, man remains trapped in a cycle of destructive behavior, unable or unwilling to break free from his own vices and desires. Critically examining the poem, one might appreciate its stark portrayal of the human condition and its unflinching critique of societal norms and values. The use of vivid imagery and poignant language effectively conveys the sense of disillusionment and despair felt by the speaker towards humanity's collective failings.

However, some readers may find the tone of the poem overly pessimistic or fatalistic, lacking nuance in its portrayal of human nature. While it highlights important issues such as environmental degradation and moral decay; it may risk oversimplifying complex societal problems and overlooking the potential for positive change. Overall, "Man, Incurable" serves as a powerful reminder of the consequences of unchecked human behavior and the urgent need for reflection, accountability, and action to address the pressing challenges facing our world today.

In 'The fiend of pain', p. 77, the poet imagines how pain is his constant companion, sneaking its way into his bedcovers as he nursed his wounds and guilt. What more does it seek? How can it be satisfied when his life has been nothing but a relentless struggle? It wrenches him, yet its thirst remains unquenched. Struggling to muster a smile, tears betraying no deceit, it offers his release from his suffering. In response, a bitter laugh escapes me. "How much time?" He inquires, already knowing the answer. "Three hours, at best," he replies, his tone heavy with resignation. "Well, that's enough time for a decent cup of coffee," I retort. "Would you join me?"

The poem "Man is Man," p. 79, the poet critically examines human behavior and its impact on the environment, society, and personal fulfillment.

The poem "Gloating over the Glitter" p. 83, provides a critical examination of humanity's tendency to prioritize material wealth and technological advancement over the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants.

Through vivid imagery, the poem depicts the distressing consequences of human actions on the environment and society. Scared leaves and teary trees personify nature's anguish as it suffers from the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. The mention of glaciers groaning

and global temperatures rising underscores the urgency of the climate crisis.

The poem also highlights the human toll of industrialization and modernization. Dark clouds of poisonous smoke symbolize the pollution generated by industrial activities, which not only harms the environment but also endangers human health. The reference to killer diseases and the deadly virus further emphasizes the devastating impact of human actions on public health. Additionally, the poem condemns the violence and destruction caused by warfare. Missiles and bombs turn cities into tombs, and innocent civilians, particularly women and children, become victims of conflict and strife. The imagery of stinking corpses serves as a haunting reminder of the human cost of war.

Overall, "Gloating over the Glitter" offers a scathing critique of humanity's obsession with material wealth and technological progress, which often comes at the expense of environmental sustainability, public health, and peace. The poem urges readers to reflect on the consequences of their actions and to prioritize the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants over short-term gains.

Dr. O.P. Arora has established himself as a prominent figure in the literary realm with eight poetry anthologies and seven remarkable novels (including two in Hindi) under his belt. Each of his works possesses captivating elements that resonate universally, leading to international recognition. His latest anthology, 'When You Walk Alone', exhibits a unique kaleidoscopic charm due to its expansive thematic breadth. The poet's brilliance shines through as he captures every real and every imaginable facet of human experience, thought, feeling, and emotion, evoking echoes of Shakespearean lines in the recesses of my mind:

‘The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to heaven; and as imagination

bodies forth the forms of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name...'

Dr. Dalip Khetarpal

Dr. Dalip worked as a Lecturer in English at Manchanda Delhi Public College, Delhi. He worked in various capacities, as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and HOD (English) in various academic institutes in Haryana.

He was a Dy. Registrar and Joint Director at the Directorate of Technical Education, Haryana, Chandigarh. Dr. Dalip has also started a new genre in the field of poetry, which he would like to call 'psycho-psychic flints'.

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