

REFLECTIONS ON ASIA PACIFIC
POETRY MEET 2015 IN VIETNAM
LIGHT OF THE WORLD TODAY



MOUSUMI GHOSH

AND

RAMESH CHANDRA MUKHOPADHYAYA

Published in the PDF

By

Dr. Mousumi Ghosh

Editor Platform

Flat A2, P-85 Kanungo Park,

PO Garia,

Calcutta 700 084

West Bengal, India

mousumi0607@gmail.com

***One should look straight into
the truth,***

Accurately assess the truth

And tell the truth

Satyameva Jayate

Foreword

Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya and Dr. Mousumi Ghosh two distinguished scholars from India visited Vietnam recently to attend Asia Pacific Poetry Meet 2015. They were in fact invited by the Vietnam Writers' Association at the third Conference on Vietnamese Literary Promotion in Hanoi March 2015. Before visiting Vietnam- a Communist country both of them had numerous questions in their mind. They were really not in the know how to interact with Vietnam-a different culture?

Nevertheless they could interact successfully not only with the people of Vietnam but also with those literary personalities visiting the fest from different parts of the world.

As soon as they came back from Vietnam they composed a book in Vietnam Unvisited Visited and Revisited. The book is basically a sequence of monologues of Ramesh and Mousumi. They share their experience in Vietnam with their readers. They record their reflections of Asia Pacific Poetry Meet

2015 in Vietnam which is but the light of the world today Light in their book. One may call the book as a memoir of Dr. Mousumi and Dr. Ramesh. They have reconstructed their dream of Vietnam unvisited after visiting the real Vietnam.

For them their journey to Vietnam is but a Pilgrim's Progress. They as if went for a Pilgrimage there.

They tried to record everything right from the first welcome in the airport of Hanoi then meeting poets listening to them sharing with them in their book religiously. I consider it as one of the valuable documents because it will facilitate the readers of India who know not much about the Vietnam which is passing through a new phase of *Doi Moi*.

Dr. Ramesh and Dr. Mousumi have rightly said that politicians create boundaries between man and man, literature destroys those boundaries. I believe this book will enhance the India Vietnam fraternity in the real sense of the term.

17.02.2016

Biplab Majee

Preface

The authors of this book, we, Ramesh and Mousumi, visited the Asia Pacific Poetry Festival 2015, held in Vietnam. It was an exciting experience. Hence the book. Our emotions and the information we acquired during the visit have been recollected in tranquility in this book. The famous Bengali poet Biplab Majee calls it a sequence of monologues of Ramesh and Mousumi. We are thankful to him for writing a foreword of the book. Here it should be noted that websites and Vietnamese Press have also popped up in course of our monologues. The authors hereby acknowledge their loan to Tham Luan (TL hereafter and Hunger for Peace (HP hereafter) as well as to the poets who gifted us their books at the Asia Pacific meet while writing this book.

Mousumi Ghosh

Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya

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VIETNAM UNVISITED

Mousumi

True that when Vietnam War was raging, I was perhaps a school student. But I knew that America was interfering with the internal affairs of a country. They stood in the way of the Vietnamese people deciding their own future. I still remember that my father showed me a magazine when I was in class I or II standard. There were pictures of wounded soldiers, crying babies. I now wonder why my father had shown the heart wrenching pictures to a child. May be to instill in the mind of his daughter the horrors of war and to reap the spirit of protest against imperialism.

Ramesh

In the middle of the sixties I was a college student. It was during this time that the communists were very popular among the students. They debunked the so called bourgeois education and burnt college libraries and laboratories. They made a travesty of the university examinations. Besides whoever did not sympathise with them was debunked by them as class enemy worthy to be killed. They were drawn to either Mao Tse Tung or Stalin. I did not like them. It

were they who gloried in the Vietnam War against America. Surely I also hated America. May be people do not enjoy anyone who dominates them. That could be one of the reasons why I did not like America. By the by, our communist friends have been silent about the conflict between Vietnam and China.

And I was all for any struggle against imperialism and colonialism. Our fore fathers also fought hard against the British Raj. So I felt a kinship with the freedom fighters of Vietnam. But I was also drawn to Vietnam and Indo China because once upon a time there were Hindu kingdoms in Vietnam and its neighbourhood. And because Indian culture which includes Buddhism and Hinduism were wide spread in the Far East including Indo China of which Vietnam was a significant part. Here it will be not out of place to point out that ancient India did not ever try to build an empire beyond the Indian subcontinent. And Hinduism does not advocate missionary activities. Despite that Champa which is now situated in Vietnam was under Indian influence in the past and I had a curiosity to learn whether some relics of the Indian influence still linger or not in Vietnam today.

But at the same time I had some doubts. Only one party the Vietnamese Fatherland Front led by the Communist Party of Vietnam rules Vietnam. We belong to a multi-party system. So I had the misgivings whether there is any freedom of speech in Vietnam and whether there is any individual liberty in Vietnam and whether there is freedom to follow a religious faith in Vietnam.

Besides, modern Vietnam had to fight her enemies for long forty years. And who enjoys to visit a place that is battered by war?

But I never thought of ever visiting Vietnam even in dreams. And accidents often take place. **Nandita Bhattacharyya** who works among the rural youth suddenly rang me and told me that her husband **Biplab Majee** wanted me and Mousumi to visit on the occasion of the Asia Pacific Poetry Festival to be held there during the Vietnamese New Year. It was a surprise to both of us. Biplab Majee is a leading poet of our generation. So he deserves to represent India at an international poetry meet. Besides, both of his parents sacrificed their whole life for the cause of communism. They fought for the cause of the oppressed peasants. Le Thanh Nghi observes in his

The Vietnamese Soul in the Poetry of Ho Chi Minh-
The poems in Prison Diary and the poetry of Ho Chi Minh in general are filled with a deep compassion for life. It is the love for the country love and compassion for its fellow inmates in the prison the compassion for a baby who had to follow her mother to prison... (Tham Luan Page 179). Biplab had to follow his revolutionary mother to prison when he was a mere baby. He was an avant garde communist poet during the sixties and seventies. So Biplab deserves to be selected for an international poetry meet. He is honest and a loving friend. It was at his instance that I rang Mousumi and I decided to go together with Mousumi to have a glimpse of the land of heroes and hear the great poets of our time from different lands. For us it was a great opportunity to visit Vietnam. Besides Mousumi's father was once upon a time a communist by faith and a poet too. With those who are genuine communists I think a visit to Vietnam is a pilgrimage. Myself though not a communist, with me also an offer to visit Vietnam was an opportunity to undertake a holy excursion. Mousumi also must be glad to get the chance to visit Vietnam. I rang Mousumi.

Mousumi

And on the 11 February 2015, I got the call from Ramesh, my teacher for participating in the International poetry festival of Vietnam whose object is to establish peace and prosperity. Vietnam Writers Association sent an invitation to us. I sent them a write up before my journey to Vietnam. The topic was An Economic Approach to Literature. Well, literature can dwell on anything ranging from the stars in the heavens to the pin point on earth. So no wonder that literature can also dwell on the most crucial economic issues that haunt the world.

And literature attracted me, a teacher of Economics to Vietnam.

Ramesh

And yes an invitation letter from Vietnam introduced Vietnam as the 'home of poetry'. I loved the expression. But I doubted its veracity. I thought that it was an instance of euphemism. Be that as it may we set out for our pilgrimage.

We Set Out For Pilgrimage

Mousumi

The first photograph which I took in my android as I noticed afterwards was of a sunrise at the

Subarnabhumi airport, Bangkok. Indeed a new dawn for me. After a few hours we reached the Noi Bai airport, Hanoi.

Ramesh

Yes the very name Suvarnabhumi speaks of Indian influence on the culture of Thailand. We Indians used to look upon Thailand and neighbouring areas as land of gold. Suphan Buri or Suvarnapuri or the city of gold is still there in Thailand. It was founded in the ninth century. It was situated in the state of Dwaravati in ancient times and kings named Bhagadatta Suryavikrama and Suryavarmanand the like reigned there. All these names are Indians.

We had to change our aircraft at Bangkok. We boarded on the aircraft bound for Noi Bai airport Hanoi. Presently we reached Noi Bai .The airhostess and the flight purser greeted us with folded hands just as we Indians do. That was a great relief. Because earlier I wondered how should we greet the strangers in Vietnam whom we wanted to befriend.

VIETNAM VISITED

Our Reception in Hanoi

Mousumi

Myself being a teacher, I have a penchant for bonding with the student community. The two young girls who came to receive us at the Noi Bai airport immediately stole my heart. They were so lovely and spontaneous. They are studying public relation. The international festival was an opportunity for these young students to communicate with people from different cultures, languages and having different interests. One of them had a fair knowledge about Indian food and Indian dance. She told me that her boyfriend is an Indian, from the state of Punjab. They accompanied us to the hotel lounge. At the lounge, there were many such young girls. I learnt that they were the volunteers and there were fifty in number who accompanied more than one hundred and fifty delegates from the forty three countries of the different corners of the world. I must say that these young people of Vietnam are assets of the country. Over the next eight days, they took care of our different requirements .They emitted a fresh energy which transformed all of us to be more

energetic. Indeed, every day we had to complete our breakfast within 7 am and get ready for the chores of programs continuously for the seven days.

At the lounge, a lady came forward and hugged us. She was **Madam Dao**. Her first words to me were - Oh, you are so young. Well, I think nearly everybody likes this sentence and I am no exception. Our friend Biplabda sent some token mementos for Ms Dao. They were the replica of the Bengal school of art, Kalighat Pata Chitra and paintings of a renowned artist from Bengal Jamini Roy. She gave us the programme schedule and quickly arranged our room. Madam Dao was a strict disciplinarian .She speaks less and works more. No one missed her attention. On the first day she joined us at the lunch so that we feel comfortable.

The dining hall was filled with poets and other people connected to literature. They came from different countries. On the first day however, the majority were neighbours of Vietnam. They hailed from countries like Thailand, China, Japan and Laos. Sir and me visited every table. Sir tried to start a conversation with every group discussing with them the history of their countries. They naturally liked it. Though many

of the participants were not comfortable in speaking English, but the difficulty was overcome with their hearty smile and the eagerness to communicate. I realised the importance of nonverbal communication at an international meet.

Ramesh

India was ruled by the British people for two hundred years. Macaulay dreamt that the Indians would be converted into Black English men. 5 per cent of our men and 3% of our women speak fluent English. Total English speakers in India amount to 125,226,449 according to a survey in 2005. The constitution of India posits that speeches in the parliament could be delivered in English as well as in Hindi. Hindi is the lingua franca of India. Official correspondences could be legitimately done in English side by side with Hindi. And there is a myth that English is a global language. But on our visit to Vietnam the myth simply exploded. Very few people from Vietnam can continue their conversation in English. Unlike us they were ruled by the French for long. So the educated people of Vietnam, some five per cent of them, know French. (Are the people who emulate their foreign rulers educated?) Often, in Vietnam, they do their higher

studies in French. Besides they know Chinese and Russian as well. Of course right now English is replacing French language and it is obligatory to read English in schools as the second language. Sorry we do not know any foreign language other than English. But we had no difficulty in making friends. Body language or nonverbal language can also help in befriending strangers. And we met the poets from strange shores at the dinner hall.

It was singularly interesting to me to learn that many of the young girls were learning Public Relation. I guess that this is the consequence of Doi Moi. The Communist Party of Vietnam, determined to better the economic condition, introduced Doi Moi and allowed a market oriented economy to meet the country's development needs. With the advent of the free market economy there is always the exigency of public relations. Public relation has to be studied when there is a dysfunction in the mutual relationship among our neighbours.

Collective Literary Journey begins

Mousumi

During the lunch there were many kinds of food and drink. Especially there were different types of non-vegetarian dishes laced with different sauces. Since my teacher is a vegetarian, we opted for vegetarian dishes. There were different types of mushroom and tofu items. The mushrooms were tasty. The finger chips were also delicious. There were soups. Rice is a popular cereal. The Vietnamese people as well as most of the delegates from the South East Asian countries use chopsticks. Pornpen, the Thai poet and later Jami Procter an American poet taught me how to hold a pair of chopsticks. However, I think I need more training on the subject.

We met **Pornpen Hantrakool** the very first day. She with her calm personality, big stylish hat and a stick can be noticed even in a crowd. She gave my teacher her book, a collection of poems-Springs and Autumns speeding through Time. I read it on the very next day. It is a collection of rich philosophical thought. A poem entitled People and Peace ends with the line -With too much happiness, there is no peace for people any more. I told her that I liked the poems. And, after a

week before our departure she presented me another copy of the book with her handwritten note – To Mousumi with love. And what is peace? To me, it is this love. Poet Pornpen has realised the difference between happiness and peace. Pornpen introduced us to the renowned Poet of Vietnam Mai Van Phan. She has translated many of his poems from Vietnamese to English.

Mai Van Phan is a very humble and loving person. He gifted us his book of verses Hidden Face Flower . And the next day, he came along with his teenage daughter and two huge bags full with his creations. He gifted many of his poem collections to the poets from the different countries. My teacher told him on the very first day that he would explicate a few poems by Mai Van Phan . And that was the beginning of a collective thought process. A poem written in Vietnamese language is definitely rooted in its culture and tradition. When it was translated into English by a Thai poet, I think it transformed the Vietnamese poems into a new creation with a value added to the thought of its first creator. And when my teacher started to explicate his poems, those poems became a fountainhead of comparative literature study. The

lunch session of the very first day thus turned to be a significant one, the beginning of a collective literary journey.

Next day onwards a chain of programs started with breaks for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Introduction with More Poets

Ramesh

During the Asia Pacific poetry festival in Vietnam in the year 2012 poet delegates from twenty five countries assembled. This time poet representatives from forty three countries turned up in Vietnam. There were approximately one hundred and fifty poets and editors in all. And it was indeed a big and significant gathering. We met a number of poets, writers and journalists from America. This is significant. Despite the fact that it were the Americans who had let loose hell upon Vietnam and despite the fact that the ravages of the war and the My Lai massacre are still fresh in our minds even after fifty years since peace were established between Vietnam and America, Americans as it seemed to me are very much welcome in Vietnam. And curiously enough quite a number of Americans such as Kevin or Martha are used to frequent Vietnam through the decades. It is

said that quite a few Americans had sympathized with the cause of Vietnam against America. Yes at least 500 women children and the elderly in the hamlet My Lai were brutally killed by the American soldiers in 1968. When the news was spread Americans were divided in their opinions as to America's presence in Vietnam. In 1967 the Russell Tribunal was set up. It found America and its armed forces guilty of bombardment on the civilians on the villages, on the pagodas and ancient monuments etc. in Vietnam. In his book **American Power and the New Mandarins** Chomsky condemned America for warring against Vietnam. He forecast in unequivocal terms that the Vietcong would win the war and many of the Americans who supported Vietnam's resistance war are always in touch with America since the war broke out. **Mr Kevin** is famous as a translator of Vietnamese poetry in English and he was greeted and congratulated over and over again during the festival. By the by, at the dinner table we met a novelist from Boston that reminded us of the Boston Tea Party. Curiously enough we expected that he might tell us of cubist poetry or concrete poetry or computer poetry ,

but to our utter dismay he seemed to be all for classics such as Whitman and Dickinson.

The festival witnessed really a very large gathering of the poets from the different parts of the globe. We met a Japanese young lady who is a poet and a painter in one.

We met a young lady doing her Ph.D. with a university in Yunnan China. She told the present author that the Chinese women are at par with men in every walk of life in China. But I must confess that in India the women are not on the same footing with men. There was another lady from China who distributed a journal embodying Chinese literature.

There were poets from Mongolia. They looked gorgeous in their national attire. A young lady who speaks competent English introduced herself as a poet and a Shaman. Her name is **Delgermaa Ganbat**. She is autobiographical in the following lines-

Sought Freedom, Couldn't find.
Caught in control, Couldn't get apart.
Ran from parents, Couldn't escape.
Searched for vacant land, Couldn't reach.

The above lines speak of her quest for freedom. And they will find an echo in every youthful heart throughout the globe. But the lady Delgermaa Ganbat whom I met the day before our departure in Hanoi seemed to me spiritually quite advanced. It was drizzling when I first encountered her. At the same time a hazy brightness of the morning sun was being diffused all over. She has wide exposure. It seemed that she knows Pali language. She has a little Sanskrit too. She seemed to be a devotee of Buddhism, Shamanism and the cult of the blue sky. In fact Buddhism went to Tibet from India. And it was Tibet which spread Vajrayana Buddhism to Mongolia. Dalai Lama is greatly revered in Mongolia. She told me that Genghis Khan was tolerant to other religions. She told me about the magnanimity and greatness of Genghis Khan and I had to agree with her after a moment's reflection. Later she presented me a valuable anthology of Mongolian poetry.

And also we met a poet from Iraq who told the assembly that while he was reading poetry in Vietnam, some of his close friends might be killed in Iraq. Iraq is undergoing a civil strife.

We met two poets from Pakistan. They are Muslims. One of them told us that instead of worshipping Hajrat Muhammad they had better worship Lord Rama because culturally they are the kins of Indians. Islamic culture is alien to them. Another Pakistani poet condemned the killings of the children in a school in Pakistan by the terrorists.

Well Lord Rama is quite popular in the Far East. Pornpen Hantrakool, a poet and a professor of history is quite familiar with Ramakien which is the national epic of Thailand. Pornpen seemed to have smattering in Sanskrit. Besides whether Buddhist or not, the exhortation of Lord Buddha are quite alive in the regions of Far East such as Vietnam and Thailand. There are Buddhist shrines in Vietnam. And we know how Vietnamese monks went through self-immolation to rescue Vietnam from war. All these made it evident before us that Indian culture is not altogether alien to the cultures of Far East. And one wonders why India does not have rapport with these countries on the economic level.

Also there were poets from Turkey and Uzbekistan. The poet from Turkey teaches French in Turkey and

is fluent in French. There was a poet from Egypt. He was accompanied by his wife.

We met **A'zam Obidov**, a bright young poet from Uzbekistan. One of his poems entitled Difference published in the Facebook asks us to open our mind and heart wider for change. To get an award is not the be all and end all of a poet. A'zam Obidov presented me a beautiful cap. But I could not keep my words with him in Hanoi and I repent for that.

How many Vietnamese people claim that they have a religion is a moot point. But believe it or not fifty thousand people approximately claim that they are the worshippers of Lord Shiva. They are Hindus. We read in history that Hindu kingdoms existed in the Far East but we could not dream that we would ever meet Vietnamese people who are Hindus even today and who hold on to their myths and traditions. A poet named **Inrasara** is from Cham district of Vietnam. Cham speaks of the ancient Hindu state Champa which lasted till 1832. And yes the poet Inrasara is proud to speak about the bygone glories of Champa. His poems are charged with a wistful love for the bygone glories of Hindu civilization. He is very much a Hindu dwelling on Cham folk culture and folklore. The

presence of Inrasara amidst the milky way of the poets assembled from different parts of the globe shows that Vietnam though an avowed communist country has granted freedom to a large extent at least in this sphere of religion.

The poets and writers assembled in Vietnam from different parts of the world were all for peace because the Vietnamese Writers Association organized the festival of poetry for the sake of disseminating the message of peace and the Vietnamese government stoutly supported the Vietnamese Writers Association on this issue.

Mousumi

The majority of the participants were from the countries of South East and Central Asia and there seemed to be a cultural integration among us. And if we go through the pages of history, my observation gets strong support. During the first few centuries AD, India maintained a rich cultural as well as economic relations with these countries- Annam, Shyam, China, Burma, Champa and others. There were exchanges of religious and cultural ideas. Economic integration was the natural outcome.

Ramesh

In fact economic necessity has not been always the driving force of history. There are nomads who live on fruits and roots collected in the woods. They do not labour for more than three hours a day. Although some of them know the art of agriculture, they do not opt for it. They say that when there is abundance and abandon in nature why should they work hard? And often spiritual quest has brought one nation to another. Give and take in the economic field followed suit.

Hanoi and Calcutta

Mousumi

During my stay in Vietnam, I never felt that I was a stranger there. Not only the continuous flow of traffic on the city roads but also the roadside eateries with young communities specially flocking are alike the different scenes of Calcutta India, I found a deeper similarity of Calcutta with Hanoi.

Ramesh

By the by Hanoi and Calcutta are different. True that Hanoi is on the banks of Red River and Calcutta is on

the Ganges- the saffron river. But there were three villages only in the 17th century where Calcutta is situated now. East India Company set up a fort here after 1690 and gradually it grew into a city and it remained the capital of India till 1911. On the contrary Hanoi has been the political centre of Vietnam since 1010 AD till date with some discontinuities. The population density in the urban area of Hanoi is sometimes no less than that of Calcutta . Despite that Hanoi seemed to be very clean. That suggests that the inhabitants of Hanoi have innate habit of cleanliness perhaps. We Indians claim that since our population is vast and people from far and wide in the country throng in the cities like Calcutta, they are dirty. But compare Calcutta with Tokyo. The population of Tokyo far exceeds that of Calcutta. Despite that one can see his face reflected in the streets of Tokyo. The streets are so clean.

Of course the poet **Mai Van Phan** observes

Garbage on the strand

Floats faster than

The water's current

Hanoi itself no wonder is often a protagonist or a character in Vietnamese literature. **BichThu** observes-

Generally those who write about Hanoi focus on its beauties of yore- the beauty of Hanoi's small alleys and small streets. They usually cast their longing look back to the Hanoi of the past and compare the same with the Hanoi of the present. They seem to lament over the fade away glory of the old city's elegance in the process of urbanisation in a developing country. But is it not inevitable in the world today and must we not accept it? Bich Thu observes that the people of Thang Long (ancient name of Hanoi) of thousand years of civilisation are slowly dissolving (TL).

Tuyet Nga writes

Hanoi 95

Wrinkled old memory

wearing a pink dress today she is 17

high way she flies as a flame

quite small heels where is our ancient town?

Surely though change is inevitable we feel sad when the image of a once upon a time great city is distorted. We cannot help it. By the by since 2011, Calcutta is undergoing a facelift with flyovers, skyscrapers, renovation of the parks and the like. I was brought up at Calcutta. But right now often I

cannot recognise my city. With Laforgue and Baudlaire Paris was a veritable hell. And London with T.S. Elliot was an instance of the Waste Land.

The fragment of the city of Hanoi that we witnessed was definitely the posh area of the city. There were ceaseless flows of two wheelers in Hanoi from dawn to dusk. Even in the night the traffic was no less. Buses were rare. And traffic jams are as frequent in Hanoi as in Calcutta. But no poet from Bengal could describe traffic on the city streets the way Mai Van Phan describes the same.

An evening

A rat and I

Rush across a road

There were roadside food stalls or restaurants. And of course shops abounded in that area. The built space had residences behind the shops. It was interrupted by small lanes. They lead inside the bhulbhulaiya or labyrinth consisting of shops and residential houses that pose an enigma to a stranger. True that the traffic jams, mounds of garbage here and there, network of lanes wide and narrow, roadside tea stalls and food stalls are familiar spectacles in Calcutta. But this is not all. The

pomellos, jackfruits, guavas, bananas, pineapples, watermelons, litchis and the like are native to Vietnam as they are native to our Bengal. **HuuThinh's** Into Autumn opens with

Suddenly the scent of guava

Wafting on the cool dry wind

only to remind a Bengalee as it were that he/she is not far away from his/her home.

Mousumi

On the first evening with other two lady delegates Pornpen and Rati, I went to a leisurely walk in the neighbourhood of the hotel. It was drizzling. Later Dominique, the French artist who became our close friend told me that In Vietnam, the cloudy weather sometimes persists continuously for three to four months. I will say more about **Domnique (Dom), Pornpen, Rati** and other delegates afterwards. The street in front of our hotel was decorated with colourful lights. Gates were built and on the top of those gates, there were big logos of the Communist Party – hammer, sickle and star made with chains of light. Many shops were also decorated. It was just after the TET festival, we had been to Vietnam. The air was still filled with the essence of the festivity.

There was a ceaseless flow of traffic. Two wheelers were more on the road. There were footpaths and hawkers. A lady was selling different types of flowers in a cycle / mobile van. It was a lovely sight and I wanted to click it. But, the lady it seemed tried to hide behind the long flower sticks. We entered a shop. There were different types of dry fruits there. Rati wanted to purchase some of them. The sellers were glad to accept dollars. There were two to three banks in that area and ATM counters were also there. One could get dollars from these counters.

The Poet **Tran Quan Quy**, a close friend of Biplab Majee came to meet us in the next afternoon. Tran was an organiser of the First Asia Pacific Poetry festival here. Tran took us to a very beautiful lake side café. We went there in a taxi. It was a memorable experience for me. It was drizzling lightly. The environment turned somewhat misty. The lakeside café was full with young people, families enjoying the scenic beauty of the lake accompanied with awesome pastries and other delicacies with Vietnamese coffee on the Sunday evening. We were accompanied by other two poets **Huy Mau Le** and Pornpen. There is a well maintained lakeside garden along the street. I

took a few snaps of the road, the people enjoying the Sunday evening with their close ones. Many people also requested me to give a pose for the camera. This was because I was in my national attire Sari. Interesting .One lady, she was selling some stock , said that she guessed that I am an Indian. This was because when she approached me for purchasing, I moved my head to and fro from left to right to say no without uttering any word. She then told me that Indians love to say yes or no by moving their heads. Thus, it seemed to me that how significant is body language. India is a very large country with an area of 3, 287, 590 square kms with 1.28 billion population. Indian Constitution recognises 22 languages as the scheduled languages. However, a common citizen of Vietnam recognised me as an Indian by observing my nonverbal mode of communication.

Later one day Dom invited Sir and me to accompany her for visiting some places in the city. It was noon. May be it was the tiffin time in the offices. The road side food stalls were very busy with their business. It was a lovely sight. The people mostly in casual dresses were sitting on small stools and the food mainly snacks were served on another small stool in

front of each of them. I took a snap. Most of the young persons were more interested in surfing their mobile than the food. Beside the footpaths, there were rows of scooters parked. The streets were full of life and quite colourful. I also took a snap of a female hawker carrying her products in two baskets which were swinging from two ropes hanging from a stick horizontally lying on her shoulder. There was also a big hat in her basket. She was wearing a trouser and a full sleeve shirt with a very smart outlook. I also took a snap of a vehicle, a non-motorised transport which looks like a perambulator. It is bigger in size than a perambulator and looks like our rickshaw and more colourful.

Ramesh

There is the rub. It is the ego of a person that should be recognised. An Indian is happy when he/she is recognised as an Indian. Ha Ha! And of course a Vietnamese will be happy if he or she is recognised as Vietnamese. And indeed it is through differences that the creation exists and a truly peaceful society must be built on tolerance of the difference among things and thoughts in the existence.

Hanoi

Now one of the distinguishing features of Hanoi is that it is a city of lakes. Each lake is associated with a legend. I do not remember the name of the lake we visited. But possibly it was HoanKiem Lake in the Old Quarter. Approximately seven hundred years back the Chinese army attacked Vietnam and almost conquered her. The great patriot and leader Le Loy took shelter in the woods and hills. In the meantime a fisherman while fishing found a blade and Le Loy came by it. It was the blade of a sword. But it had no hilt. If there were a hilt it would be a great sword. And lo! There was a hilt .It was found in a banyan tree. The blade perfectly fitted in the hilt. And Le Loy fought the Chinese with that magic sword that reminds one of King Arthurs Excalibur. The Chinese aggressors were defeated and driven out from Vietnam. Now one day king Le loy was boating on the green waters of the lake. Lotuses were abloom in the lake. A tortoise showed up and told the king that the magic sword that was in possession of Le Loy should be surrendered to the tortoise. The tortoise recounted how out of love for Vietnam the serpent god who lives at the bottom of the lake gave the magic sword. Now that the enemies

took to their heels and Vietnam was out of danger the magic sword should go back to the serpent god. The tortoise will carry that to the serpent god. The king bowed to the tortoise in all humility and gave away the sword to him.

This legend is very significant. The Vietnamese people believe that whenever Vietnam's independence is at stake, divine powers back up the people of Vietnam. But mark you Vietnam never glories in wars. Vietnam is all for peace. Hence the anthology of Vietnamese war poems published by the Writers Association is entitled Hunger for Peace. Vietnam fights only when fight she must. During times of peace there should be disarmament .Le Loy gave away the sword merrily.

We Indians also worship snakes. We look upon the tortoise as the incarnation of one of the major gods.

Tran QuangQuy is one of the office holders of the publishing house of Vietnam Writers Association. We could not talk to each other much because he is not adept in English and because I do not know any other foreign language except English. But we have read his poems translated into English. They are outstanding. He has stepped aside from conventional

imagery. Dawns are not all poetry in his world. With the women who carry anxious harvests on their shoulders from the village to the city

there are a scrap iron sunrise
and a refuse dump sunset.

Tuyet Nga puts Tran in the group of poets who have renovated and liberated poetic form and renewed the language in many different ways (TL page 173). In other words, there is nothing absolutely beautiful. It is the mind that distinguishes the beautiful from the ugly. And the mind is dependent on the economic condition. Thus Tran appears to be a confirmed materialist and anti-romantic. With us he reminds of the modernist poetry of T.S Eliot who mingles the sublime with the trifle. Eliot measures life with coffee spoons

Though an iconoclast at heart his personality is very soothing and pleasing. It seems that he is always a very good friend with anyone. Anyone can find shelter in him.

The coffee and the sweets that Tran offered us at the lake side were wonderful, especially the sweets. They reminded us of Bengali sweets. They were absolutely like some sweets found in Bengal. In fact identical

sweets in two cultures prove that the two cultures are on equal standing. Despite the fact that our languages are different our cultures are on the same level. We - me a Bengali and Tran a Vietnamese are brothers. Levi Strauss will defend my statement.

You do not get sweets in five star hotels. Besides a five star hotel offers you all the different dishes at a time. There is no syntax in a dinner at five star hotels. The authentic food of any country must be found in roadside restaurants.

Mousumi

May be, later on the day when we visited the Museum while we were eating variety of foods. There was coffee as well as fruits like banana, watermelon etc. I chose coffee. Someone told me that the bananas were awesome. I hesitated whether my stomach would permit these bizarre combinations at the same time. Chutima from Thailand assured me that Asian stomachs are so strong that they could sustain anything. For the first time in my life, I have become aware of my Asian identity and Asian stomach.

TET

Ramesh

Well, we became aware of our Asian stomach during Tet festival. Tet means feast of the first morning of the first day of the New Year. Vietnamese New year is based on Chinese lunisolar calendar. In India however different calendars are there in different cultures and no New Year Day is observed by the whole country unless it is the first day of an year according to Gregorian calendar. In Indian cultures the different New Years however are not observed with such grandeur and festivity. Traditionally celebration of this Tet festival continues for a week.

Mai Van Phan observes

A New Year's Eve

The Earth

An illuminating candle

But with the people of Vietnam, New Year or Tet does not mean ringing out the old and ringing in the new.

Mai Van Phan tells us

Spring soaked in the soil

Digging the soil down

Found the whole old year round

English Language

Contrary to our expectation most of the poets from the different lands especially the Vietnamese poets do not communicate in English. But it was evident from their smatterings in English that they have wide knowledge and learning. This they did in vernacular. It is a pity that we Bengali people from India still cling to colonial heritage and we had to do our higher studies in English only. Despite this fact many of these Vietnamese poets that we met have their children either being schooled or colleged in England. Our visit to Vietnam has however proved that English is not yet a global language. By the by, the more the English language globalises the world the more it will be globalised under the impact of different cultures and languages.

The poets We Met Second Day

Mousumi

We saw more new faces during the lunch time next day. There was a special table for us with the placard vegetarian. And there we met Indra Wussow, the

Latvian lady from South Africa and her friend, the South African dancer. Indra is a strict vegan.

Ramesh

I was thrilled to hear the name Indra. A Latvian lady with the Indian name Indra. And how come that she stays in South Africa? Well, Latvia was captured by Soviet Russia in 1944. Consequently 160000 Latvians fled to Germany and Sweden. In 1949 40000 Latvian rural people and Latvian patriots were sent to Siberia. Some 120000 Latvians were put to jail. By 1959, 400000 people from different parts of Soviet Russia migrated to Latvia. Thus the existence of the Latvians in their motherland was in jeopardy. It was during this time that the little child and her parents migrated to Germany. Indra's story reminds one of Stalin's cruelty. But who wants to retrieve sorrows by digging the heart or history? Interestingly enough many of the words in Latvian language are similar to Sanskrit words. And the name Indra is an instance, Indra is the name of the king of Hindu gods. Well, Latvians seem to take pride in their link with Sanskrit language. Our IndraWussow who is one of them is a vegan. A vegan is one who takes only plant based

diet. There are many vegetarians in India but they take milk. A vegan does not take milk even.

Mousumi

On the second day evening there was a dinner party .It was the induction ceremony. There were a number of red-white buses which took us to the venue. A group mind had begun to develop among the invitees. Sir and me made it a point to keep away from each other. Each of us should sit with different people so that we get the opportunity to talk to more people. We were given a red carpet welcome by the organisers. The President of the Vietnam Writers Association **Poet HuuThinh** and the other organising heads received us with great warmth. The Vietnamese girls in their traditional attire and with their smiling faces gave us a hearty welcome. There was a stage where the artists, all of them were women, were playing different instruments. Some of those instruments were not familiar to me.The music was soothing and the artists were all very beautiful. It was a feast for both the eye and the ear.

There were so many types of food that it reminded me of Chhappanno Bhog of the Lord Jagannath.

Chhappannobhog or a platter consisting of fifty six

items of food was a special platter for Indian God Lord Jagannath viz.the Lord of the multiverse. However, the Vietnamese dishes were mainly non vegetarian though there were some vegetarian items. There were also different types of wines. We sat at a table where we enjoyed conversations with poets from Japan, South Africa and Turkey. **Indra Wussow** and her friend, Turkish poet the beautiful **Musser** , Japanese poet **Morri koi** all of us sat together . Morri Koi is also a painter. She gifted me her book. It was an enjoyable party. Here we also met the two Pakistani poets **Akash** and **Rasid**. They preferred to talk to us in Urdu. We the delegates from the two neighbour countries got the opportunity to meet each other in Vietnam.

Ramesh

Yes Mori Koi is a poet with difference.

Let us quote a poem composed by her:

As far as the eye can see
If one looks for a painfully long time
Over there one hundred million of light years away
There is A star that has already perished
Soaked in the night mist.
Being here at this moment is a thing of beauty

In the image of empty space
Yesterday and today There is nothing to link the two
All that can be seen
Amidst the photons of light Is love.....

Here she speaks of sunyata or all pervading emptiness which is charged with love or bodhichitta decked in imagery culled from physics and philosophy and the truths of everyday life.

Muesser Yenja has also a distinct voice of a woman. Women are loving and tender. And when there is dysfunction in worldly life, when love is shattered poets like Muesser feel that the world is at its end. She is being stoned to death as it were. But she does not stop there. Who stones her to death? She blames no one but God. She exclaims –

My heart is the biggest
stone that God threw
at me

Indeed if we had no heart earthly sorrows and despair would not be there.

Akash and **Rashid** hailed from Pakistan. But when we met them I felt a secret joy in my heart. Their tongue, their attire their body language and their

appearance looked so much similar to those of us the Indians that I could not feel that they came from a foreign land. We are brothers. I had the opportunity to talk to Akash on different issues and I found that he has great respect for every religion and culture.

In the Palace of Cultural Friendship, Hanoi

Mousumi

The festival officially began on the next day, March 2. The opening ceremony was held in the Palace of Cultural friendship Hanoi from 9 am. We got a cordial reception there. There were many poets and members of the Vietnamese Writers Association. A television channel took my short interview. They wanted to know what steps are needed to spread the popularity of Vietnamese literature. I told them that besides regular translations of the Vietnamese works, critical estimate of Vietnamese literatures in different languages are the need of the hour. In the opening ceremony, the delegates from different countries – the cultural ambassadors were invited to the stage. President HuuThinh gave an opening speech in Vietnamese language and it was interpreted in

English. The cultural ambassadors of different countries they were all poets, delivered their speeches either in English or in their mother tongue which were interpreted in Vietnamese language. We were given headphones over which it was possible for us to hear the English version of their speech.

Museum

After that we visited the museum for Vietnamese literature. In the museum, there is a huge stone. It is the symbol of peace. The poets from different corners of the globe got an idea of ancient Vietnam, its developed education system from the various models and pictures. The models are so lively that it seems that we the visitors were transported to the Vietnam of yore really in the midst of a study period where the students from the age of ten are studying Confucian philosophy, history of China and the history of Vietnam. In details it records the steps of learning from age 6-7 to higher education. It states that the excellent pupils or children of mandarins together with the children of the Royal family were sent to the National Royal University in the Capital city.

Ramesh

True. Museums make us think and often motivate us to act. Systematic training and learning in ancient times in Vietnam has been brought home to the visitors with the aid of models. This tells us of the impact of Chinese culture on Vietnam. It also speaks of the influence of Confucius on Vietnamese culture in early times.

Confucius did not devote himself to metaphysical questions. He believed in ancestor worship family and moral values. In his Analect he tells us

Do not do unto others what you do not want to be
done unto you

If you commit a mistake correct. Otherwise it will
remain ever a mistake

Confucius who was born 2500 years ago was the first private teacher in China. It was he who first introduced competitive examination for getting public service. He believed in meritocracy. He believed that a good government and good kings and bureaucrats can establish peace and happiness. The king must be good. He is not like the Prince of Machiavelli who is good only for tactical purpose. Rather Machiavelli tells us that a king might be unscrupulous in order that

he might get at power. Thus Confucius was much ahead of his time. Confucius prescribed education for the nobility and the royalty. Confucius believed that everyone should be happy with his or her role in the society. Just as Lord Buddha advocated the five conducts so did Confucius prescribe five virtues, namely, jen or goodwill and generosity, yi or rightness or duties according to the role one has to play, li or identity of how one thinks and how one behaves, chih or wisdom and hsin or trustworthiness.

Unlike Confucius who was all for good manners and gentleman's code and a good government, ancient Indian teaching was different. It taught skills in boyhood so that with their aid one could lead an honourable worldly life being plunged in mundane activities. During youth, however, he is aware of the fact that the battle of life is role playing and there is no absolute truth in the worldly life. So with the advent of old age one renounces the world to lead a life of a recluse. Finally he should plunge himself into the contemplation of the world soul or God and give up his mortal body.

Curiously enough the poet HuuThinh voices similar ideas as to the different stages of life-

Mornings try to earn a living
Afternoons seek career and fame
Evenings bring out wisdom to be sharpened
Awakened

Rows of trees burst out crying

Although Confucius did not deliberate on God or gods he observed that whatever virtue was in him was due to the grace of Heaven. By the by, it should be noted that like Confucius Lord Buddha also did not revel in metaphysics. With Lord Buddha gods were not very important.

The museum displayed write ups in different scripts through the ages put down on different kinds of material as paper for writing. Calligraphy is something unique with China and Vietnam. Earlier the Vietnamese people used Chinese scripts and most of the ancient classics were written in Chinese. But at the same time Vietnamese language was put down in Chinese Script. With the advent of the French Vietnam took to Roman script to express themselves. To write Chinese script is difficult. But Roman script is easy to learn. The introduction of Roman script brought about a revolution in Vietnam. The art of

writing was widely spread and write up of poems and essays and stories and other literary types multiplied. In 1919 with the advent of Roman script printing technology developed and many a newspaper showed up. Publication of books multiplied. This effected a change in the emotions and mode of thinking of the masses. In the thirties the New Poetry movement made itself felt. It advocated freedom in social thought, freedom in marriage and respect for freedom of the individual. It was imbued with an emergent romanticism. It stepped aside from the tradition and revelled in free verse. Of course there were powerful poets who held up traditional form of poetry. Their poems are however romantic at bottom glorifying life in village. **Tu Hun** also belonged to the new poetry movement. But he was not romantic. He was all for revolution and fight for national liberation. This is not that peculiar to Vietnamese history of literature. Similar things happened with the advent of William Caxton and the printing press in England. In India the first printing press was raised by the Portuguese. But in 1800, the first printing press in Serampore Bengal showed up. As a consequence there was a revolution in the history of Bengali

literature likening the revolution in Vietnam after the advent of the printing press.

Vietnam earned its freedom in 1945. And new faces in the realm of poetry popped up. They were young at that time and they joined the army and actively participated in the Resistance War against America. Since they participated in the war they gave vivid description of the war unlike their predecessors unlike the pre-war generation whose poetry lacked the details of real war.

In the ten years between 1965 and 1975 poetry navigated.(Vu Quang Phuong TL page 184 ff)

The museum displayed wonderful instances of calligraphy that transforms signs into form. It is a visual art related to writing. It was at this museum of literature that I met three jocund young poets from Indonesia. They were Muslims by faith. But they are fond of Ramayana. Ramayana dwells on the adventures of a young prince Lord Rama. Ramayana is not merely the national epic of India. It is also the national epic of Indonesia and Thailand. Pornpen is also aware of the Ramakien – the Rama story of Thailand. In fact one reads one's own mind in any narrative whatever. Ramakien read the Rama story in

the light of Thai culture. At the same time Indonesian Ramayana has incorporated in it the teachings of Hajrat Muhammad to a large extent. Be that as it may, Rama is the culture hero in all the three countries - India, Thailand and Indonesia. True, that the majority of the people in Indonesia are Muslims by faith. Indonesia is one of the countries having large Muslim population. These Muslims however participate in the portrayal of Ramayana story through dance. With some of them Islam is their religion and Ramayana is their culture. May be the presence of Hindus in Indonesia dates back to 2nd century BC. And Sailendra kingdom ruled in the Indonesian archipelago till 10th century. The Ramayana, as exists in Indonesia, speaks of religious and cultural syncretism. My Indonesian friends also told me about Rabindranath Tagore. Indeed the Bengali poet Tagore exerted great influence on modern Indonesian literature. One of the first poets of Bahasa Indonesia, Pane studied at Santiniketan Bengal. He wrote Puspa Mega or Cloud Flower. It is a triumph of lyrical poetry and a pathfinder of modern Indonesian literature.

The **poets from Indonesia** offered me cigarettes from Indonesia. The tobacco is mingled with clove in them ; The cigarettes are soothing and wonderful.

Volleyballs of Chocolate creams against Canon balls

Mousumi

After the dinner at our hotel at 6pm, another round of opening ceremony programme started at 7.30 pm on March 2 at the Opera House of Hanoi Capital. Many countries can learn from Vietnam how to develop cultural relationship among different countries. At the same time their cultural function convinced us of the innate strength of Vietnamese culture. Poet HuuThinh, the President of the Vietnamese Writers Association declared here that the festival was intended to promote the unique attributes and values of Vietnamese literature among international communities. It was to broaden the international understanding of Vietnam's culture and people as well.

This was especially reported in the press(<http://www.vietnambreakingnews.com/2015/03/2nd-asia-pacific-poem-festival-opened/>).The event got

huge press coverage. Highlights include the reading of several works of Ho Xuan Huong, a renowned Vietnamese female poet (1772-1822), which were translated and performed by a **female Slovak writer**. The press <http://www.saigongpdaily.com.vn/CultureArt/2015/112881/> reported that this year's event with the theme of islands and seas presented a comprehensive picture of Vietnamese literature's value and achievements. The press stated - Poets of Vietnamese Writers' Association and members from poetry clubs and universities nationwide together with soldiers of the Vietnam Naval High Command, the High, and international poets from UK, France, Brazil, South Africa and Pakistan joined the event. Side line activities included exhibition on Vietnamese and international literatures, art street featuring calligraphy and parallel sentence and performances of folk art. The press stated - The Second Asia Pacific Poetry festival opened at Hanoi Opera House on the same day. The festival is an opportunity of the country to promote Vietnam's beautiful and serene landscapes and present its poetry to its international friends. The press stated - Vietnamese poetry lovers will have the chance to enjoy famous poetry works by well-known

poets of the world. It is also expected to be a rendezvous for world cultures to merge and present the diversity of different cultures of other countries.

Similar quotes from the press could be multiplied.

With me, the international poetry and literary festival is not only a forum for the poetry and literature lovers. To host a conference of such magnitude is expected to expand its economic and strategic footprint in the Asia Pacific region amid China's increasing presence in the region. And the world laden by the threat of nuclear weapons can get a lesson from Vietnam as to how the message of peace spread through the language of poetry penned by the poets from countries across the globe could be a strategy in this respect.

Ramesh

What Mousumi indicates is that Vietnam does not support China's escalating influence on South China Sea and on the countries of Far East. China invaded Vietnam over and over again in the past and ruled over Vietnam for a long time. Although China supported North Vietnam during her war against the USA , when the North Vietnam and South Vietnam united China was not happy. Besides Vietnam made

treaty with Soviet Russia. A long battle between China and Vietnam ensued presently that lasted for ten years. In the face of such an irritating situation the Asia Pacific Poetry Festival is undoubtedly a wise step on the part of Vietnamese government to impress the neighbouring countries with the message of peace. To face regional unrest with poetry is like outdoing cannon balls with volleys of chocolate cream. It might raise a public opinion among the countries all over the world as to Vietnam's love for peace. North Korea, of late, experimented with hydrogen bomb. Poetry could be a fitting reply to that. The quarrel between China and Vietnam is not at all shocking to us Indians. We have quarrel with China as well as with Pakistan over border issues. Such problems are everywhere perhaps. Wherever two countries share a border a border dispute lies in the logic of affairs. Modern political system has forged these artificial borders between one country and another. Hiuen Tsang did not need any passport for his travel from China to India.

Can poetry do anything to do away with such tensions? In this context it will not be out of place to refer to the wonderful speech delivered by Mr

Naowart Pompaiboon of Thailand. He dwells on the three functions of poetic wisdom. Firstly poetry, the dance of language, is the summit of poetic art. Secondly it integrates feeling memory and thought into a wholeness of wisdom. And thirdly poetry can be literally used as a weapon. Pen is mightier than sword and poetry is sharper than the blade, because poetry can slash into the heart of an enemy without wounding the enemy. On the contrary poetry gives pleasure. It heals up wounds and sorrows. It charges us with fresh vigour and hope. There is a Chinese saying- Only one beautiful word makes winter warm for three month (Tham Luan p 53). Does it not mean that poetry could be a mantra? When poems are employed to do away with diseases and personal misfortunes, they are mantras.

Vietnam remembers Tran NhanTong the King Monk. Even in a situation full of political turmoil he persisted on fighting with arguments and not blades. To find peace he used to write poems. They were not deliberately composed ones, smacking of shrewd political ploy but impromptu utterances on this or that moment of his life. For example, he explains-

After the dance of 'gia chi'

Let us don our robes of spring.
Auspiciously
Today is Thanh Minh Festival.
Trays are full of spring rolls and rubies,
An ancient custom of Vietnam.

These lines do not speak of any repentance for the past. They do not have any foreboding for the future. They invoke us to make the present moment as enjoyable as it was in the past moments. Joys as it were have no ending.

Vietnam is a country where many kings and generals of the past as well as of the present have been poets. There are poets of kings in India as well. Bhadririhari a king left the worldly life for the life of the recluse. He is one of the greatest poets of Sanskrit literature. King Harshavardhan was a devotee of Lord Buddha. He was a playwright of great merit. Despite that poets of kings and generals and freedom fighters are not many in Indian history unlike in Vietnamese history. Here it will not be out of place to refer to King Asoka . He was a saint of a king. He quelled the war drums only to beat the drums of virtue. The drums of virtue are poetic withal.

The writings of Tran Nhan Tong dwelled on current affairs as well. Sometimes they were letters addressed to Chinese ambassadors (TL page 86) The Asia Pacific meet in Vietnam sends letters to the comity of the nations all over the world.

Mousumi observes that such a meet of poets from different countries of the world might give a fillip to Vietnam's trade and commerce with other countries. She is right. If a country proves itself culturally of high water mark, other countries will naturally be drawn to buy commodities from it and sell commodities to it. Because everyone expects that one who smacks of culture excels in other fields of production as well.

Doi Moi

Mousumi

Wikipedia states that Vietnam, a communist country is now renovating itself which is known as DoiMoi. It is the name given to the economic reforms initiated in Vietnam in 1986 with the goal of creating a 'socialist-oriented market economy' where the state plays a decisive role in the economy, but private enterprise and cooperatives play a significant role in commodity

production. On one hand, the Communist Party of Vietnam has reaffirmed its commitment to the socialist economic orientation, and that Doi Moi renovations of the economy are intended to strengthen socialism. On the other hand, DoiMoi was inspired not only by socialist conceptions but also by the example of the newly industrialised countries in East and Southeast Asia. Almost overnight the "big bang" economic liberalisation transformed a stagnant peasant economy into a vibrant, market-driven, capitalist system. The apparent and sudden swelling of ranks of petty entrepreneurs produced a boom in local markets and the emergence of 'street front capitalism' in urban areas (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DoiMoi>).

Ramesh

Well, to speak the truth there cannot be any totally free market oriented state nor there can be any totally controlled economy in the existing socio political system of the world today. Notion of a free economy or controlled economy is a utopia. Even in a controlled economy there must be individual enterprise. Even in a free economy there must be state control. In fact the only economy that exists all

over the globe is the mixed economy which India adopted as its economic policy presently after her independence in 1947. Presently after the independence of Vietnam, she had to pursue a control economy in the main so that the nation could fight like a one man against its enemies. When there is all quiet on the war front, Vietnam need no longer to keep itself in belligerent mode. So she can be more lenient to private enterprise than ever. At the same time she can open her doors to foreign influences come whatever may. The brand of communism that sticks to tenets, that might apply with success in the nineteenth century, is absolutely outdated in the world today. Just as Lenin interpreted Marx in the light of the situation of the world during his time so must Vietnam change its economic policies in the context of the world today. Just as with India mixed economy is the means and socialism is the end so it is with Vietnam. A kind of democratic socialism is perhaps the ideal of today from pragmatist point of view.

Yes, Vietnam's emergent market economy and revolution in the field of technology has ushered in a new era. **Tuyet Nga** observes that the spirit of renovation generated by this emergent situation in the

1990s has conjured a democratic environment congenial for fresh literary creations, the like of which were never attempted before. They invite an abundance of artistic thoughts and creative trends (TL page 173). But the Doi Moi has its dire impact on the minds of men and on the society as well. Most of the new generation depict the youth caught in the lonely city life and trapped in the unstable reality. They are just lonely and they suffer from anguish. Each day is a painful one with them full of regrets. In fact young Vietnamese are wont to worship brand product and to receive without giving. This is Vietnam's self-criticism. But what is true of Vietnam is true of India today. And what is true of Vietnam and India is true of the world today. The world is too much with the getting and spending.

True that Vietnam is developing fast. It is among the twenty fastest growing markets in the world and one of the top eight of the markets in the Asia Pacific area. Forbes magazine acknowledges quite a few Vietnamese with assets in the millions of dollars. Now a day visiting clubs, going to spas, shopping and worshipping brand products is a fashion. But the rich people already referred to by Forbes and their kins

who get rich through the stock market, government projects and owning their own companies do suffer from the feel of boredom. They seem to be spiritually bankrupt. The young Vietnamese are addicted to cell phones, tablets and laptops. They are crazy for Louis Vuitton's bags, wallets, cloths, jewellery, watches as well as Gucci, Chanel and Dior products. Indeed there are a class of Vietnamese who are getting rich and richer every day (TL 133 ff). India has taken to the path of liberalisation in 1991. And the state of affairs in India is similar to that of Vietnam. The rich are growing richer, the poor poorer. The youth is drawn to consumerism.

Be that as it may as **Phong Le** observes, a new writer generation in Vietnam have sprung in the 1980s who have accepted the mission of bringing literature to a new Renovation era. Everyone of new generation is not thoughtless. Tuyet Nga observes that they perceive poetry more intellectually than ever (TLpage 174). Phong Le further observes that Vietnam shall have to face many more challenges to get rid of hunger and poverty. But so must every other country. Even America is a horrid spectacle of plethora of plenty side by side with stark poverty.

Think of the inhabitants of Harlem District in New York.

We have already alluded to how the poets of Vietnam respond to the renovation of Hanoi. They cast a longing lingering look back to the Hanoi of yore, Hanoi a city with thousand years glorious past. The world is fast changing. Smokeless ovens were replaced by electric heaters. Electric heaters were replaced by gas ovens. Gas ovens are being replaced by induction heaters. And any time induction heaters will be replaced by something new. Similarly take the case of literature. Vietnamese literature itself has been flowing like a brook meandering from hills to valleys and then into the deep chasm under cedarn cover to burst all of a sudden into a massive water fall. And as Phong Le observes, one does not know what is in the offing as a consequence of shift from printing press to online publishing at the moment.(TL PAGE 139ff) This is a use and throw world. In the inimitable language of **Thuy Duong**-Things seem to be solid, but they are easy to break. There is as it were nothing to believe in. This is usual with the world of appearance. Because, change is the category of life. One cannot dip into the same water twice. If we

know that sunyata or the deep chasm of emptiness is the fountain head of the world of eye and ear we could take the phenomenal world easy and remain plunged into the silence that the philosopher poet Huu Think lays bare in his words. Poetry is written with words not with ideas. But we cannot dip into the waters of silence unlike the sage poet Huu Think. We cannot control our minds.

Consequently we men have nothing to lean on. Are we in a night mare? Before the advent of the French and modernity the society was more and the individual was less. Vietnamese poetry was seldom written in the first person. Perhaps **Cao Bao Quat** was one of the first poets who sought to liberate his ego from the trammels of a society and culture where it was blasphemy to speak of the individual self. He exclaimed—

I want to climb to the highest mountain top

Sing my heart out to the clouds

Elsewhere he says

In my uprightness

I want to pull the Sun close with one hand

In another poem he posits

I lift my head to look outside

I want to hold the cloud to keep going up
Cao Bao was the poet of the first half of the 19th
century (Dang Hui Giang TL 98-99).
With the advent of the 21st century the novelist **Thuy
Duong** observes that with the liberalisation of human
ego things have been dismal. The ego is set free in a
bizarre world and man has become sometimes
enemy of himself impelled by the ego. This shows
that reckless individualism could bring about disaster
on an individual as well as on the society. Thuy
Duong refers to his novel Reside. Reside is the story
of thirteen families. To earn their bread and to survive
in the open world they have been swept away by the
lust of the open era. They live in the present. They are
practical. They have no higher values to lean on. In
this context the novelist tells us that he is in search of
his true self in his novels. Hence with the magic of his
literary art he has conjured a dialogue between the
soldiers who are deceased, the souls of the after
world and our generation that is alive(In this
World)and also a dialogue between the past and the
present (Barefoot). Unlike the nations that are swayed
by the fashions of time, it appears to us that the poets

and the philosophers of Vietnam are busy in seeking the true self of Vietnamese nation and culture.

In this context according to **Dr Mai Huong** efforts to renovate literature started as early as in 1975; he points out that Nguyen Minh Chau also advocated that the starting point of literature should be the individual and his destiny. That automatically leads to the probe into the psychology of the individual. Earlier Vietnam was occupied with war. Now in times of peace the function of the soldiers need not be emphasised. This is the time when artists should provoke men to war against evil motives and intention, opines Dr Mai Huong. The Vietnam Communist Party now exhorts that - One should look straight into the truth, accurately assess the truth and tell the truth.

One should look straight into the truth, accurately
assess the truth and tell the truth
-Communist Party of Vietnam

This has inspired the new generation.

Earlier they gloried in war. Of course literature must serve a nation in its exigencies. Otherwise literature would be of no use to the society. General Giap had words in him like the battle of Truong Son. His words are poetical withal. **Kevin Bowen** recollects that General Giap reminded him that he was a writer and a teacher too (TL page 82). Recalling the war with America, reminiscing Vietnam's battle for life, General Giap told the world -Without books we made the books(Pham Hoa TL page 117).

Without books we made the books

- General Giap

Pham Hoa observes that Poetry and prose about Truong Son is a priceless treasure of Vietnamese literature as well as world literature. But when war is over there should be no love for war. Even today those war poems are popular with the youth. Tran Cao reports us that some students opine that they feel bored and afraid to read modern poetry. But poems written during the war period draw them. **Tran Cao Son** comments in this context- Fighting the

enemy and writing poems, writing poems and fighting the enemies- these two activities blended into one humane and heroic nature.

Fighting the enemy and writing poems, writing poems and fighting the enemies - these two activities blended into one humane and heroic nature.

-Tran Cao Son

By the by, we Indians did not witness any war of the kind that Vietnam had to face for at least four decades. Hence the wealth of poetry during war that Vietnam has produced has no parallel in Indian literature perhaps.

The post 1975 generation feels that war is unnatural and war plays foul with human destiny.

Towards the end of the war a group of poets came upon the scene who inherited the fighting spirit of their predecessor. But they forged a new style in consonance with integration and renovation of Vietnam . Since the 1990s a fresh generation of poets made its mark. **Mai Van Phan** is a significant poet among them and the present author has explicated a number of poems composed by him.

We Indians live in a multiparty system and we have a hunch that there is not enough freedom of thoughts and speech in a one party system. But this does not seem to be true. Dr Mai Huong observes that the post 1975 literature frankly dwells on new land use corruption, lusty instinct and degrading morality and the like. That is there is enough space for freedom of thought and speech in the socialist Vietnam. Earlier literature such as that composed by Nguyen Minh Chau consciously played down the darker aspects of life. During war time every country has to undergo certain strict rules and regulations.

But now, the war over, the artist is free to deliberate on social and political issues. Now he is free to give vent to the workings of his inner consciousness. He is free to discuss the structure of the government and administration as well. Take for instance the novel Bitter Flame. It announces that the civil authority and managing system from the grass root level to superstructure must be renovated. Bitter Flame discusses whether the Party and the Government should be one and the same or not. **Ms Do Thing** Deputy Secretary of QuangNinh Province observes that the party and the government should be

combined into one or else too many personnel are needed and there will be overlapping of duties. In our opinion the system of organisation does not matter much. Whether there is separation of powers or not is not that important. We are one with the general secretary in Bitter Flame when he tells the leader of Than Hoa province that the weakest point of the country is the decay of the moral quality.(TL-205, 206) India has a multi-party system. We Indians brag of separation of powers enshrined in the constitution. But if people those who manage the party or parties and those who run the bureaucracy have bad morals no constitution under the Sun can give respite to the citizens ruled by it.

True that poetry changes the society but in order to write good poetry, that is poetry which might charge our fellowmen with a new zest for life could crop up ,if two conditions are met. Firstly poetry must serve the aspirations of the readers and the masses. Secondly there must be social and spiritual environment for enjoying poetry (Tran Can Son, TL- 208-210). By social and spiritual environment we do not mean that there should be peace and comfort for the poets and readers. They need not write lying on a sofa. They

need not read lolling on a sofa. During war time the soldiers composed poetry and the poets wielded rifles to make history. Those poems were time and again. The readers who were connately in love with their motherland burnt with patriotism.

Huu Thinh the uncrowned poet laureate of Vietnam today tells us that the poets will prove that the centre of the world's attention is not the free market, not the old system of thinking that threatens and uses weapons to solve problems around the world but peace dialogues and cooperation among different cultures in all possible aspects.

The centre of the world's attention is not the free market, not the old system of thinking that threatens and uses weapons to solve problems around the world but peace dialogues and cooperation among different cultures in all possible aspects.

-Huu Thinh

What They Feel

Mousumi

The world meet of the poets in Vietnam also helped us to have a first-hand experience of what the poets of different lands really feel in the face of the social, political and economic situation of their countries. It shook our conscience when a strong built poet from Iraq came on the stage and told the audience that while he was reciting his poems here, many of his friends were fighting war in the homeland and many of his close friends were being killed in the war. His poems speak of the devastations of the war.

Ramesh

True, that the civil war in Iraq is centred around the issue of the possession of the oilfields. During Saddam Hussein's time the minority community among the Muslims owned the oilfields depriving the majority people of Iraq. And the possession of the oilfields has been the bone of contention in the Iraq civil war. But there is a but.

It is not only the economic issues that propel history. It is the ego of the people that counts. Think of the patriotic poems of Vietnam.

Mousumi

When a Pakistani poet came to the stage, he recited a poem which was a condemnation of the recent terrorist attack on school children in Pakistan.

The festival theme was poetry and prosperity. The present world devastated with the fear of terrorist attack here and there, now and then can get temporary refuge in poetry. The poems from different countries gave glimpses of many cultures. In between the recitations of poems from different lands there were brief performances of Vietnamese song and dance. They were lively.

Happiness

In the middle of the two opening ceremony programs we managed to squeeze an hour or two. In that time period, we had a leisurely chat with the Thai Poet **Pornpen Hantrakool** in my room in the hotel. The life story of Pornpen Hantrakool is like her poems, an optimistic one. She wished to become a servant in a rich household so that she could feel how the rich behave with the poor. Pornpen was born in 1947. Her parents were from China. She was born in Thailand. From childhood, she knew three languages- Hynan, Chinese and Thai and she said - I am trilingual. She

studied liberal arts. After graduation, she did a diploma in History. She taught in universities. There was a big massacre in Thailand on 6th October 1976 where there was a heinous attack on students and protestors that occurred in the university campus in Bangkok. The army killed many socialists. Shocked, she resigned her job in protest. She described herself as a peaceful Marxist, not a revolutionary one. Her pursuit for academics was also in a different way. She wanted to travel. She chose England. England, she said was democratic and peaceful.

Ramesh

In fact Karl Marx who believed that a bloody revolution was inevitable to destroy the oppressor class felt that socialism could be reached along peaceful process also after his exposure to British democracy. We refer to Marx's speech at Hague in 1872. So the notion of a peaceful Marxist is not queer.

Mousumi

Pornpen did not want to bother her family financially. She chose to work in a Czechoslovakian family for eight to nine months. Then, she took a waitress's job. She was adventurous. She studied some two pound courses of social sciences with her earning. They

were very enjoyable. After a year, she moved to a restaurant as a receptionist. It was a better job. She spent her free time in the afternoon visiting many museums. There were some hundred museums. Then her friends pursued her to do a Ph.D. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had raised the university fee too high at that time. Pen did not have enough money to pursue. Despite that, she spent the thousand pounds that she had saved. However, she disliked her professor. She told it in his face and he failed her.

Ramesh

Are developed countries developed enough?

Mousumi

Pornpen spent three and half years in England. Then she returned to Bangkok and joined Silpakorn University. She worked there for twenty years till her retirement. Post retirement, she thought that she had finished her job of a historian as it is time consuming to write an article. She likes poetry from her childhood and wrote some poems. She started writing poems. She doesn't call herself a poet but a poetry writer. She told me that when you're old, you don't write superficial things like romance but deeper things. She

said that her country is splitting into two and political conflicts are going on. She writes on how one's life can benefit others. Pen said - Now I am less emotional, I feel love for everybody. Otherwise there is no way out, we are as it were caught in a whirlpool. Poetry leads me to some kind of spiritual rinsing and cleansing. Now I feel my soul is cleaner and elevated. I am happy.

Pornpen Hantrakool is a happy person. And a happy person has the capability to make other people happy. And her poem asserts-

Happiness comes free.
You don't have to buy,
Unhappiness demands so much,
Yet people war over it at all costs.

Her gift the collection of verses is no doubt is very precious to me.

Ramesh

If two beggars unite, their begging bowls unite and one begging bowl forged from the two will be bigger than ever. So if beggars unite unhappiness only doubles. But if happy people unite the fine excess of their happiness could pervade the environment where they are. There is a fine excess of happiness in the

poetry of Pornpen. And whoever comes within the range of its fragrance cannot help but being happy. In fact happiness index is an emergent paradigm in the field of development economics. Bhutanese people are not that rich. They are very poor in relation to the Americans. But they are happy men and women. Because happiness comes free. It does not depend on economic prosperity.

Conference on Vietnam's Prose and Poetry

Mousumi

On the next day, as scheduled, conferences on Vietnam's prose works and poems took place in the two parallel sessions of seminars in the conference room of Hanoi in the morning. It was a delight for me to see that my article 'An economic approach to Literature has been published in Tham Luan- Essays, International Conference on Vietnamese Literature. The Collection contains thought provoking articles of International writers and poets.

Ramesh

In fact with the nineteen nineties there has been a spectacular development in the realm of Vietnamese prose. Both professional writers and new faces have

been showing their inner creativity in the richness and diversity in their prose that touches upon varied and variegated topics. And prose has become very familiar with the reader. The readers have found the issues of contemporary life ranging from so called trivial things to the sublime , from past to present, from unexpected moments to the age old problems , from the existing objects to the invisible impression in the world of concept and the spiritual world in the modern prose of Vietnam. And one of the characteristics of modern Vietnamese prose is the subjective and the personal perspective in the evaluation of problems. And prose no less than poetry revels in imagery to express itself. In an atmosphere of democracy, this openness of literature lies in the logic of affairs. Today the rise of modern life poses serious environment problems. Literature cannot be indifferent to the cry for help from Nature. Writers, both poet and prose writers send the message about the right attitude towards Nature. Nature is the second body of the civilisation. Human civilisation right now sunk into the Serbonian bog of despondency can be called back to life only if man's passion for Nature could be brought to the foreground. Writers have seen

trees, fields, canopies, drizzle, flowers as a symbol of Nature.

Writers read their own minds in Nature. Bich Thu observes that the presence of prose has created a literary party for the choice of the readers in the context of cultural identity in renovation and integration period (TL 229ff). Renovation and integration must take Nature into account.

Mousumi

The **NDO** reports- In the early days of the Lunar New Year, 151 writers from 43 countries and territories travelled to Vietnam to attend the third conference on promoting Vietnamese literature to the world. The conference saw the attendance of important figures in world literature such as Egyptian writer **Mohamed Salmawy** Secretary General of the Afro-Asian Writers Association, among others. Some countries were sending their representatives for the first time such as Cuba, Colombia and Albania while China sent a delegation of three writers, demonstrating the interest from the world community in Vietnamese culture.

We got the opportunity to meet more poets and writers from different countries. A poet from Hong Kong **David McCarthy and his Indian wife Gauri**

were there. A group of poets from Mongolia were there. They were in their national attire. Two ladies from Myanmar came during lunch time to our table. They presented their book to us. They also requested my teacher to give their books to other English knowing delegates and he obliged immediately.

Ramesh

Gauri hails from north India. She was a student of fine arts. **David McCarthy** hails from Scotland if I can rightly remember. McCarthy is an artist too. He repairs vintage cars including Rolls Royce cars. Well by the way Rolls Royce runs on goodwill. That is how an owner of Rolls Royce defended himself at a court when he was asked how come he ran his cars when the supply of gasoline was short. In other words vintage cars- that is cars made by such companies like Rolls Royce in the past are poems in the realm of car technology. No wonder that a person who can call back the vintage cars and the glories of the past of transport technology can write good poems. McCarthy is a poet with difference.

Politicians Create Boundaries between Man and Man Literature Destroys Those Boundaries

Mousumi

The Vietnamese Press reported that during the six-day meeting, many contemporary literary issues and global challenges facing the world were discussed and analysed. All participants agreed on one matter: literature or any art form, first and foremost, must be created for the sake of humanity, and must arouse human conscience and connect peoples for a peaceful, conciliatory and co-operative world.

Ramesh

Yes this is of immense importance. Tham Luan published by the Vietnam Writers Association embodies many of such discussions held at the Asia Pacific Festival. **The Party and the State Leader of Vietnam** observes that while our sense of humanity is offended by the evil and bloody conflicts taking place in the many parts of the planet the poets from the different lands assembled in Hanoi bring the breath of peace and friendship. In other words the world is a huisclois as it were where it is difficult to breathe. It is the function of poetry to open the doors and windows

of the closed door room so that fresh air blows and humanity can breathe. The honourable speaker points out that a healthy culture encourages flow of ideas –to go in and to go out. to give and receive. The soul of mankind the strength of a nation can only be enriched and empowered when it harmonises with the common flow of the mankind. (TL page6)This reminds us of the great Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore who exclaimed -They (i.e. the many cultures)will give and take, unite others and unite with others, and no one will be debarred from this joyous exchange of ideas on the coast of the vast sea of humanity. And surely we know that poets are best ambassadors of any culture. The honourable speaker reminds us that the two wars of independence were fought as much by the poets as the soldiers. Nay the soldiers were themselves poet and the poets themselves were soldiers. In short literature sometimes functions as weapons. Take for instance the poems of Ho Chi Minh. He was ever a fighter and the architect of Vietnam. While pent up in a prison he observed-

It is your body which is in prison/ not your mind.

That reminds of Bonnivardin Byrons sonnet Castle of Chillon. But does it not remind us of the opening verse of the Dhammapada-

Manopubbangamaa dhamma

Ho Chi Minh said-

I versify until such time as I shall see freedom (Ho
Chi Minh by Jean Lacouture page72).

A Bengali poet exclaims in the same vein-

When the scimitar of the tyrant does not flourish in
the battleground

When the wails of the tortured does not reverberate in
the sky

Me a rebel, tired of war

I shall be quiet

The Party Leader recounts how Thach Sun played a musical instrument and changed heart of the enemies without any bloodshed (TL Page 7). This is the highest teaching of the world - nonviolence or ahimsa. What Mahatma Gandhi of India preached and what Vietnam exhorts mankind are identical.

HuuThinh posits that the Asia Pacific poetry meet in Vietnam will re-enact a race for peace instead of a race for armament. In a world where the sky is murky with the clouds of despair, and with the shadow of

impending nuclear war the poets from different cultures along the path of cultural exchange will together kindle the light of hope. When Huu Think tells us of the journey from darkness to light (TL page 12) we Indians are reminded of a prayer in the Upanishads-Lead us from untruth to truth, lead us from darkness to light, lead us from death to immortality etc.

HuuThinh says literature needs to create silence in this age of breakneck speed and noise. The silence will give birth to wisdom (TL page 14) **Naowarat Pongpaiboon** posits that true poetry is the body of wisdom (TLpage 53). GjekeMarinaj gives us the call-Lets cast a wide net of wise words that is wide enough to cover all nations- a net that speaks of peace and hope, a net that encompasses one world(TL page 64).

Tran Nhuan Minh remarks that every poet should walk on his own feet depending on where the nation goes. But their destination is the same-humanity, just as all the rivers rush to the seas. Tran Nhuan Minh states that the poets need not have wide learning. Hoang Vu Tnuat in his essay carries us to the north of

Vietnam to the bamboo house of Phan Van Chuong
to hear him pray-

the soul belongs to Jesus

body belongs to the dried field

Hoang Vuan Thuat quotes Do Thanh Dong another
poet-

I discover a thing

that a waste collector knew long ago

There are non garbage things in the dumping ground

Ones garbage is others blood

This reminds us the Indians a verse from
Isopanishad-

What God renounces is consumed by the God

Himself.

Hoang VuanThuat also refers to the novelist
TracDiem. She is poor. She is not well read. She
works as a tourist guide. But her writing is time and
again.(TL page 244). Thus Hoang Vuan Thuat only
supports the proposition of Tran Nhuan Minh that to
become a poet one need not have wide learning.
While Tran Nhuan Minh notices that poetry leaps up
from intuition Hoand Vuan Thuat states that the
springs of poetry is the unconscious mind. A poet
cannot but write.Because his ideology drives him to

write poems the way Nature impels the mother to give birth to a baby. What is ideology? According to Tran Nhuan Minh while the colours of a flower stand for the content of a poem the fragrance of the flower could stand for the ideology of the poem. Tran Nhuan Minh thinks poetry should have some bright haziness or vagueness. This reminds us of the notion of ambiguity which is according to Empson sine qua non with poetry. An instance of such ideal poetry could be illustrated from the essay of Hoang Vu Thuat. Hoang Vu Thuat quotes the poet Tran Thi Hue-

The sun saw me the sun saw words

Whisper of sands and the gait of sand daily

The sun crouched by me kissed on the waves...

Hoang Vu Thuat comments that Hue's poetry is a spirit that Hue only understands. That is true on a level. Tran Nhuan Minh finds a halo around a poet of which he is not aware. The honesty and kindness of the poet and the beauty in poetry must fight for a world without war terrorism and discrimination (TL page 160,161).

Mousumi

The Press further reports that many books were exchanged between writers.

Ramesh

True. The poet Mai Van Phan presented us three books of poems in Grass Cutting in a Temple Garden, Out of the Dark and Hidden Face Flower. Ngyen Trong Tao presented us his White Candle. Ngo Tu Lap presented us his book of poems Black Stars. The Cham poet Inrasara gave us his the purification festival in April. Tho Tuyet Nga gifted us the Poetry by Tuyet Nga . They are significant poets by Vietnam itself. Besides, the Vietnam Writers Association presented us Wild Under the Sky by Huu Thinh.

Mousumi

The press further adds that International “cultural ambassadors” came to Vietnam, explored famous scenic sites and enjoyed ‘specialties’ of Vietnamese culture. Vietnam appeared to do well in introducing the country and its people. However, what the public and literary circles are waiting for are concrete results from this conference.

In the world’s publishing industry, translators, however important, are only those who work on order while publishers are those who decide what to print. This year’s conference saw the attendance of many famous writers, poets and translators but saw no

presence of the world's leading publishers. Even when publishers in Vietnam want to contact their international peers, they do not know how and who to ask. Vietnam has spent a great deal of time and expenses to welcome international writers who certainly have their own goals, not only to read several poems on the stage.

From the last conference, the organisers are yet to summarise how many Vietnamese titles have been translated as a result of the conference. And because there is no data, we cannot make any analysis or assessments to formulate an effective strategy to promote Vietnamese literature to the world.

The recurrent questions asked by foreign participants are usually “Which books have been published recently?” and “Are there any notable works recently?” but there seems to be no satisfying answer. The introduction of Vietnamese literature at the conference was not very detailed. It was mainly about the history and writing viewpoints while lacking in information about specific works about contemporary life. The majority of Vietnamese participants were senior writers while there was virtually no presence of young writers.

Import of Foreign Literature-Vietnam a Country of Cultural Hospitality

Ramesh

This report of the press has much truth in it. The draft of speech by the party leader and state leader of Vietnam addressed to the poet delegates from different countries laments - In economic terms we have practiced excessive import of your literature but limited export of ours (TL page 13). This is significant. Vietnam has been ever open to foreign influences especially in the field of literature. Vietnam is a country of cultural hospitality (HuuThinh TL page 13). Chinese poetry of the Tang dynasty excels in the ability to dwell on the beauty of the earth changing the attire with the change in the season. It is capable of interpreting the universe in its own way. It ponders over the destiny of man. It is loaded with the rich cargo of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism which characterise the oriental attitude towards life. Tang poetry is, be it of any genre, is balanced, beautiful and excellent in its economy of words. Its phonetic structure is frighteningly exquisite. Read between the lines is the watch word of Tang reading of poetry. Tang method of reading poetry sees eye to eye with

ancient Indian method of reading the texts. And it agrees with the tenets of the Close Reading School of today. The Tang poetry inspired the Vietnamese classical poetry. **NhaTho Do Trung Lai** observes that poetry written in classical Chinese in Vietnam include 4505 poems and essays on poetry written by 629 authors.(TL page 147ff) **Tran Nhuan Minh** says- I always want to learn from traditional Eastern poetry and especially Chinese poetry of the Tang dynasty and I try to make my poetry concise and meaningful (TL page 161). When the French appeared on the scene as the ruler of Vietnam, Vietnam came across French poetry.**ThanhThao dwells** on how Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard influenced him. They transform the real world into surreal and the surreal into the real.Thanh observes that Aragon helps us escape from reality so that we can read the reality from the surreal plane and return to reality with renewed energy and vigour. Surrealist poetry does not merely spring from the heart. Its source is deeper than that.Thanh employs a beautiful imagery to distinguish Eluard from Aragon. While Eluard's poetry is like a microwave that we cannot prevent from entering into our consciousness Aragon's poetry is

like a river with waves where we bathe. Thanh observes that these foreign poets have the same wave length as that of the Vietnamese poets. How come? Thanh quotes Eluard

Rain comes upon us

Rain falls among us

Like it falls from empty space

We surmise that Eluard reminds one of the sunyata or emptiness of Buddhism. And Buddhism is deeply laden in Vietnamese culture although everyone might not be a Buddhist in Vietnam formally.

The Russians supported Vietnam against America. At that time many Vietnamese studied Russian language and culture. ThanhThao observes that he was greatly influenced by Pushkin, Lermontov, Esenhine and Alexander Block. But the greatest influence on Thanh was the Russian poet Eduard Badritsky.

Besides Thanh was influenced by poets like Pablo Neruda, Nazim Hikmet, Octavio Paz and Lorca and others. There have been competent translations of these masters in Vietnamese and Thanh read them through translation. The translation literature in Vietnamese is very rich. Poetry from Korea and

America, France and Spain and South Africa have been translated into Vietnamese.

Being an Indian I feel sorry because Vietnam has not taken notice of Indian poetry at all. India is the home of hundreds of languages and many of them are very rich in the wealth of content and form. At the same time I must confess that translation literature in India is not as rich as in Vietnam. The enthusiasm for translating foreign masters is not that high as in Vietnam.

Now as to Vietnam. Vietnam's open door policy to foreign literature has been evident from the above observation. This is very laudable. The more you take from others the more you are culturally rich. At the same time you become more open to foreign influences. A truly great poet culls the picturesque phrases and turns of poetry wherever he finds it. A truly great nation culls the pebbles of beautiful ideas and phrases from any culture and language whatever.

The Vietnamese Participants in the Meet

Furthermore the press complains that the majority of the participants in the meet from Vietnam are senior

writers. There is virtually no representation of the young writers. True.

Phong Le in his article observes that since the middle of the 1990s Vietnamese literature has witnessed a sea change in both style and material. **Mai Van Phan** is a poet of the nineties. We have sought to download the wealth of his poetry as enshrined in hidden face flower from India. Phong Le further observes that the 8x and 9x have a vast variety of writers. They dwell on variety of emergent themes. They touch upon every aspect of life in all levels of size and depth. Now a transition is taking place from paper printing to online publication. Phong Le expects great surprises from this shift in the style of publication (TL-pg 139 ff).

Vietnamese Literature needs to be Translated-
Translation Paradigm

But mere production of poetry is not enough. Just as Vietnam has translated the classics of contemporary literature Vietnam's literature needs to be translated into different languages.

This boils down to the issue of aesthetics of translation.

Hu Thinh the President of the Writers Association Vietnam observes---If we take pride in the Vietnamese language for its exquisite ability to express the wonders of our inner world the translators find it extremely difficult sometimes impossible to translate. The work of translation here is not different than the task of brushing away clouds to reach the blue sky. However the difficulty and real contribution of the translators is to transform a world of soul into another world of soul one culture into another culture. Therefore translators deserve our respect and sincere thanks(TL page 13)

The difficulty and real contribution of the translators is to transform a world of soul into another world of soul one culture into another culture. Therefore translators deserve our respect and sincere thanks

Nguyen Ba Cong's write up *Writing By Ways of Translation, Translation By Ways of Writing* is esoteric in style reminding us of the Buddhist sutras.. It deliberates on translation aesthetics. We quote here the first sutra-

To write is to live in the words and to turn words into
life the life of one's own consciousness and
awareness

To translate is to live in the words by ways of another to momentarily turn the others consciousness into one's own the life of someone else's awareness by that of one's own (TL page 79).

What do we translate? We translate the text. But what is a text but words. The writer sends a part of his being and consciousness into words. The translator must have the required empathy to live in the words the way the other or the poet lived in the words. The translator must make the poets or the others consciousness just as one person could put on another person's shawl.

Well in our opinion to turn another's consciousness into one's own is a yogic feat. The yogis of a poet can lose his consciousness so that another's consciousness might speak through him. But with us

the common run of men such yogic feats are not possible. With us translation implies that the text of the source language has to be represented in the idiom of the target language. Consequently there is creative treason. Me thinks that HuuThinh underlines this idea when he says that in the case of translation the function of a translator is to transform a world of soul into another world of soul, one culture into another culture.

If one derives $a^2 + b^2 + 2ab$ from $(a + b)^2$, one might go back from the former to the latter. But in the case of translation one cannot however go back from the text of the target language to the text of the source language. This is because any text is capable of meaning on n levels. In fact there could be as many texts as there are readers. To illustrate the point let us quote here at least two English translations of the same passage from the Tale of Kieu-

1. As evidenced by centuries of human existence
Destiny and genius are apt to feud
Having injured an upheaval
The sights observed must wrench one's heart
'Tis no surprise to find the bad and good in pairs

So a maiden blessed by beauty is likewise cursed
by envy

2. Centuries of human existence,
Prodigy and fate intertwined in conflicts,
Mulberry fields turned into open sea,
Enough's been seen to melt the heart.
Little wonder that beauty begets misery,
For Blue Heaven's jealous of exquisite glamour!
(Source : *internet- conciseenglish.net*)

Here we refer to the Readers aesthetics. **Tran Nhuan Minh** seems to suggest this same idea about translation when he says –When they keep reading they see what it is that I suggest and finally they think about what I ever thought of and just like that if I have three hundred readers with those deep thoughts.(TL page 160) This appears to see eye to eye with Indian aesthetics as put forward by Abhinava Gupta .

Reception aesthetics posits that the text of one culture is transformed into another culture. Dryden translated Aeneid into English. It has been a 17th century English poem. Alexander Pope translated Iliad into English. It has become an 18th century

English poem. This is what we mean by creative treason.

Be that as it may as Louis Kelly opines-Western Europe owes its civilization through translation (Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics 1993 page 1305). Seen in a particular context this is true in the case of every civilisation. And Vietnam acknowledges the truth of it. Vietnamese literature abounds with translations of classics from different tongues and cultures. By the by we should understand what translations can give and what translations cannot.

Mousumi

Let us hear what the **Press** says.

As Chinese translator **Zhu Yangxu** put it, culture is the name card of a country, and literature is an effective and low-cost tool to promote a country. A workshop entitled “Vietnamese poetry retains the Vietnamese spirit” took place in Hanoi on March 03. The workshop was organised on the side lines of the third international conference of promoting Vietnamese literature in Hanoi with the participation of many local and international poets.

The majority of authors during the early times of Vietnamese literature were Buddhist priests. Their poetry reflects Buddhism's succinct style and popular thoughts.

Poetry reached its peak under King Le Thanh Tong with an imperial palace poetry club, which made great contributions to the development of Vietnamese poetry. Skilled poets emerged during Europe's bourgeois revolution, including Nguyen Du, a master of human psychology and life.

Veteran poet **Vu Quan Phuong** said that the origin of Vietnamese poetry could be traced back to the 10th century with written documents found in the pre-Le dynasty (980-1009), which then flourished in the Ly and Tran dynasties (1009-1225) - (1225-1400).

According to poet **Vu Duy Thong**, a highlight of Vietnamese poetry is poems on wars, which carry popular humanitarian values, peaceful aspirations, and wishes for humankind to live in love and happiness.

The conference also drew international writers, poets and translators, who are interested in Vietnamese literature. It provided a chance for foreign and

domestic authors to exchange and learn from each other.

Quang Ninh Province

Mousumi

After the lunch at 11.30 in the hotel, a fleet of red buses were ready for us for a trip to Quang Ninh province. I chose a seat and I met **Dominique de Miscault** on 3rd March who sat next to me. After that for the remaining days, I deliberately chose my seat next to her. She was from Paris. She is a painter and is in publishing business. Painting is what she does from her childhood and she asserts that no school is necessary for her to learn painting. She is learning all the time. She participated in many exhibitions in France. She also shared with me the problem of women. She confided me that at one period, she had to do multiple chores and her mother was very ill at that time. She said that she is not completely in the art market. She has a relationship of about twenty five years with Vietnam. She comes there every year even two- three times a year. She was associated with the famous Hanoi Ceramic Mosaic Mural . First she did a project plan, designed a section - the seven

days of creation The initiator of the project was a lady journalist from Vietnam Nguyen Thu Thuy. It is a ceramic mosaic mural on the wall of the dyke system of Hanoi. Its length is about four kilometres. Dom said that it has been recorded into the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's largest ceramic project. Unless she was with me, I would miss the opportunity to see the beautiful creation.

With a focused eye of a photographer she pointed different significant sights - the architecture of old and new buildings in the city, the agriculture, the burial grounds in the country side and told me about some local customs. She had a book with her, a collection of Vietnamese painting. I am not an art connoisseur. However, I enjoyed the pictures. I took a snap of one. It was a scooter. Below it was written -Nguyen QuocDan,*Nocubism*, 2011, acrylic., Vietnam. She also told me the history of Vietnam. In two hours bus journey, she described me the time period when Vietnam became a colony of France, the Vietnam-America war, the administration of Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, the lift of US trade embargo against Vietnam on 24th June 1994 and its impact. She is an intellectual in the real sense of the term. She is now

sixty five. She carries a big camera all the time. She is now doing a documentary on the sea farmers. Her husband and daughter are in Paris. Her elder daughter is no more. She was in Vietnam when she suddenly got the bad news. She shared with me her sad thoughts.

Because of her, we got the opportunity to visit some beautiful Buddhist temples after returning to Hanoi. She practically persuaded us to take a ride with her. She hired a cab, entertained us. Moreover, she also took us to the home of her Vietnamese friend who owns an art gallery. With nice green tea, we had our discussion ranging from politics, economics and society to art. Sir discussed about Picasso, Matisse with them.

I learnt a French sentence from her- Oh la la. She used it often. The most outspoken and free minded lady Dom gave me a few precious advice as a lady. Her gifts are also unique- a model of fish and a comb. Fish in our Bengal is a good omen. I believe that our friendship is also a blessed one.

Hanoi is a city with its urban characteristics and just after we left the city, there were green all over. The paddy fields half submerged in water with its clearly

earmarked boundary lines were on both sides of the highway. There were also banana trees. When I travel from Kolkata to Asansol my workplace by bus, I enjoy similar green scenario in the district of Bardhaman, the rice bowl of Bengal. However, in Vietnam the farmers were in different attires with hats on, and their scooters were also visible beside the field .In the midway, we had a stopover at a place. It is a hub of sculpture studio. There were different figurines. Most of them were of Lord Buddha. We also saw there some of our familiar statues of Indian Hindu deities.

Ramesh

Yes there were many an idol of Hindu gods and goddesses. Lord Ganesh is one of them. We Hindus worship many gods. But whenever any worship is done, Lord Ganesh must be invoked at the outset. Lord Ganesh gives fruition. His is a surrealistic image. He looks like an elephant and yet he is not an elephant. He looks like a man and yet he is not a man. Such an image could be found only in dreams. Buddhism that has been raining compassion in the Far East as well as in the rest of the world sprang from India , its fountainhead. No wonder that the Hindu gods and goddesses who existed before

Buddhism showed up in India were incorporated into Buddhist pantheon. Seen from a point of view Buddhism is but an offshoot of Hinduism. Lord Buddha did not know that he was preaching a religion different from Hinduism. Buddhism however puts an enlightened one above gods.

Halong Bay

Mousumi

We reached Halong Bay in a misty afternoon. Halong Bay in Quang Ninh Province, in the North east of Vietnam is 165 km from Hanoi. We stayed at the hotel Trade Union, Bai Chay in Halong City. At the gate, it was written that the hotel warmly welcomes the participants of the Second Asia Pacific Poetry Festival. The room allotment for so many participants took nearly an hour and in the mean time we enjoyed the scenic beauty and the cool fresh air sitting on the staircase at the entrance of the hotel. The name of the hotel indicates that the country is a communist country. Sir had left his stock of cigarette in Hanoi and Gouri gave him a lending hand in this matter. Gouri jokingly told us how hard she tried to get rid of smoking. She even visited a professional clinic for it

and her husband accompanied her and so and so and she just smiled and I though a non-smoker enjoyed their smoking.

The hotel was nice and there was no dearth of luxury. However from my window the Bay was not visible. But I enjoyed the urban landscape and skyline with hills at the backdrop. Most of the buildings are yellow, white or in beige colour with red conical rooftop. However some of the conical rooftops are in other colours and it was enjoyable to see the structures from the hotel room. The complimentary fruit basket they gave us was also very nice. I never saw such football size guavas before and the bananas were also very nice. In Hanoi also, we enjoyed the fruits. Especially water melon and banana were very fresh.

The banquet given by the Party Committee of Quang Ninh Province took place at 6 pm. It was a lavish affair. After that we participated in the International Poetry Night, Art performance at the Palace Vietnam-Japan Friendship, Le Thanh Tong Road, Halong City. The International art and Poetry night at the Palace was an opportunity to enjoy the local folk art performances by the Vietnamese artists. However, I felt a little boring when the same set of people, the

office bearers of the Writers Association of Vietnam and that of the different countries like Egypt, Sudan and others were invited on the stage every time and their speeches were similar.

Next day morning all of us were very much excited for the tour on Halong Bay. We gathered at the hotel lobby by eight in the morning. Our friends Tran Quang Quy and Mai Van Phan were there. We enjoyed quick photo sessions especially with our volunteer friends.

It is said that 'If you haven't visited Ha Long Bay, You haven't been to Vietnam. Ha Long Bay was twice recognised by UNESCO as Natural World Heritage for its outstanding universal values of its landscape and geology and geo-morphology. The name Ha Long means 'Descending Dragon'. The legend of Ha Long states that once upon a time when the Viet people established their country, invaders came. The Jade Emperor sent Mother Dragon and her Child Dragons down to earth to help the Viet people fight against the enemy. When the invaders boats were rushing to the shore, the dragons landed down on earth and spat out numerous pearls, which then turned into thousands of stone islands and islets emerging in the sea like great walls challenging the

invaders boats. The invaders boats broke into pieces. After the victory, Mother Dragon and Child Dragons did not return to Heaven but stayed on earth at the place where the battle had occurred. The location where the Mother Dragon landed is nowadays Ha Long Bay. The legend suggests that Vietnamese people are descendants of a Fairy and a Dragon. The Dragon and Fairy symbolize the strength of the nation and the poetic name of this area was given by the local people. Now a day many of the names of the islands and islets on Ha Long Bay contain Dragon. Writer **Nguven Ngoc** wrote that we should visit Ha Long at least once in our lifetime to understand and to know that life is endless. Just by two simple words Stones and Water- the nature composed the poem of the world's immortality (Ha Long Bay Management Department, Ha Long, 2014).

The rows of coconut trees along our journey path to reach the cruise were of short height. The cruises became mini worlds. Sir initially sat with Poet Tran Quang Quy ,Huy Mau Le and Imdad Akash. I sat with two Vietnamese ladies. One of them is poet**Le Thi Binh** who was from Ho Chi Minh City. Her husband is a Poet. She showed me the pictures of her daughter's

wedding. They have furniture business. She later sent me Vietnamese songs and poems of her husband. The name of one of the cruise is Indochina voyages. We gathered at the deck to enjoy the beauty of the sea. Bruce Be the painter was already there enjoying the cool sea breeze. At the deck, we met the Chinese poet and translator Ou Xiaou. She has translated the poems of Chinese poets into English. She studied Gender Studies. I wanted to have a detailed conversation with her afterwards, but we did not get the opportunity for that.

Ramesh

We met **Oui Xiaou** during our visit to Halong Bay. She is doing her research on gender. I had a very short conversation with her. She appeared to be a feminist. She talked of Mencius. She undoubtedly is an intellectual.

The Yunan China delegation has published a journal meant for the Asia Pacific meet. It is an anthology of essays lectures poems etc. The speech of **Cao Wenbin** throws light on Pumi culture. It is partly autobiographical. According to him while weapons created war, poetry creates light. There are beautiful poems in the journal.

Mousumi

And we reached our destination. Ha long Bay is a vast sculptural work of nature. It covers an area of 1553 square kilometers and includes 1969 islands. From afar the islands appear to be a solid wall separating the sea and the mainland. When one comes closer, the wall suddenly opens and a multitude of islands appear here and everywhere. There are thousands of limestone islands emerged from the seas. It is beyond my capability to describe in words the mesmerizing beauty inside the caves. I thanked God for that. And the two stones like two lovers on the sea were also photographer's delight. Sir had a quick adda with the Russian delegates and quite naturally he tasted Russian Vodka. There was a Russian young man who was very good looking. However, it was difficult to communicate with them since they do not know English. My companion a Vietnamese lady gave me boiled sweet potato.

After the lunch,we were ready for the Kinh Bac Cultural Centre. The second Asian-Pacific Poetry Festival took place amidst throwing of colourful balloons in the sky.at the KinhBac Culture Centre in the River Delta province .The local girls-the

volunteers gave us a warm welcome. All of them were in black dress with red and green sash and black headgear.

Addressing during the event, **Nguyen TuQuynh**, vice chairman of Bac Ninh's People's Committee, said -In Vietnam, poetry plays an important role in life, encouraging the creative spirit among people. He added that this is a good chance for local and international writers to exchange their views. Throughout the event, many local and foreign poets recited their poems honouring the beauty of nature and human life. The delegates also had a chance to enjoy BacNinh's unique folk art, the QuanHo (love duet singing) which has been recognised part of the world's intangible culture heritage.

The Peoples' Committee of BacNinh gave us some precious paintings and a CD of the Halong Bay. The paintings done in natural colours and on a special type of material are very precious to us. The sumptuous dinner was hosted by the Peoples' Committee of BacNinh province. We went back to Hanoi in the evening.

The Young Girls in Vietnam

During our return journey I took an interview of **Hua Phuong Nhi**. What I loved most in Vietnam were the young Viet girls. The young girls of Vietnam who were volunteers in the poetry festival were so lovable. They all were cheerful and remained close to us. Their co coordinator was Hua Phuong Nhi, an eighteen years old girl. The two hour return journey as her companion gave me a knowledge about the young generation of Vietnam who were born after the war, their aspirations, and about the family life of urban Vietnam. She is a first year student of journalism in the Academy of Journalism and Communication, Hanoi. The college is one of the best in Vietnam and the students from neighbouring countries like Laos also take admission here. The classes are held in the morning and the afternoon shifts. Her class time is now from 1pm to 5 pm. Her parents own a media and publication house. She has grandmother in her house. She wakes up at six thirty in the morning to assist her grandma in household chores. She takes her grandma to daily market on her motorbike. In Hanoi, scooter is the most popular mode of transport.

Pornpen earlier told me that people here are not very much interested to buy a four-wheeler. Hanoi is short of garages and traffic jam is regular in the city roads. However, the family of Phuong Nhi owns a car. Her parents start as early as at six thirty in the morning for the office, six kilometers away to avoid the traffic jam that starts around seven in the morning. The office work generally begins around eight in the morning. There are no domestic servants in her house though many families there employ domestic servants.

When I enquired about her future plan, she told me that in order to find a good job, one needs to speak fluent English. One also needs money and right contact. There are foreign teachers of English, but the courses are very expensive for the students. It is more than ten dollars for two hours. The students try to do part time jobs for learning English if they don't have the parent's financial support or if they are not interested to depend upon them. They can get job in coffee shops and shopping malls. Phuong Nhi has become a volunteer in this festival for the opportunity to interact with people from different countries in English.

Like our Bengali girls of the same age group, she loves outing with friends, dinner in the restaurant and she loves dogs. She has two dogs- Mi, Tom (Noodle). She likes to eat a dish which is a kind of noodle made from crab. She also loves pizza. Her grandma's chicken preparation is also her favourite. However, she is unique in many respects. She spends quality time with her family and she is serious about her career. She is hard working. She wants to go to foreign countries especially to France. She opened her heart to me, told me about her grandfather. She loved him most. He died five years ago.

This eighteen year old girl took care of all the problems of the delegates from the forty three countries and was the leader of all the fifty volunteers. Vietnam is lucky to have daughters like her.

Humming Bird Igniting a Star

I have forgotten to tell about another friend poet **Jami Proctor**. Jami is an American and her husband is a Chinese. She is a very popular poet in China. Her book of poem Humming Bird igniting a Star is a cherished treasure for me.

Ramesh

Jami's Humming Bird igniting a Star is a remarkable book of poems. Her poems are esoteric. For example in her poem Ganges she tells us of a lady who wears a pendant around her neck where an Om is inscribed. She can feel sound vibration where words form. There is a kind of fairy tale atmosphere in her poems. A Little boy in the poem Ganges draws hands and they become flowers. He draws ears and they become birds.

Poetry Day at the Temple of Literature

Mousumi

March 5 is Vietnamese Poetry Day. It is a very sacred day in Vietnam, the land of poetry. It was a Full Moon Day. Interestingly, it was Holi on that day, the festival of colours in India. The Vietnamese Poetry Day opened on Thursday at the Hanoi's Temple of Literature with the theme "Turn the heart to the sea and islands". The avenue through which we reached the event stage was decorated with Pictures of all the participants from the different countries. On the side of the alley, the plants were decorated with poems.

Ramesh

It was as it were we entered the forest of poetry. The forest of poetry is the opposite of the Birnam wood of Shakespeare's Macbeth. Vietnam's forest of poetry seeks to invest the world with fresh myths never attempted before in any country and culture. Vietnam wants to look upon the world as made of the stuff of poetry.

The poetry day is the brainchild of Vietnam Writers Association. It was first organised in the year 2003 at the Temple of Literature. Culture Vov reports that the poetry day was celebrated at more than hundred places in Vietnam in 2015.

This is a unique experiment for Vietnam and unique experience for the strangers. Think of a nation loud with poetry on a particular day of a year. In fact every man is not merely a potential poet, he is a poet. Since poetry is at bottom the expression of one's heart when everyone is allowed to express himself or herself, can democracy be far behind? True democracy is not conditioned by the declaration of a formal constitution. Poetry implies sympathy with the other. It is through poetry that we can lift up our hearts beyond the ken of materialism. Poetry prompts us to

probe into the thing-in- itself lurking behind the phenomenal show of the world.

During the poetry festival they visit the Temple of Literature. The Temple of Literature is also the Temple of Confucius. it is also the oldest university of Vietnam. This is significant. The son of Confucius Kong Li recounts that the Master once asked him whether Kong Li had read the Odes and added that if he had not studied the Odes, there could be no more conversation between the Master and Kong. This anecdote is recorded in the Analects. And it shows how greatly Confucius deemed literature as the treasure house of wisdom. In fact some scholars opine that it was Confucius who compiled the Classic of Poetry. The Classic of Poetry is an integral part of canonical works associated with Confucius.

In ancient India a poet and a prophet are the same person- kavi. In ancient German the poet and the prophet are the same person- the vates. So it is perfectly all right when we find the temple of Confucius known as the Temple of literature.

Mousumi

It is also the oldest university of Vietnam.

Ramesh

Yes, in the temple of Confucius that was founded in 1070AD the University was set up in 1976 AD. Where else a university could be founded but in the temple of Confucius – the wisest of men under the Sun? The temple was reconstructed from time to time. But its oldest architecture still lingers. And it is still irradiating the light of literature amidst the gloom that envelops the world today.

The temple reminds me of the universities of ancient India. There was Takshasila University two thousand seven hundred years ago. Some ten thousand students lived there. They used to flock there from different parts of Asia. The university offered sixty four disciplines for study.

During the fifth century the Nalanda University was set up in what is now known as the state of Bihar in India. It was there that the great Chinese scholar and sage Hiuen Tsang studied at the feet of Venerable Shilbhadra. There were Vikramsila University, Valabhi University, Puspagiri Univeristy, Odantapuri University and numerous other similar centres of learning. But it is a pity that all these universities have turned into ruins. But despite the ravages of time Vietnam holds

on to her ancient university even today. It speaks of the steadfastness of Vietnam's national outlook.

Press Report

Taking "Vietnam's sea and islands" as its theme, the event opened with the recital of poem "Homeland is the mother's voice" by **Nguyen Viet Chien**. The poem describes Vietnamese people's pride in their national tradition, culture, patriotism, and heroism as well as their awareness of territorial sovereignty and hope in the younger generation.

There were separate areas for Vietnamese and foreign poems. The event featured songs in between recitals of poems. Slovakian poet **Neeva Mukova** recited three poems in Vietnamese, and **South African poet Indra Wossou, British poet Graham Mort, American poet Martha Collins** and **Mongolian poet BurneSambun** presented their new poems about Vietnam and introduced their countries' literature to Vietnamese poetry lovers. NeevaMukovasaid: *"The atmosphere of Vietnam Poetry Day is very special and impressive. Foreign poets recited their works. I'm impressed with their presentations in their mother tongue because I can feel the tones of each language. I like Vietnamese*

poems so much that I've begun writing poems in Vietnamese". The event created opportunities for Vietnamese and foreign poets to share their passion for poetry. It helped foreign poets better understand Vietnamese poetry and literature. Poet **Gjeke Marinaj** of the US said: *"Vietnamese literature is very unique. It is different, I think, from other countries, because it has a sense of beauty. It is delicate. You can only see that there's a kind of beauty in Vietnamese poetry: the metaphors, nature, people's love with sentiment. These are all literal devices that make Vietnamese poetry unique from many other countries".* Despite language barriers, poetry connects people. For many foreign poets, Vietnam Poetry Day is a nice experience. Iraqi poet **Naseer Flaiij Hassan** said: *"When I came here, I saw a very beautiful country and very beautiful nature. The crowd of dancing is very amazing. And I found very friendly people here. For me, now I have many ideas about Vietnamese and Vietnam's poetry. Now I know that poetry is important for Vietnamese people. When I go back, I'll have so many books of Vietnam poetry. I'll read them carefully because I love these people. I am interested in Vietnamese poetry".* Vietnam Poetry Day

included an exhibit of Vietnamese literary works translated and published abroad, books from Vietnamese publishers and a display of poems from poetry 30 Hanoi's poetry clubs. Writer **HuuThink** said: *"We are integrating into the world, even the world's culture. This is the time to export and promote our cultural values. We organized this event to promote Vietnamese culture. We need to do more because through culture, we can introduce Vietnam, its land and people to the world and learn more about the cultural values of other countries to further enrich our own culture"*.

Along with members of the Vietnam Writers' Association, the traditional arena also attracted students from six universities and nearly 20 poetry clubs from Hanoi and other eight localities across the country.

The participation of the Coast Guard High Command and Border Guard High Command is also a highlight of the event, bringing a number of interesting pieces celebrating the sea and islands.(
<http://vovworld.vn/en-US/Culture/Vietnam-Poetry-Day-2015/318014.vov> Radio The Voice Of Vietnam)

Mousumi

I sat beside two Chinese poets. The senior one was **Li Kaiyi**. And the other was a young poet **Xu Xingzheng**. Though we faced some difficulty as the Chinese poets were not proficient in speaking English, we had no difficulty in exchanging our literary creations. They gave me a collection of the verses translated into English and I gave them our magazine Platform. Poet and essayist Li Kaiyi, born in 1960, is the executive director of Yunnan Writers' Association. Poet Xu Xingzheng, born in 1976, began to publish works in 1999. He lives in Kunming.

The poets from Thailand performed their recitation in a group and Pornpen the senior most one was in the forefront. **Prabhassom Sevikul** is also a great author and poet from Thailand. His wife **ChutimaSevikul**, a writer is also a jovial lady. Prabhassom Sevikul has passed away just six months after the Asian Pacific poetic meet. May his soul rest in peace.

In the meantime, my French friend Dom and me went inside the temple and paid our homage in front of the statue of the Confucius and his closest disciples. We also visited the gift shops. Dom, being a veteran in Vietnam guided me to choose what to purchase or

not. She has gifted me a lovely colourful replica of a fish and a comb. I purchased replicas of tortoise, colourful ink pens with paintings of dragons, a flute, small models of Vietnamese couple, comb and a small mirror. There were also wrist bands of different zodiac signs. I purchased them with dollars. Dollar is the prevalent currency along with their Vietnamese Dong. One US dollar is 22, 456.1 VND and an Indian rupee is currently 341.26 Vietnamese Dong. So I didn't purchase much as psychologically I was always in the process of conversion of dollar into Indian currency value.

We returned to our hotel and quickly got ready for our next schedule. It was a reception given by **The President of Vietnam Truong Tan Sang**. It was also a new experience for me. The yellow coloured Gothic building with captivating stair cases looks like a king's palace. Inside the big hall, a statue of the leader Ho Chi Minh with red backdrop.

The President described foreign writers, poets, and translators at the Hanoi-based literary events as cultural ambassadors who will assist in cementing Vietnam's friendship with people around the world. He added that their presence in Vietnam was an

opportunity for his country to share its cultural values and help the international community to learn more about its literature. He said that the Vietnam's long-standing culture, a mosaic of fifty four ethnic groups' identities, is the power behind its people's victory over foreign invasions over and over again in the past.

<http://www.vietnambreakingnews.com/2015/03/vn-president-meets-foreign-writers-poets>

translators/reported that President Truong Tan Sang said - In the current DoiMoi (Reform) period, culture is considered as a target and also a momentum of the national development and protection. He said that a number of global scientists and technicians have been cooperating with Vietnam for its development, reflecting continued sentiments towards the country from international friends over the years.

Phu Thi-Gia Lam Hanoi

The next day March 6, we got ready around 7 Am for a trip to PhuThi- Gia Lam Hanoi, in the village of the great poet Cao Ba Quat. Cao Bá Quát was a Vietnamese poet of nineteenth century and a revolutionary who led a peasant uprising against

Emperor .Cao Bá Quát was well known for his eccentric personality; he chose to continue to live a poor man in tattered robes. Through his literary work, Cao Bá Quát expressed his discontent on how the dignity of man was at a loss impelled by man's desire for fame and fortune. The story of his death is shrouded in mystery. He was either executed or killed in a battle. Many of his poems were destroyed, but about 1400 of them survived. His poems treat Buddhism sceptically. In honour of the great poet, an incense ceremony was organised. The Vietnamese girls in bright yellow dresses paid homage with lighted candles. The artistic performance was photographer's delight. Dom did not miss the opportunity to video the show. The world poets of twenty first centuries paid homage to the revolutionary poet. Me thinks that it was the best venue for a poetry session. It was drizzling. The audience sat under big umbrellas. And the organisers invited on to the open stage the first speaker for the day our Sir Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya.

Dr. Ramesh said that language comes first and ideas next. Very naturally if the poets could give the language of peace , people will be all for peace. they

shall not be able to think otherwise. Surveying the poets from different lands of the world, he told us that there was God's plenty at the Asia Pacific Poetry Meet. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. They are capable of giving the language of peace and capable of establishing peace. He quoted the Upanishad- Saha naa vavatu Saha nau bhunaktu etc. May the power of peace protect and add strength to the teacher and the student, the employer and the employee, the colonizer and the colonizee, the speaker and the auditorium. All the dichotomies of the existence should be sublated into one creative spirit. Peace, peace, let there be peace. Let there be peace on our physical plane, let there be peace on our mental plane and let there be peace on the plane beyond. He read a short poem addressed to a Vietnamese deity... Oh Mother Goddess ...The whole atmosphere seemed more serene .because of the Sanskrit sloka which seemed like a song in Sir's melodious voice. The audience enjoyed the speech .there were huge applauses. The translator promptly translated his speech in Vietnamese language. After the speech, a Mongolian poetess came to Sir and introduced herself as a Shaman.

Ramesh

Yes, the auditorium applauded the chant of the Sanskrit sloka. This shows that the sound system of Sanskrit language is really captivating. Besides a large section of the auditorium seemed to have some notion of the Upanishads. They were happy when they heard the Upanishad in Sanskrit. It is evident from this that foreigners many of them are respectful to Indian culture. Does India today live up to their expectation?

Mousumi

The Pakistani poet Imdad Akash then recited his poems. When my turn came, I acknowledged that the festival had given me an opportunity to enrich myself. The President of the Writers Association Poet HuuThinh greeted me after the speech.

Another event was very memorable for me. Two young girls nineteen or twenty years of age, the volunteers- **Pe Jun** and **Hoang Thao** requested me to accompany them to an isolated corner. They are younger than my son. One of them tied a friendship band on my hand and the other gifted two pens, one for me and the other for the Sir. They were very much interested to have a photo with me. And now it was

my biggest treasure which I received from Vietnam. Whenever I see the photo, the innocent and lively faces of the two girls make me happy. And thanks to Mark Zuckerberg I can see those lovely faces quite frequently and communicate with them when I like to.

The lunch was at the PhuThi Village. And it was a memorable one. Local wine was served along with different delicacies. A group mind was formed with many poets with whom we had spent six days.

The closing ceremony venue was our Army Hotel auditorium. The party began from 7 pm. The representatives of different countries went to the stage and shared their experiences. We gave our books to the different delegates and we have also received their priceless creations. We were four from India. Sir and me, Rati and Divakar. We gave Indian paintings to our international friends. It was also the last day of our veg group dinner with adda. Indra and her friend, Divakar, Sir and me and a Vietnamese poet were the vegetarians who enjoyed the different delicious vegetarian cuisines.

Sir also wrote a letter to Kevin, the veteran poet from USA who has a long connection with Vietnam and the Vietnamese Writers Association. Sir gave suggestions

that there should be sessions where the poets and the poetry lovers would discuss different aspects of their creations. Besides, Sir asked for a short history of Vietnamese literature to be written by the Vietnamese Writers Association.

Sad Parting with Sweet Memories

The next day, invitees started to return. Our French friend Dom bade us goodbye. I felt a sudden sadness. Vietnam has been able to weave many hearts together. However we had many works to do on the last day. Our another friend **Poet Tran Quan Quy** came to our hotel room sharp at nine. He gave me an interview. Our young volunteer Phuong Nhi acted as the interpreter. Tran is a renowned poet of Vietnam. He is also an office bearer of the Vietnam Writers Association. He is a poet with difference. He has served in the Vietnam War. He has seen the brutality of war and the sufferings of humanity. He has lost a large number of his friends. Many of them were very talented people. He was born and brought up in a village . And his poems he thinks are reflections of his rural identity. He is proud of his identity.

In our eight days we have met a number of creative personalities. And everybody has his or her own history of struggle, survival, betrayal, success and failure. It is my limitation that I was not able to communicate with all of them in the short time span. What is the power of poetry? **Gjeke Marinaj** an Albanian American young poet wrote a poem *Horses* in 1990. It was a satiric poem. It was about the Albanian people who were being exploited by an oppressive regime. The power of the poem was such that it became the voice of protest in Albania. Anticipating that he would be hanged he fled. He crossed the Albanian-Yugoslavian border and fled first to Yugoslavia and later on to the United States. Gjeke Marinaj is a lively person and very popular in Vietnam, a communist country. Thus Marinaj truly has crossed many boundaries.

In the afternoon, Poet **Inrasara** came to meet us. Inrasara is an intellectual in the real sense of the term. He is an authority on Cham culture and Cham history.

The evening was cold and drizzling. Sir, Rati and me had a long adda session. **Rati** is an eminent Hindi poet, translator and Vedic scholar. She is the editor of

Kritya, an international journal of poetry publishing contemporary Indian and world poetry. Rati recited many of her poems. She told us about her struggles. The struggles are manifold. First being a girl child, then as a new bride in a new set up and then again at a new place in her own country where language is different. And she is a winner.

At the dinner table we met Musser and Metin. **Musser Yeniay** is a lovely young Turkish poet. Her poems have been translated into various languages. **Metin Cengiz** is also an eminent poet of Turkey. His poems have been translated into many languages and published in foreign magazines.

The next morning we woke up early. Our scheduled flight for Bangkok was in the morning. At the breakfast we met few other delegates who were also ready for the departure. The delegates from Laos and Mongolia were busy with their huge luggage.

The hospitality of the Vietnamese Writers Association was praiseworthy. The president of the Writers Association HuuThinh came in that early morning to bid us farewell. And Madam Dao was there as usual. Phuong Nhi, the young leader of the volunteers

was also there inspecting the arrangement for cars for the different groups for different flight times.

Ramesh

Note on HuuThinh

During our parting the poet Huu Think was present at the lounge of the Army Hotel. He personally bade farewell to every one of us the poets from different lands. His face was aglow with motherly love and wonderful kindness. Huu Think is the president of the Vietnam Writers association. And it was under his aegis that the Asia Pacific meet has taken place. And it seems to me that he brooded on the assembly like the Holy Ghost overflowing with the milk of humanism and casting a light on the meet that was never found in sea or land. He himself personally served red wine once to each one of the hundred fifty poets who assembled at Army hotel in Hanoi. His humility and politeness are time and again. They leave a stamp on every heart.

The poet HuuThinh introduces himself in his poem Words of Greetings in the following:

I am often spattered with sweat
Please imagine a life smudged with earth

Things easily Forgotten, things left out
This is me – you can imagine freely

I am often chased off by masses of rose thorns
No way would I be noticed by chance
At a big party people will remember the liquor
This is me – the unnamed glasses.

Clouds descend, find words to console the earth
This is me – a small, lonely kite
In happiness, I stand outside barred windows
In parting, I am the sad song humming

Children would like me to be a balloon
To fly, swaying in surprising happiness
They take turns calling for each other to grow up
This is me – a desolate stalk of rice.

The beauty of the person Huu Think far exceeds that
of his image on the mirror of poetry
We are in a world where everything moves very fast.
Take for instance the world of painting. Realism of the
nineteenth century was replaced by impressionism.
Thence painting moved to post impressionism and
symbolism. Presently futurism popped up only to be

displaced by fauvism. Fauvism had its hour and it gave way to cubism. Presently expressionism popped up its head and then there was sur-realism and so on in every sphere of life. Waves after waves of fresh thoughts and commodities come and go amidst this noise the poetry of HuuThinh momentarily transports the reader into silence that is eloquent. It is the silence of Bodhichitta as it were.

Return to Calcutta

Mousumi

A bye bye to the City of Lakes. From NoiBai airport to Suvarnabhumi airport by Thai Airways, we reached Thailand within two hours. Thailand seemed to be more close to me than earlier as it is the home of some of our newly acquainted friends- the Thai poets. Our next flight for Kolkata was in the night. It was nearly a nine hours stay at the airport. And we spent the time within the airport, a very busy airport. It seemed that it is a shopper's paradise. From the largest brands of comforts and luxuries-liquor, tobacco, chocolates, perfumes, cosmetics, fashion, watches, pens, lighters, accessories and costume

jewellery , skincare and aromatherapy, toys, books electronics and confectionaries to the local delicacies even sweet tasted tamarinds , it is a place of what not. There are also restaurants offering foods to satisfy different taste buds at steep prices. There are free Wi Fi zones. Both of us are averse to shopping. But still we cannot praise the airport economy of Bangkok. Sir gave me a large dictation. It was the explication of the poems of Mai Van Phan at the airport. Thanks to free Wi Fi, I sent them to Mai Van Phan then and there. We enjoyed a coffee. Price is Rs six hundred in Indian rupee. Time passed looking at travellers of different countries.

I took a snap of the sunset. It is interesting I clicked my first shot in this tour at this Suvaranarekha airport. It was the sunrise. We were waiting for our flight to Hanoi. And my ending shot was also at this airport.

We reached Dum Dum airport at midnight. After the dazzling airport of Bangkok, our Dum Dum airport seemed very sleepy and dull. We spent the remaining night at the airport. And at dawn we started for our home.

VIETNAM REVISITED

Ramesh

During our visit to Vietnam we gazed and gazed but little thought what wealth the show to us had brought. But now for oft when we lie in our beds Vietnam flashes upon our eyes which are the bliss of solitude. Calcutta is one of the most crowded cities in the world always loud with din and bustle. Amidst its madding crowd and ignoble strife among the noise of the traffic -the rattle of tram cars the horns of buses the clamour of the cabs all of a sudden the dragons of the Halong Bay and the symphony of the poetry in different tongues recur before our inward eye and those who look upon us whisper to one another -these are the men who are struck with Vietnam.

Well Vietnam appeared to me to be a country where freedom reigns supreme.

Loneliness

Vietnam seems to suffer from loneliness. Why? At present Vietnam has joined in treaties with Japan, America and many other countries of the world. Still why does Vietnam suffer from the notion of

loneliness? Le Minh Khue observes that the Vietnamese language does not get as much attention as other languages do. (TL page 133). How come this loneliness occurs? Earlier a people would remain contented being pent up in the shell of their culture. But with the passage of time every people is directly or indirectly connected with other peoples. Naturally if Japan becomes economically a super power, Vietnam or India want to catch up with Japan's affluence. This is just like children vying with each other. If someone is very good in playing football another child wants to emulate it. But such things are easy to say. We cannot help competing with one another. Otherwise we cannot survive. Right now the world market is there and it is real. And we must succeed there, Look at the world market of literature. Claudel, Rimbaud, Valery , Eluard from France, T.S. Eliot from England , Nabokov of Russia, Ole Shoenka from Africa , Lorca from Spain, Umberto Eco from Italy to name a few flood into the markets of the developing countries. On the contrary the so called developing countries are no less rich in their literature. But it is a pity that their literary activities are little known abroad. Commonly developing countries are not worried about these

facts. On the other hand Vietnam is aware of the fact that its language and literature are not popular abroad. Literature is not a commodity like a television set or a refrigerator. Literature is not a material wealth like iron ore or gasoline of Tonkin Bay. It is something spiritual/intangible in relation to them. And Vietnam as it were seeks to impress the world with its spiritual wealth. Even though Vietnam had undergone harrowing times loud with gunfire and explosion of bombs, Vietnam seems to have quelled its war drums only to beat the drums of Dhamma. But Vietnam should at the same time remember that the western powers set up colonies all over the globe in the nineteenth century. Vietnam herself was chained under the shackles of French imperialism. And wherever the rulers go, they teach the ruled their own language and literature. True that Lorca joined in the Spanish civil war to resist fascism or Sartre opposed America's interference in the affairs of Vietnam. But who sells Sartre? Who sells Lorca? It is the capitalists who have made commodities of Sartre and Lorca. An American economist and sociologist noticed that the mandarins of the feudal period linger even today in the shape of capitalists. And the feudal lords of yore

are in the skin of the capitalists and democrats sometimes. Neither India nor Vietnam ever set out for the conquest of alien countries. No wonder that neither Vietnamese literature nor Indian literature is at the moment sold like hot cakes in the world market.

In order that Vietnamese literature could make a dent on the world market Vietnam organises the Asia Pacific Poetry Festival in a grand way. Vietnam Writers Association has also set up a centre for translation so that Vietnamese literature could reach alien shores. We have already discussed translation paradigms. But translations are not enough. There should be classical elements of the classic of the Vietnamese literature so that its grandeur and glories could be pursued by the elites of every culture and country. When HuuThinh says

We do not want to only be the market that consumes world literature, we must become part of the cultural exchange, he certainly thinks of literature as a commodity in this context. Surely literature could be looked upon as a commodity. The poet is here an artisan. Either the capitalist or the state can alone get the commodity marketed. In order that a commodity could be sold, one must be aware of the

distinguishing features of the commodity. And one must position the same in the vast array of the literatures of the world.

Wealth of Vietnamese Literature

In this context we had better dwell on the wealth of the Vietnamese literature.

The Literature of a nation is always rooted into the mundane reality as perceived by a nation. Vietnam underwent thousand years of servitude under the Chinese rule. Later on for almost hundred years the French ruled Vietnam. Also Vietnam was enslaved by the Japanese people for a time. Finally the colonial powers got Vietnam partitioned. The North Vietnam was earned by the Communists while the South Vietnam was awarded to a stooge government serving as an agent of a foreign power. Consequently, a war laying the logic of affairs between the people of Vietnam and America. Presently Vietnam had a long drawn battle with China. In fact the Vietnam we visited has passed through the fire of continuous war for forty years and proved its mettle. Vietnam might say with Jesus of yore- I am the resurrection. Vietnam reminds

us of Sita the heroine of the epic of India the Ramayana. Just as Sita had to prove herself braving the ordeal by way of walking through fire or just as Kremhield of the German epic Nibelungenlied Vietnam went through fire test, so did. Consequently one of the chief motifs of Vietnamese literature through the ages is war poetry. But curiously enough while most of the nations revel in heroic poetry where war is glorified Vietnam is different. The Ramayana dwells on how Lanka has been rescued from the rule of a demon. The Mahabharata another Indian epic of ancient times narrates how the forces of good win over the forces of evil. Shahnameh of Firdausi dwells on the battle between the father and the son , Sohrab and Rostum. Gilgamesh enshrines in it the heroic adventures of Gilgamesh the king of Uruk and Enkidu. Iliad narrates how Troy is burnt. Song of Roland glories in knighthood and narrates how Roland and his handful of friends resist myriads of invaders and brave death. The Anglo Saxon epic Beowulf kills three ogres one after another. But no such heroic poem figures in the history of literature of Vietnamese language. The epic poem which is placed in the niche of the temple of Vietnamese literature is

the Tale of Kieu. It narrates how a woman who is exceedingly beautiful and talented is in love with a gentleman of high watermark. But for the sake of her family she has to sell herself to a debauch. Thereafter she was sold out again and over again. But she holds on through all these ordeals. And is finally liberated. She meets her lover but she does not marry him. The tale of Kieu is meaningful on n levels. It is a triumph of feminist literature long before the wave of feminism that has swooped upon the literature today. But ironically enough the patience of Kieu and her hardships seem to symbolise the stance of Vietnam in the face of the terrible ordeals put forward before her by history. Maybe just as Christ braved the cross to redeem man before the eyes of God the Father, so did Vietnam undergo the trials and tribulations of history only to redeem the whole humanity in the face of an impending another nuclear war in which hydrogen bombs and neutron bombs could be used. The war poems of Vietnam must be read in this context of the character of Vietnamese people. It has been observed that the poets of the nineties onwards are no longer interested in war themes. Although the younger generation of the poets in Vietnam that fired

up with patriotism even in 2014 when the possibilities of a war with China showed up, but war poetry is not engrossed with so called battle between the protagonists and the antagonists. Right now we live in the so called global village where a single day does not glide away without a war here or there. Think of Iraq, think of Syria, think of Nigeria . The number of the war torn countries in the world today is countless. And what does war do? Its effect is not limited to those who clash in the battlefield. When the invaders come Tran Hung Dao warns us-Your gardens and rice fields won't be enough to save your life, worth even a thousand tolas of gold; your devotion to your wife and children won't be of any use for the nation. The greatness of your wealth won't buy the enemy's head; your hunting dogs can't chase away the opponents. Good wine wouldn't make him drunk or dead; doleful music wouldn't make him deaf. Our king and his mandarins would be captured, what a tragedy! Not only is my land lost, your property will also be transferred to others; not only will my family be driven out , your wife and children will also be seized. Not only will the graves of my ancestors be trampled on; the tombs of yours will also be intruded

upon. Not only do I suffer humiliation for a hundred years to come, a shame impossible to erase; your family will be bound in defeat. Could you indulge yourself in wanton pleasure then? (A hunger for peace pg. 13). Practically there is the same message in the ancient Indian epic the Mahabharata which dates back to 3rd century BC perhaps. And the proclamation of Tran Hung Dao in the 13th century applies to the world today. Just as the destruction of the forest in the Amazon valley could affect a flood in Indonesia, just as the Chernobyl incident in Russia affected the whole of Europe so does war. Be it near Granada or in Gold coast war will affect any other country be it Vietnam or India. So war poetry as a genre is not dated. Besides war poetry teaches us to love our country, the flora and fauna of our land. It awakens our love for our family and our reverence for our ancestors that might remain dormant in times of peace. So love resides at the heart of war poems. War poems in this context could be described as love poems in disguise. And let us first retrieve the wealth of war poems in Vietnamese literature.

War Poems

Tran Quang Khai writes

All the port of Chuong Duong Quay

We seized the enemy's spears

And captured the Mongols on the Ham Tu estuary

Give yourself completely over to a life of peace

And the mountain river will last ten thousand years

Today directly through war or indirectly through preparedness for war every day the environment of the globe is being destroyed. Earth is the only spaceship where we can remain as travellers from birth to death. If this spaceship is destroyed whither shall we go? Quo Vadis? And the great poet Tran Quang Khai of the thirteenth century exhorts us-

Give yourself completely over to a life of peace

And the mountain river will last ten thousand years

The country in which we are born is our mother. She nurses us. It is on her breasts that we play during our childhood. It is on her lap that we become aware of our manhood. It is into her arms that we go for our hiding presently after old age. And we are all of us indebted to our country. A famous general captured by the Chinese in the fifteenth century exclaims -My

debt to the land is unpaid (Hunger for Peace pg. 22). All of us be it a Vietnamese or an Indian should be aware of our great indebtedness to our motherland and to our mother tongue.

Let us refer to two Tay ethnic writers in this context. **Y Phuong** said-Literature is the work to repay those who gave birth and a settled position to me. **Cao Duy Son** confided – I write as if it was a debt repayment to my homeland, to those who gave birth to me, to friends, to neighbours...(TL pg 113 ff). Here is aesthetics to be cultivated by the writers all over the world. To defend our motherland and mother tongue there must be poems written on horseback on a ten thousand mile journey (Hunger for Peace pg 20).

Le Cang Tuan of the fifteenth century was captured by the Chinese. He does not pray for an escape from the prison. He exclaims

I'm three thousand mile away, a foreign captive,
Without the presence of my mother for forty-five
years.

He further laments that he is away from the ancestor's graves in a foreign land. Love for the country implies love for the mother and reverence for the ancestors. Ancestor worship is one of the chief features of the

Vietnamese people. And may be the teachings of Confucius are lurking behind such poems.

Mousumi

The war poems of Vietnam are matchless. The peace hungry world can quench their thirst from them. And since literature is a unique product in the arena of marketing, its marketing objective should be a unique one. It ought to be a societal marketing. It expects marketers to install social and ethical values to the target consumers -the peace hungry poetry lovers.

Individual

Ramesh

Individual here in Vietnam is a value. That is why Huu Think the President of the Writers Association told us in the address that every individual poet is a planet himself and the assembly of poets from far wide in Hanoi appears like a galaxy. We have already referred to the ego in Cao Bao's poetry . His poems like-I want to climb to the highest mountain top reminds us of a Bengalee poet Nazrul Islam-

Say thou brave soul

Say My head is ever upright

Gazing at my head the crests of the yonder
Himalayas are bent.

Cao Bao exclaimed -I want to pull the Sun close with
one hand. Nazrul cried-

I go past the skies

I tear asunder the Sun and the Moon and the stars
And rise to the utter dismay of the Creator

In order to fully appreciate one's own country one had
better go to other countries. In order to enjoy one's
own literature one had better travel the realms of gold
of other literatures.

Dr Mai Huang observes- Instead of describing
individual's destiny behind the destiny of the
community literature has to use individual's destiny as
the starting point, the final target and the centre of the
artistic glass. (TL page 104).Consequently it probes
into the psychological depth and socialisationof an
individual figure in the novels. The characters appear
as mini universes full of mysteries with sudden
psychological changes and unpredictable actions.

In the realm of literature there is no restraint practiced
on the poets and writers in Vietnam. In Soviet Russia
poets and intellectuals were harassed if they had not
followed the aesthetics upheld by the government

such as Socialist Realism when Trotsky was on saddle. Quite a few great poets and intellectuals and artists had to flee from Russia such as Shkolovsky Roman Jacobson Akhmatova and so on. But here in Vietnam one can hear the echo of every literary movement that flashes forth anywhere in the world. Thus symbolism surrealism and post modernism have also provoked the creative artists of Vietnam.

Respect for the individual in the realm of literature proves that there is very much democracy in the realm of thought and writings in Vietnam. Tuyet Nga's article entitled Democratic Spirit: the Driving force in the development of Vietnamese Poetry etc. (TL page 172) throws ample light on this issue.

Even debates on the mode of governing the state and on the structure and function of the constitution are not a taboo in Vietnam. One is free to criticise the government and the constitution if one so wills. We have already illustrated this by way of referring to Bitter Flame. Indeed one could find more freedom of thought in Vietnam than in many so called democratic countries with multi-party system.

Different Genres in Modern Vietnamese Literature

With the advent of modern Vietnamese literature new genres popped up. War diary is most significant among them. They give a refreshing view about the wars in the immediate past to the readers. **Dang Thui Tram's** diary is one of them. There we find a beautiful woman come of a noble family volunteering to go to the war zones to help save wounded soldiers. The diary describes how the soldiers died bravely. There are also many other diaries written by those who have been martyrs later published by their families. These diaries help us understand about life and people during a time when everything was for the frontline and there was nothing more precious than independence and freedom. Many of them penned in combat trenches or on the way to the battlefields or in between two bombs (TL page 154).

Besides there have been novels like Bitter flame. We have already referred to the same.

There have been detective novels as well. The Adviser written by **Huu Mai**(TL 225) for example. In fact detective novels are always a metaphor of an

aesthetics. The reader is a detective. The author is the thief as it were. The reader chases the author to get at the end of a narrative which the author is wont to defer.

In modern Vietnamese literature we find every kind of genre and every kind of style including surrealism, symbolism, postmodernism and so on. But a great poet does not belong to any school whatever. The works of **Nguyen QuangThieu** is an instance (TL 193).

Modern Vietnamese literature is imbued with a quest. There is the quest for the self (TL pg 94) as well as there is the quest for cultural identity in renovation and integration period (TL 234).

Spiritual Fine Excess and Buddhism

A survey of the literature of Vietnam from earliest times till death will show any casual reader that it is imbued with a spiritual message. **Thuy Duong** remarks – if they are cut from their religious roots they will get lost, lonely and miserable (TL pg 95). HuuThinh observes in his speech- Vietnamese writers

have a special position and an irreplaceable influence on the spiritual treasury of the Vietnamese people. We can read Buddhism in many of the poems and write ups composed by Vietnamese poets and authors. If channels of marketing could be forged this fine excess of spiritual bounty of Vietnam could inundate the world destroying all the warheads that are been preserved by the belligerent countries.

Thus Vietnamese literature has certain utility in the world market of literature. If Tham Luan really gives us a glimpse of the discourses raging in contemporary Vietnam and its neighbouring states we dare say hereby that the tenets of Buddhism function as an undercurrent in most of these discourses. For example, the speech of **Naowarat Pongpaiboon** (henceforth NP) is entitled The Three Parts of Poetic Wisdom (TL 52,ff). One wonders whether the title of the speech reminds one of the three gems of Buddhism-

Buddham Saranam Gachhaami

Sangham Saranam Gachhaami

Dharmam Saranam Gachhaami

With Mr NP poetry is the comprehensive “Buddhi Panya” or the true wisdom. This reminds us of

Buddhism that seeks to attain Prajna Paramita or perfection in wisdom. When Mr NP says – the spirit does not perceive the sensations through six channels or Sadayatana it is Buddhism. Since sensations are not perceived by the spirit there must be the space for memory and poetry seems to be a recollection of emotion recollected in tranquility. This is Wordsworth. But this is Buddhist aesthetics as propounded by NP. NP prescribes five do's for the poets. They are i) Be in the present; ii) Be the voice of the oppressed, iii) be detached from individual attitude which is not self-serving but serves the majority , iv) Must have political conscience, v) work like a lion which means neglecting the crown and take no pleasure in being under the skin of other animals. Does it not remind us of the Panchasheel of Lord Buddha and the five precepts of Confucius? Like Buddha NM observes- Today's world spins with great speed into folly and easily leads us astray. The claw of power, the illusion of worldly gains hurt and weakens people. Our society needs immediate healing and NP thinks that poetry could come to the aid of humanity. We can revolutionise the world even with the tip of our pens.

The instance of a lion of a poet could be found in Tran Nhan Tong belonging to the thirteenth century. Dr. Nguyen of Vietnam Writers Association has delineated the story of this lion of a poet- a king turned saint. He left his throne at the age of thirty five and became a recluse. He has been one of the founders of Vietnamese poetry (TL pg. 85). We have already alluded to him. In fact early Vietnamese poetry was deeply influenced by the poets of the Tang dynasty and by Buddhism. The early poets were Buddhist priests. They dwelled on the philosophy of Lord Buddha. The style they employed was reminiscent of Tang poetry (TL page 184). Thuy Duong in his I and the era I'm living in points out

i) Our writing generation goes from one illusion to another. ii) Things seem to be solid now, but they are easy to break.

There is nothing to believe in. Without such belief humans have nothing to lean on, man therefore does things that are unbelievable. Thuy Duong seeks his own self and seeks the faith required for his own self to survive in his novels. And in the novel Barefoot he observes if the people are cut off from their religious

roots and humane values they would be get lost, be lonely and miserable (Page 95).

Nguyen XuanKhanh has written a book about a religion that worship Vietnamese mother. Does it allude to worship of Mother Goddess? By the by worship of Mother Goddess is widely spread in India . It is especially very popular in Bengal.

Tran NhuanMinh observes that some poets go into their inspirational spirits may be it is something God given create spectacular beauties never delineated in prose or rhyme. (TL page 160)

The so called communist government led by Pol Pot in Cambodia created images of horror and out Heroded Herod. Vietnamese volunteers rushed to rescue the Cambodians from the cruelties of the Pol Pot government. The Vietnamese soldiers as depicted in the novel Unchanged Colourland sacrificed their lives for the sake of the freedom of their neighbours. **SuongNguyet Minh** observes that the volunteering soldiers loved their enemies khmer just like they love their own people. Carrying the elderly, starve themselves to save the food for others, helping women through labour, taking care of sick children. They'd rather suffer the thirst than steal one

coconut from places even when no one was there. They'd rather eat salt than catch the fish from the field. Some injured soldier who were watching five or six prisoners who just shot them and still kept calm. The images of the volunteering soldier according to SNM were as beautiful as Buddhist soldiers. Does it not mean that the Vietnamese government, the Vietnamese army and the Vietnamese people are at bottom as loving as Lord Buddha himself. It does not matter much whether they are Buddhists or not.

Distinguishing Features of Vietnamese Literature

Firstly, modern Vietnamese literature is at par with the avant garde western literature today.

Secondly, the war poetry of Vietnam is different from any other war poetries of the world.

Thirdly, with Confucius family is all in all. Love for the mother, love for the child, love for home, love for the native village, love for nature and love for motherland are recurrent motifs in Vietnamese poetry.

Fourthly, Vietnamese literature has a fine excess of spiritualism and the quest for the self.

Fifthly, Vietnamese literature of today is keenly concerned with how to hasten the development of the country. This might be a lesson to the developing nations of the world to expedite development. Engineers, scientists, economists and the like are not enough. The poets must be there to kindle the imagination of a nation and engineer the road to development.

In order that this wealth of literature could be distributed in the world market, competent translation of Vietnamese literature is the exigency of the hour. Writers Association has already set up a specialised department for getting Vietnamese literature translated into foreign tongues. In this context a discourse on translation paradigm will not be out of place.

Translation of Vietnamese Literature into Other Languages

But Vietnam laments that Vietnam is on the receiving end. The literature of Vietnam is not translated into foreign languages and consequently Vietnam has not

been able to leave a stamp on world literature. That is why Vietnam feels lonely.

One cannot but appreciate this stance of Vietnam. The Head of the State and the Party is also worried by it. But in India where multiparty system exists such enthusiasm is neither found among the government nor among the intelligentsia.

And in order that Vietnamese literature is translated into different foreign tongues, in order that the poets of all the world are drawn to Vietnamese literature the Asia Pacific meet of the poets is organised. The poets of Vietnam are surely proud on this stance of the state and the Vietnams Writers Association. Sadly enough no such endeavors if any are perceptible in India.

True but the Asia Pacific poetry meet in Vietnam in 2015 was the third meet of the kind. The media asks what has been the concrete result of such a conference. The media asks how many Vietnamese titles have been translated into foreign tongues. There is no statistics. We feel that such misgiving of the media is reasonable. But the present author can point out that at least some concrete achievements have been borne by the Asia Pacific Meet in Vietnam undoubtedly. Biplab Majee a leading poet of our

generation has translated many of the poems composed in Vietnamese. He has translated the poems of Tran Quan Quy into Bengali. A book on Vietnam by Biplab is at the moment on print. A group of poets under the leadership of Dr Mousumi Ghosh has undertaken the task of translating Mai Van Phan. 250 millions of people speak Bengali and they are spread all over the world. If Vietnam could remain in touch with the Bengalee the dissemination of Vietnamese literature and Vietnam's soul would get a mileage.

Marketing

Ramesh

What is a market? Why? It is a place where there are buyers and sellers. The seller must have exclusive rights as to the commodity that he sells. That is why he can transfer the commodity to a buyer. As soon as the commodity is purchased the seller's right to the commodity no longer exists. Instead the exclusive right to the commodity is now transferred to the buyer. But literature as a commodity is different. A piece of

literature radiates like a lamp or like uranium on its own. And no one can stop it. There is a fiction in law that imposes copyright but the copyright remains only for a limited passage of time. Who can erase the tale of Kieu from the hearts of the Vietnamese people? Who dares to wipe off the songs of Milarepa from the hearts of the Tibetans? Who dares to ban Tolstoy from the face of the earth?

In our opinion mere translations of the ancient and modern classics of Vietnam into different languages are not enough. There should be numerous critical estimates of those classics written in different languages that will pinpoint the intrinsic merits of Vietnamese literature and culture. As long as we developing countries claim that we have written surrealistic poems as beautiful as those of Andre Breton or as long as we brag that we have written novels at par with those of Proust or James Joyce we cannot sell our literature. One who is the first in the market can get the major dividend. There may be a country whose major export could be the books.

One who is the first in the market can get the major dividend. There may be a country whose major export could be the books

But on another level when good literature is exported it evokes a special regard among the masses of the foreign shores for the culture of the country that exports the literature. Consequently other products of the exporting country could be easily, marketed in the aforesaid foreign shores. That is a good strategy.

Mousumi

Peter Drucker, the father of modern management said-Marketing is everything. All other activities are support services to the marketing strategy that one pursues. Mind it there are differences between selling and marketing. In selling the emphasis is on the product, whereas in marketing emphasis is on the needs and wants of the consumer. Planning for marketing is a long run one, in terms of new products, tomorrow's markets and future growth whereas for selling, it is a short run oriented one and focus is on today's trends.

A market is a process of interaction between buyers and sellers. Market can also be viewed as a group of customers who exhibit similar needs and have the ability to satisfy those needs. In marketing, a product

is anything that can be offered to a market that might satisfy the want or need. And, here the product is Vietnamese literature. The customers are lovers, they love literature. In reality, these buyers do not belong to the homogeneous group. Every book lover has got specific preferences, resources and needs. Since it is almost impossible to cater to every customer's individual characteristics, marketers have to group customers to market segments on the basis of common characteristics. The segmentation explains whom to target. It facilitates proper choice of the target market and effecting tapping of the market. For effective segmentation, the organisation involved in marketing must be able to make segmented customers aware of products and services. And they must get products to them through the distribution system at a reasonable cost. Since, the product is a piece of literature, the awareness campaigning needs to be a unique one. Similarly, the role of publishing houses, the distribution network, the e- networks of blogging and social media, government policies, issues of piracy and copyrights and many other factors all play significant roles. Social media cannot sell a book, but forge a relationship which can help to

sell book. Market segmentation can be of more than one base.

In publishing, an author or a publisher or the title of a book could be a brand or a signifier of a brand.

There is language based segmentation based on people speaking the common language, region, size, population density, psychographics segmentation based on the study of lifestyle of individuals, demographic segmentation based on age, income , purchasing power and other variables. And depending on the available resources, experience and competency of the marketer and the time available, the marketer will decide which market to target. A target market is a set of buyers sharing common needs or characteristics that the company decides to serve. There are different types of targeting marketing options .

In our opinion, concentrated marketing strategy may be a suitable option where the product is literature of a country. Targeting a selected market segment instead of all the available market segments may be a better option. The next step is the positioning of the product. Positioning is act of developing an image to occupy a distinct place in the minds of the target

market. It is essential to select an image that sets the product apart from the competing products and inform target customers about the product. And the product here is Vietnamese literature.

In the realm of literature market, the focus is not only the market place but also upon the market space. A market place is a physical place where buyers and sellers meet for an exchange whereas a market space is the virtual world where buyers and sellers meet through the internet. And now the borderline between the place and the space has becoming blurred. Amazon announced in late 2011 that their e-book sales had overtaken their sales of paperbacks and hardcover books combined. The e-book reading devices like digital e-readers, tablet computers, smart phones are surely to get credit for that. They are now portable, convenient, cost effective for a large section of customers especially in the developed world.

Publication of e books has its merits. The most significant one is the ability to build a stronger global customer base. Besides that required investment is low as both production costs and inventory storage costs are lower. However, one needs to be aware of

the issue of piracy and the Digital Rights Management technology.

International marketing management is the need of the hour. It is more so as Vietnam witnessed dramatic changes after Doi Moi.

However, international literature marketing is distinguished from local marketing. It is governed by the rules and regulations of the foreign countries. It also deals with the cultural diversities that exist between nations. To succeed, marketers must know the customer in a context including the competition, government policy and regulation, and the broader economic, social, and political macro forces that shape the evolution of literature market.

Among the international market entry strategy, joint ventures, direct investment, franchising are popular ones. A joint venture is a strategic alliance where two or more parties, usually publishers form a partnership to share markets and profits. Establishing a joint venture with a foreign firm may be with a foreign author /translator or a publisher can be a mode for entering a new market. A firm is a decision making unit with respect to production. Since, the product here is literature, thus a firm can be an author/

publisher or any stakeholder associated with the literature marketing endeavor. Through foreign direct investment, one can invest directly in facilities to produce and/or market a product, the Vietnamese literature in a foreign country. Franchising is a specialised form of licensing in which the franchiser often assists the franchisee to run the business on an on-going basis. Since Vietnam is interest about export of literature, it needs to bring its literature to the notice of potential buyers. True that the international literary conference and the poetry festivals are noble mode of cross cultural communication, a major factor that influences an individual's perception towards brands is the country where it is made. And here interestingly, the brand is Vietnamese literature and the country of origin is Vietnam. The macro factors that contribute to the image of a country are economy, technology, wealth index, regulatory mechanisms, government and business history. Moreover there are the micro factors- the channels of marketing. Any literature export policy is functionally dependent on some or all of these factors. And in this international marketing of Vietnamese literature, the role of internet is also a very significant one. This is because the

basic difference between domestic and international promotion is that the latter is essentially a cross cultural communication. The social networks are the best platforms for a cross cultural communication. And one should be smart enough to act first. To be the first in the market space is the need of the hour for the Vietnamese literature.

Ramesh

Yes, selling and marketing is not the same. Selling is the consequence of marketing. Marketing commonly speaking seeks to cater to the needs of the potential consumers.

In the world today, threats of a nuclear war loom large. If there is another nuclear war man shall have to fight with sticks thereafter. Or else the whole earth might turn into a piece of charcoal floating in the space. In the face of it the language of peace is all that the world needs. And Vietnam could prove herself to be the fountainhead of the language of peace. Her war poetry is imbued with the hunger for peace. And as Mousumi observed, it is matchless.

Thanks to the fast changing technology and ever in the flux world market people are confused. They

suffer from a spiritual vacuum. Vietnamese literature could fill up the vacuum.

Vietnam must be in her own element if she seeks to make a dent in the world market. Imitation of western literary movements cannot lead Vietnam anywhere even though Vietnamese literature is of high water mark. The typically Vietnamese aesthetics that is suggested by them is not laid bare by the philosophers of Vietnam as it appears to us.

Any market has segments. Marketing commonly chooses a specific market segment for its target. That way Vietnamese literature should be translated into the major languages of the world in that light. Bengali should be considered as one of the target markets. Vietnamese literature should plunge in the aesthetics of comparative literature to prove its intrinsic merits.

An intelligent media could support this proposition.

The embassies should interact with the people where the embassies are stationed and try to shape their culture in the light of Vietnamese culture and experiences.

Practically Vietnam must be the brand of Vietnamese literature. Therefore Vietnam must make a mark in international politics and in the world economy.

Hence, just as every citizen of Vietnam should work hard so that Doi Moi should be successful so also the like of us the lovers of Vietnam should also labour to propagate the message of Vietnam as percolated through Vietnamese literature. With us me and Mousumi, there is no hesitation to speak aloud in praise of Vietnam. Because Vietnam with its Halong Bay and fairyland physical and cultural atmosphere, with her voice of the fairies could lull the belligerent states of the world to peace.

EPILOUGE

Ramesh

It matters little whether one party rules a country or many parties rule a country. There must be no hard and fast rule that one model of constitution could be imposed on every state of the world. In fact every people has its own history and experiences and it is in the light of these experiences that a people should have their own constitution.

Yes, behind the declaration of the constitution of Vietnam the towering figure of Ho Chi Minh burns like a flame that shaped it. Ho Chi Minh was a communist par excellence. And it was under his leadership that Vietnam achieved its freedom. Being an Indian, I can aptly ask why despite the fact that there has been a communist party in India since 1916, India has not been transformed into a communist country. As to my perception, Ho Chi Minh was as much a patriot as he was a communist. Jean Lacouture in his biography of Ho Chi Minh claims that Ho Chi Minh invented national communism (page 259). But this has not been the case in India. The communists here were

ties to the chariot wheels of communist internationalism and undermined the patriotic feelings of the people. Ho Chi Minh when required befriended China. When the interests of the country needed he went with Russia. Everywhere the interest of his country was in the foreground.

Ho Chi Minh is one of those rare freedom fighters in the world who was as much a poet as he was a fighter. Even if his political contributions were forgotten his poetry would exist. Being an Indian I must confess that there is no Indian political leader of Ho Chi Minh stature, no maker of India who has been such a great poet.

Even after achieving freedom Vietnam had to fight long with foreign aggressors. She had to rescue its neighbour Cambodia from the tyranny of the so called communist regime of Pol Pot. This reminds us of Pandit Nehru the first Prime Minister of India. He helped Indonesia to achieve its freedom.

Vietnam has been the giant killer outdoing France outwarring America and repelling China. She has come out of the flames of forty years of war with the major powers of the world, reborn like the phoenix. And Vietnam is on its road to development.

Vietnam is one of the fast developing countries of the Far East. And it seems that Vietnam is destined to have a niche in the comity of nations. Vietnam has the elan vital in her to lead the world amidst the encircling gloom. We say this from our firsthand experience of Vietnam.

What did we find in Vietnam? It is truly a country having a soul made of poetry. The Bai Tho Mountain or the Poem Mountain stands a monument signifying the truth. In 1468 the king poet Le Thanh Tong etched a poem on a flat rock in the mountain. Two hundred sixty eight years later Lord Trinh Trinh Cuong – a famous poet during Le Trinh period read the poem of the king Le Thanh Tong and wrote another poem on a cliff. This is how poetry of one generation lights the poetry of another generation.

And even in the face of life and death question amidst ceaseless war for decades together Vietnam's vein of poetry has never been stunted. Vietnam's kings and generals and the freedom fighters have always been poets and they, as legends testify often, repelled their aggressors playing on musical instruments. This is nonviolence. Nonviolence and love are the message that Vietnam spreads in the war torn world. Through

the century Vietnam has undergone untold sufferings like another Christ and Vietnam's message to the world sees eye to eye with that of Christ- Love thy neighbour as thyself.

And this is evident from Vietnam's gesture towards its neighbours as well as towards America. It may be argued that in the world today one cannot but make treaty with America. The cold war over, there has been the end of history as it were and market is all in all. Hence Vietnam had to make treaty with America. There might be some grain of truth in it. But at the same time Vietnam's history shows that she has never been revengeful. Lord Buddha exclaimed in Dhammapada

The enemy cannot be conquered with enmity

By love alone one can overpower the hatred of the
adversary

Vietnam has been able to draw the attention of the scientists in her march on her road to development. Vietnam gratefully acknowledges this.

True that Vietnam is a deserving candidate in the world market to earn its due share. But as the poet Huu Think observes - The centre of the world's attention today is no longer a free market but a

development which has exceeded all means of control, not the old system of thinking that threatens and uses weapons to solve problems around the world but peace dialogue and cooperation in all possible aspects.

The centre of the world's attention today is no longer a free market but a development which has exceeded all means of control, not the old system of thinking that threatens and uses weapons to solve problems around the world but peace dialogue and cooperation in all possible aspects

-Huu Think

Huu Think here is very much right. History witnessed the partition of Africa, two great wars impelled by the scramble for market. In fact this lust for market of the West brought about great misfortunes upon the rest of the world but at the same time market could lead to exchange of ideas and cooperation. What we sell in

the market is not a commodity but an idea of which commodity is just an incarnation. If this spiritual import of market and marketing could be understood the world market would really turn the world into a global village where everyone lives to serve everyone else.

The West organised its first industrial fair in London in 1851 under the supervision of Prince Albert. There was the Chicago industrial fair in 1893 where the world met. Vietnam organised its first Asia Pacific Poetry Meet only to remind the world that emphasis has shifted from industrial goods to the intangible goods like poetry which is made of the stuff of love.

The world today has entered a stage where the powers of greed or Mara of Buddhist lore are face to face with the powers of love upon the heath unrolled by Time where the powers of nuclear weapons are being challenged by the powers of poetry, where the consumer's goods laid bare by the industrial fairs are being contested by the wealth of poetry displayed at the Asia Pacific Poetry Meet.

The poetry festival has united the poets of the world. An armageddon therefore lies in the logic of affairs where poetry will change the hearts of the unimaginative politicians and the unscrupulous

businessmen just as Thach Sanh changed the hearts of the enemies playing on a musical instrument (TL pg. 7). When love and poetry prevails in this world there will be no need of positive law. Then joy will be its own security. And the blessings of Anarchism will shower upon earth. State will wither away although differences will linger. Differences will give rise to countless melodies and they together will make a symphony for gods to hear.

The Jews are the chosen seed of God. There are other nations which claim that they are the favourites of the gods. But the demi gods viz. the dragons have alighted on the earth in Halong Bay to permanently live on earth. Thus the Halong Bay in Vietnam is the greatest place of pilgrimage for man. It is a holy place charged with the *mysterium tremendum* which inspires reverence, awe and fear in us. We are tongue tied and dumb founded.

Myself from India is a passionately religious person. In India there are countless religions, cults etc. and the like. India is a secular state. Vietnam is an atheist state on the other hand. Is it? My perception of Vietnam is that she is as much secular as India is. Although as per Wikipedia and official statistics less

than one-third of the total population of Vietnam identify themselves with one or another religion. True. But ancestor worship is widely practiced. Almost every household has a niche for spiritual dialogue. And as we have dwelled on Vietnamese poetry to an extent and the *Tham Luan* , we have found that a spiritual undertone is lurking everywhere in Vietnamese literature. In Vietnam there is the liberty to practice any religion whatever. But be it the right to religion or right to freedom of speech they must not go against the interest of the state. And curiously enough Vietnam has temples where the idols of Lao Tse, Confucius and Lord Buddha are being simultaneously worshipped. The syncretism is at the heart of Vietnam. This speaks of the white dove of democracy and assimilation brooding over Vietnam. Bourgeois democracy often tends to give liberty to a handful of the bourgeoisie at the cost of the common people. Officially Vietnam is not a follower of that. And since folk religion is followed by a large number of the Vietnamese and since folk culture was presented before the international auditorium with great pride and honour at the international poetic meet, we feel that Vietnam is not divorced from her native cultures.

There is space in Vietnam for different cultures to speak. Tham Luan has published Inrasara's wonderful ode in prose to the Cham people's love for the sea in ancient times and to their spirit of adventure and sea trade. There is the presence of the Tay ethnic group whose history dates back to 500 BC. They are ancestor worshippers. They also worship kitchen gods.

Vietnamese philosophy blends different strands of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism and folk religion dwelling on three bodies Heaven, Man and Earth. Prof. Trom Van Doan of National Taiwan University calls Vietnamese philosophy as humanistic but not anthropocentric.

On the surface Vietnam's religion and philosophy reminds one of Comte's religion of humanity. Because instead of worshipping gods and goddesses many of the people worship the trinity- Confucius, Lao Tse and Lord Buddha. Both Confucius and Lord Buddha did not revel in metaphysical speculations, Tao Te Ching says that the real Tao is unnamable and baffles description. Unlike in India where sages are worshipped but there are gods in the foreground, in Vietnam the sages and the great men of yore are in

the foreground. Carlyle dwelled on the hero as a poet. Vietnam pays homage to Cao Bao Quat , the hero as a poet.

Difference is sine qua non with the phenomenal world. Vietnam does not seek to level the differences that make the world. But Vietnam seeks to weave them into a harmony. In this light poetry is here the meta religion that could sublimate all the differences.

To describe poetry as communication Huu Think observes - Among all means of communication there is no method that allows human to find ourselves and find our fellow humans so deeply and passionately as in literature. Is there any other place where we need not journey but arrive, need not question but know, need not promise but still become soul mates as in literary encounter.

Vietnam can boast of a temple of literature where Confucius presides. One wonders whether poetry could function as a meta religion of the globe? Matthew Arnold in *The Study of Poetry in Essays in Criticism* predicts – More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Arnold further observes - Without poetry our science will be

incomplete and most of what is now with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.

The Vietnam Communist Party exhorts-**Look straight into the truth, accurately assess the truth and tell the truth** (TL Page 104). With Mahatma Gandhi Truth is God. And with John Keats Truth is Beauty, Beauty Truth.

And surely the path of truth could alone lead the world to peace.

Think of two universes. Put whatever is bizarre and whatever is ugly in one. There every atom will fight another. Put whatever is good and beautiful in the other universe. There every atom is wedded to another. Do you not think that the first universe will be destroyed on its own and hence untrue? Do you not think that the second universe will remain in harmony and hence deathless and true?

Om Shantih Om Shantih Om Shantih

Peace Peace Peace