

## Book Reviews

*For You to Decide* by C L Khatri published by Authors press, New Delhi, 2016, Pp 81, Rs 295/

C L Khatri is a well-known personality among Indian creative writers. His poetic collection *For You to Decide* (2016) is an addition to already published *Kargil* (2000), *Ripples in the Lake* (2006), and *Two –Minute Silence* (2014). In *For You to Decide*, the poet emerges with more sensitive and ardent thoughts. It is a collection of fifty one poems. His concern is not to shed light on what has happened. He tries to help social beings to orient for betterment of humanity. In a number of poems, the poet shades light on his poetic manifesto. He is of the opinion that 'the best speaks the least'. A sensitive poet always takes birth into a piece of poem while going through 'ferns and flowers'. He finds modern world as the world of fools for their weakening sensitivity and where 'blaming others is an easy escape route'. A piece of creating writing ever looks for the purgation of negative forces active along with positive potentiality of mind. It sparks the flame within. In the poem "Poetry Wants to Stand With You", the poet opines that 'poetry lights a candle' in case of extreme moral degeneration. It affects the very core function of lives. It helps resurrect gently the ashes. It ever seeks to stand with humanity:

When history celebrates swords  
philosophy fishes in abstract waters  
Muse sings the dreams of the deprived  
tears and smiles of unsung heroes.

Poetry is the most powerful weapon of sensible mind. It works with destroying capacity of guns in the events of barbarity and infidelity:

When a tyrant's tryst with destiny  
calls for genocide of discordant notes  
dungeons of fire fed with human's oil  
Poetry perforates from within, makes prayer.

In a number of poems, the poet reinstates ancient but most comprehensive Hindu view of soul and body. In "Mask" the mature poet like W.B. Yeats wishes to be transported into the church of Santa Sophia "to clap its hands and sing, and louder sing". The poet is fed up with keeping and maintaining the life of deceits and subterfuges. He wants to stop living any more such life. Soul cannot save body from perishing "in the crammed wardrobe of deceits":

You [body] and I[soul] both knew each other,  
still feigning ignorance,  
playing subterfuge.  
Off with masks today  
I am bliss, peace and truth-  
a refugee without refuge.

The enlightened soul delights as the physical body is burned along with infinite masks. The worldly men burn 'masks on the funeral pyre with mournful, tearful, and swollen eyes'. Soul is immortal. Time cannot end its life:

I will exist in the flames forever.  
 Storms can blow out the flames  
 but not the flames within a candle.

Of course it's our responsibility to keep enlightening our soul to rise above physical limits of body. That is why the enlightened poet is happy with his achievement:

It's enough. Begging is a beggars' land.  
 I am the richest person in the world,  
 Realization dawns. A happy return.

At the onset of delusive development, the poet warns worldly beings to go along with the principles of nature. In the poem "Sometimes I Dream" the poet writes:

Sometimes I dream  
 What would I do if I see the skies  
 wearing gas masks all stolen from the earth  
 and my dear earth receding into waters:  
 tortoise, worms, frogs, rodents in the entourage,  
 trees floating in the water  
 men nestling in the branches  
 cows and goats grazing leaves on trees?

The poet like Margaret Atwood and A.K Ramanujan wishes to be identified with trees. He puts forth his brilliant rationale in the poem "Suck My Sap":

I dream to bloom in the air  
 Like a lotus in the cesspool  
 I wish to be a tree  
 that makes fruits with carbon dioxide  
 a free fall for all.

It was a time when people used to shower love and care to trees and see them like their children. The poet retells an event in the poem titled "Love" in connection with:

Once a poor peasant planted  
 A sapling of a mango tree, watered it,  
 Tended it as he tended his son.  
 It grew into a tall shady tree.  
 He spent his leisure under the tree  
 Sharing his days' delight and duress.

But what happened today- "No one wants to be a gardener,/ lotus in the plastic pot.... The earth is leveled; no hills, no hillocks/ fat fumbling folk lost in a fog. Once there was a time when people used to value high of relations. Even poor people were loved. To them values of relations were above anything. But everything changed contrarily. The poet like Nissim Ezekiel expresses deep sorrow over human plight at present:

Human life in India is pretty cheap.  
 Everything else has a price.  
 Now they would deal in bangles and sandals....

C. L. Khatri's *For You to Decide* is a promising and purposive collection of pearls bearing critical thoughts on philosophy, life, soul, body, nature, eco-consciousness, religion, relation, faithful love, selfishness, filth, craftsmanship, antiquity vis-à-vis modernity, human plight in postcolonial era, feminism, native sensibility, family, self-pride etc.. Impressions of Indian poets like Nissim Ezekiel and A.K. Ramanujan are perceptible. Of course, literature prepares solid ground to bring about change in society and thoughts of people. Like Mathew Arnold, he finds poetry as a criticism of life. It is not to dive into the world of abstractions.

**Raj Kumar Mishra**

**The Philosophy and Theatre of the Absurd by Basavaraj Naikar, Authors Press, 2016, pages 108, Price 280.00.**

The philosophy and theatre of the absurd is an astute handbook for Professors and post-Graduate students alike. Dr. Basavaraj has managed to extract the crucial essence of this usually Absurd philosophy from a number of related texts and presents it in a coherent and simplified manner. He has clearly observed that literature and drama of the absurd can only be fully understood and appreciated in the west where atheism has seeped into their culture; while in the east where our trust in God has still not been fully undermined, we find such a philosophy a bit perplexing to deal with.

The book is filled with a proper delineation of all the practitioners associated with this art form in Europe along with an analysis of their related texts. Even though all of them are prodding for answers of the purpose of man's existence, each writer had their own version and view of the absurd theatre and drama. Like Sartre believes that man comes from nothingness, then comprehends his nothingness and becomes responsible in the end while Camus believes that man is a responsible being in the beginning and later on he becomes aware of the nothingness and futility of life.

The author cleverly uses various other theories like the psychoanalytic to make one understand the multiple layers that absurd drama touches upon. Dr. Naikar has perceptively remarked that the playwright's absurd vision will appeal to the spectator only if he has experienced the deeper fears, dreams and fantasies, otherwise it would remain as private madness or illusion of a mental patient.

The other half portion of the book illustrates the trickling down effect of this art form in India, specifically in Kannada drama and theatre. Unlike the west, Kannada dramatists like Girish Karnad, Na. Ratna, Purnachandra Tejawasi and others portray the absurdity not in their vision of life but in their mode of technique as analytically explained by the author. They relate and portray this absurdity with the contemporary problems faced by the Indians like corruption, exploitation, poverty, sexual freedom etc. Yet such a form of drama is viewed only by miniscule strata of the society, i.e. the crème de la crème resulting in its dwindling appreciation and practice.

All in all, this critical book manages to deliver what had been promised initially in the preface- which is to make the Indian students of post graduate level and beyond to get a lucid, articulate yet a simplified reference book so that they can fully appreciate and understand the vision of Absurd theatre and drama. The art of the Absurd is then like caviar, whose taste has to be developed gradually to enjoy its uniqueness and this handbook helps one in achieving that.

**Nadia Mark**