

**This is the way I see things and life, what about you?”
Poet Ghirmay Abraham shares his perception of the
world in his newly published book**



Billion Temesghen

The poems in your book were obviously written a course of many years. It is easy to tell as the reader can feel some kind of headway in some of the poems. How many years of your life does the book represent?

They are poems I have written since 2000. I first started writing poems in 1993. The first poem was about the Eritrean referendum and I had my father helping me out with the very little he knew about poems; but I don't have the poem now. I lost it.

How?

At that time I think I was about eight years old and after I finished writing it I wanted my poem to be broadcast on the local radio. I made my way to the Ministry of Information and saw a suggestion box and just put my poem in there. I was so naïve to think that writing the poem in a piece of paper, sealing it and putting it in the suggestion box of a radio station was all it took to have my poem broadcast on the radio. For months I couldn't turn the radio off... It was never broadcast. Afterwards I didn't write anything for a long time. I resumed writing after a year and ever since I haven't stopped writing. Therefore, the book is a result of many, many years of poetry and short story writing.

Readers agree to have found reflections of themselves in your poems. This means your poems evolve around feelings and emotions that are not far from day to day experiences. Is there a reason why you choose this technique? And if so, who are you as a poet?

Even though it is a long process I was careful not to copy anyone and always be original. Gradually, one step at a time, I found my own style and techniques that I felt comfortable working with. What we commonly see is that many artists blindly take on idealizations of certain concepts. For example, love is said to be blind, at least in our community that is the perception. And normally when poets start poetry they don't conceptualize it nor internalize it. They just take the concept as it is and think of it as a universal truth. However, that is not how it is supposed to be. A poet should be an observer on the clock. You can look into how societies interpret notions such as love, hatred, brotherhood and so on. You can imitate nature and you can imitate movements and more. Poetry is a field that gives endless freedom. Some think that the rhyming scheme is all that poetry is about, but it is not. The elements of poetry are endless and words are multipurpose tools, they serve for meanings and musicality. Slowly as you live your life as a poet it is easy to notice growth from day to day. If you put your whole being in the field you can see that you get better as the day passes. Your understanding of life changes, you get to philosophize on many things surrounding your life, you play with words, nature speaks to you... you see the world other dimensions. This is the style and technique I adopted and found to be natural for me and the way I write my poems. If people find my poems to be some sort of reflection of them then I am just thrilled and honored.

What did you think when you decided to publish your book?

I told myself that I was not going to put out a book farfetched from my experiences. I didn't want my ideals to persuade me. I wanted it to be based on my experience. Which I think gives an explanation for your previous question. So long as my poems are based on human experiences –of myself –they would naturally be easy for people to grasp.

What are you trying to say through your book?

In my head, I processed in my many experiences and put them in words in the book. I am not trying to preach nor teach anyone. I simply am sharing my level of thinking and perception of the world. What I am saying is 'This is me'. People might think less of my point of view, and they have the right to do so, but I am not ashamed of my perception so long as I stay true to myself, my own knowledge and experiences. In poetry what you say doesn't matter much, what counts is how you say it. For example, the perception of 'truth' differs from one person to another. In one of my poems I used the metaphor of a cadaver that floats atop of a well after a couple of days. So what is truth? Is it the secret that the dying man had, the cadaver that floats or the water in the well that could bury the cadaver for long? Another metaphor I used of hidden truth is the 'self' itself. How many secrets do you accumulate in the course of your life? And how

many out of them do you refuse to share? And so your body is a tomb of secrets and then when you die your tomb is the tomb of tomb. Perception is the trick.

And the ultimate goal of your book is...

At first you think you are good enough, smart enough and poetic enough to want to simply share ideas, paint images in your readers' mind and have incredible ways of expressing the reality. My ultimate goal is not to teach or lecture. I just want to tell people that *this is the way I see things and li; what about you?*

Did your experience as a journalist help you in any way?

Of course. If you are a radio broadcaster you know you'd better sound believable because your voice is the only thing the audience relies on. So radio journalism helped in that way. Moreover, I had several programs on poetry where we recited poems of local poets and sometimes translations of big names from Africa and the rest of the world. I even had a morning program of ten minutes during which I presented my audience with beautiful poems for breakfast.

Thank you for your time, Ghirmay. Eritrea Profile wishes you further luck and success in your field of work. Is there anything else you want to add?

I want to extend my gratitude to Hdri Publishers, Mr. Zemhret Yohannes, Mr. Henok Tesfabruk, Mr. Efrem Habtesion, Mr. Smasom Brhane, Mr. Tesfit Hagos and respected poet, my senior, Mr. Iseyas Beyene. Moreover, I want to thank my teachers, from middle school all the way to the university, who encouraged me to pursue poetry, art, while reminding me to equally excel in my academic endeavor. Many thanks to my fans who really help me in diffusing my poems, comment on them and make them known on social media. I also want to congratulate my parents and my siblings, and last but not least, my beautiful wife Rahel Yohannes, and our newborn baby girl, Kanait.

Ghirmay Abraham, an Eritrean poet, has been getting wide attention from the public in the past week following the publication of his book 'Riketka Itan'. The collection of 87 poems of different metrics and styles, published by Hdri Publishers, represents the author's emotions and observations in which many readers claim to have found their reflections. Poet Ghirmay Abraham, also a journalist and author of short stories, has previously enjoyed fame for his live radio broadcast programs in Dmtsi Haffash Eritrea. He is one of Eritrea's modern poetry prodigies and father to Kanait, his newborn baby daughter born on the exact official inaugural day of his book.