

Arabesque and Other Poems

Rosa Juju Abraham

ARABESQUE
And
Other Poems

*with Compliments
J. W.*

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Rosa Juju Abraham

Born in Trichur, daughter of Dr. C.T. Ouseph and Leela, Chirayath, Kannur, Dr. Rosa Juju Joseph alias Rosa Juju Abraham is a post-graduate in English Language and Literature with an M. Phil. in the same. Her doctoral thesis is on Indian English Women Poets. She is married to Mr. E.A. Abraham Panjikaran, Chartered Accountant, Alleppey.

ARABESQUE
And
Other Poems

ROSA JUJU ABRAHAM

To Appan,

Amma, Chettan

Raju

... things are not what we see
but what we perceive;
that is why,
I stood up;
put my sword in its sheath
and galloped away,
away to find pristine reality
- to imbibe what I want to believe,
whom I want to respect
and
how I want to live -
I am still
galloping, galloping, galloping...

guy

CONTENTS

Introduction - Dr. K. Ayyappa Panicker	11
Arabesque	15
Creation	16
Transmutation	17
Tight-rope Walk	18
I, Gaia	19
Culinary Musings	20
Grandmother	21
Transitory	22
Carcinoma	23
Gladiator	24
Aspiration	25
I See U	26
A Chronicle	27
Art of Listening	28
Burned Dreams	29
Tales Untold	30
Hiatus	31
An Indian Wife	32
Speculation	33
Masterpiece	34
Who Are We?	35
And They Lived –Ever After (Happily!)	36
At the Traffic Light	38
Expose Me Not	39
Memorabilia	40
Enigma	41
Crescendo	42

Trilogy	43
Marionette	
Shackles	
Empty Hull	
A Plea	46
Embarkation	47
Angst	48
Race	49
Sandwich	50
Champagne	51
The Attic	52
Fiftieth Anniversary	53
Conversation	54
Exposition	55
Predator	56
Reincarnation	57
Night Flight	58
Raga	59
Termination	60
Captive	61
Unleashed Passion	62
Pantomime	63
Can One I wondered...	64
Star-Gazer	65
Ephemeral	66
Interview with Tanika Rajeswari V	68

LITTLE WONDERS

Dr. K. Ayyappa Paniker

Juju Abraham's *Arabesque* is a collection of little literary wonders—short pieces expressing a wide variety of emotions, tensions and small rejoicings. The very first poem “Arabesque” begins with the word “pain,” striking one of the keynotes of this anthology, and ends with the phrase “in joy to resolve.” This may be taken to indicate the fact of pain and the possibility of joy. As one goes through the poems, one realizes that there is more of pain and agony and distrust in these poems than of hope and joy; yet, the poet tries to maintain a balance between the plus and minus experiences of life. One suspects that a clear note of feminism runs through some of these poems. “I, Gaia” may be read as an instance of this:

I am the “She”
 you are searching for
 call me White Goddess,
 Lilith, Demeter, Astarte or
 Gaia:
 I gushed forth from nothing,
 I gave you the earth.

.....

I create
 From the void
 I am woman
 who gave you man.

Perhaps “Aspiration” is more self-assertive, spoken with the plural “we.”

We are
 dishes lovely,
 cooking, cleaning, working,
 doing the dirty dishes,
 for three generations of men
 who loll
 in huge armchairs,
 their legs propped up on stools,
 reading newspapers, watching T.V.,
 talking seemingly dense matters,
 eyeing us
 like flies fallen into their hot soups.
 We, whom they wrap around
 and cast aside as the urge demands,
 are women
 aspiring to be men.

The possibility of rebirth and recovery is hinted at in poems like "Burned Dreams": when dreams are burnt to ashes, there still is a new awakening:

from the bottom of my heart arose
 aches and longings and hopes
 the dreams had begun again
 I melted
 and started to live once again.

There is occasionally a touch of irony to explain away the un-resolved and un-resolvable issues in life. The prose piece "And they lived ever after (happily!)" is an instance in point. Wonderful sketches and etchings abound in many poems. "Memorabilia" captures the ecstasy of getting wet in the rain. Juju becomes a little philosophical in some very short pieces like "Angst." The

authenticity of the experience is maintained with a strict control over language and rhythm. Even in a poem like “The Attic,” one may expect far too many things found in the attic to be mentioned, the author is very selective with details, yet she does not mince her words:

all hearts have dark attics
 where unsavoury thoughts are flung:
 fears, passions, hatred, littered
 thoughts
 where deaths of loved ones wished,
 where sexual fantasies loll
 where emotions snarl, spit and bare their teeth.

These words display a power not found in loose and elaborate descriptions. Here the language is precise and minimal. “Champagne” is another poem marked by terseness and intense suggestiveness.

My bottled up passions
 frothed and fizzled
 when your fingers uncorked me
 you then had your fill
 and left me,
 un-emptied, uncared,
 passion losing its tang
 a residue of bitter dregs
 vapid, frigid.

Variety, depth, intensity, authenticity are among the virtues of Juju’s poetry. Any number of poems may be selected from this slim volume to illustrate the brilliance of her craft.

ARABESQUE

Pain:

 makes the soul sing
and in full throated ease
 the melody begins.

And as each note
 falls in place
the symphony gently
 gathers pace.

Rippling down the hill
 like a rill

it nimbly gurgles
 the ache away.

O, music profound !
 the elixir divine,
in you let me dissolve
 in joy to resolve.

■

CREATION

Hush, wayward thoughts
 vying in vain,
 clamouring to exist
 without any constraint.
 Hush, wanton thoughts
 help me gently mould,
 for in you an image
 I precisely behold.
 Let me chisel and carve
 and exude in pain,
 and hold your living form
 in my arms once again.
 Hush, fleeting thoughts
 vying in vain,
 gently let me mould you
 and breathe a soul into you.


TRANSMUTATION

With the speed of a leopard
I swish past the jungle,
and as my spots vanish
I turn into a gazelle.
My doe-like eyes
drink in the sunset,
with the nostalgia of a bird
flying to roost.

Now I'm the wolf
baying at the moon,
green-eyeing the bats
that whirl past the skies,
into the inky blackness
of the night.

And then
the day bursts open
and I spring awake,
to don the garb of a man
totally fake.


Now, as I melt into the ocean of being,
I wander about aimlessly,
half-man, half- beast;
a creature incomplete.



TIGHT- ROPE WALK

He reeled off words,
twisted it intricately,
spun a yarn
and tied it taut.

Just for a moment,
her feelings balanced
precariously atop.
But soon,
tittering on this tight-rope
was her sanity.



I, GAIA

I am the "She"
 you are searching for,
 call me White Goddess¹,
 Lilith², Demeter³, Astarte⁴ or
 Gaia⁵:
 I gushed forth from nothing,
 I gave you the earth.

Search for me in the caves,
 plunge for me into the ocean, and
 I shall slowly surface
 like Aphrodite⁶.

I am the moon, the new spray of corn;
 I am myth, I am culture,
 I am destiny, I am the future.

I create
 from the void:
 I am woman
 who gave you man.

I am Gaia
 within you
 without you.

■

CULINARY MUSINGS

The moment I slice
into a voluptuous tomato,
and the passionate orange-red spills over,
I am fascinated
by the tiny orbs of vibrant life
leisurely oozing out.

Sly Flora!
you encase your progeny
in armours thick,
genetically commanding:
“go sprout at ease,
flower at will,
sustain.”

While I,
ever vulnerable,
a hanger-on
stuck into the lapels of domesticity,
wait,
for life to happen.

■

GRANDMOTHER

Tall tales, I felt, she never told
as she sweetly oiled my tangled tress,
twisting it into a magnificent braid.

Hers was the kind that smelled of native soil,
spicing my very senses
with appetizing aromas of
 myth and romance;
flavored thick with ancestral sagas,
brilliantly carving lineage into my pliable soul.

She was my Aesop and my Grimm,
my treasure trove -
but, I still cannot fathom,
as to why
everyone else considered her autistic!

■

Arabesque is Rosa Juju Abraham's first collection of poems. Her poems have been published in The Indian P.E.N., Kavvya Bharathi, Ijas and other literary magazines. Her



poems embark both on a need for adventure and anchorage, language a medium for exploration and settling down. She has also to her credit publications in various magazines comprising of poems, short stories, and articles. Her article 'The Pauline Epistles: A Precursor to Derrida's Deconstruction,' appeared in Littcrit: An Indian Response to Literature, Journal, December 2019 Issue.


"Variety, depth, intensity, authenticity are among the virtues of Juju's poetry. Any number of poems may be selected from this slim volume to illustrate the brilliance of her craft."

Dr. K. Ayyappa Paniker
from the Foreword



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