

Book Reviews

***Poland: The Rising of the Phoenix!* Text by Ragini Ramachandra, Photographs by S. Ramachandra, Mysore: Dhvanyaloka Publication, 2016, pp. 65, Price Rs.500/-**

Poland: The Rising of the Phoenix! is the sixth in the remarkable series of Travelogues by Ragini Ramachandra and Ramachandra. It recounts how their recent visit to Poland enabled them to make an amazing discovery that here was a battle-ravaged country which despite its bruised psyche was striding towards progress and prosperity, emerging like the mythical phoenix in the process. This impression is confirmed by their visits in particular to Krakow, the “Cradle of Polish Culture” and Warsaw, “a City of Ruins” now metamorphosing into “a City of Re-birth” which serves as a “symbol of the resilient Polish spirit”. Krakow, the earlier capital of the country with its medieval-antique look, its Old Synagogue displaying amongst many other artefacts a painting of Shylock with Jessica, its reputed Salt Mines (*Wiesielka*), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, its Wawel Castle along with the Wawel Cathedral, Leonardo da Vinci’s seminal painting, “Lady with an Ermine”, Chopin concerts that served as a “mediation between spiritual and sensual life” and its Jagiellonian University where Copernicus, the great astronomer had studied rightly attracted the authors.

It was the same with Warsaw, a reconstructed city with its huge, towering Palace of Culture and Science, the Lazienki Park with a Monument to Chopin, the great composer, the Royal Castle, the Church of the Holy Cross with its Chopin Pillar, the Copernicus Monument, Madam Curie Museum, Joseph Conrad’s House and the University of Warsaw where the authors chanced upon seeing *Arc News*, a Newsletter where India’s Geospatial success was praised. The meteoric changes in Warsaw, now humming with hope, optimism and energy understandably appealed to the authors who admired its “blend of the old and the new in both appearance and spirit”, eliciting the remark: “Warsaw is well-worth watching in future”.

Dr. Ragini Ramachandra’s travel writing reveals an intellectual and emotional understanding of history, landscape, casual conversations reflecting people’s attitude to life enhanced by the realistic visual representation of the same by Dr. S. Ramachandra’s photographs.

A P Dani

Charu Sheel Singh’s *Ten Mahavidyas: Goddess-Scripts of Great Wisdom*, New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2015, pp. I-IX+291. Price 500/- ISBN 978-81-8435-470-6

Charu Sheel Singh is a well known Indian English poet and critic who has not only regenerated Indian poetic tradition of Aurobindo and Tagore but has created a new poetic paradigm through his mythopoeic imagination, historical framework and rare combination of psychic and mystic inspiration and experiences. His poetry has power to disrupt the giant flow of bizarre tradition of Ezekiel and others. Singh’s *Ten Mahavidyas* carries the mystical imagination that is also mythical and image centred.

The potential seed of poetry within the poet grows in the eternal geography. The subliminal imagination of the poet invokes striking images and symbols that take us to the culmination of poet's cosmic experiences. *Ten Mahavidyas* of C S Singh establishes the idea that words are emanation of cosmic energy. His thirst for creation makes possible his entrance into zero degree ambience which gave birth to the *ten mahavidyas* from ten different directions. The moment poet produces poetic sound from this non-conceptual realm it becomes the body of God or Goddesses or of *Mahavidyas*. In this poetic volume throughout the eleven sections, poet highlights the scripted scriptures of Goddesses as the centre of cosmos. He regards Adi Shakti as "Para, Aparā, gyan, Vigyan, and Matraka" (85) which are notations of her endless cosmicity. In the "Ontogenesis" section of the poem Kali is declared synonymous with Prakriti which comprises unmanifested Purusa. She is laced with the two important functions control and release. Singh holds Indian mythological and mystical views regarding creation and destruction of the world. It is 'lila' or 'krida' of the divine that the creators come into existence and they also get destroyed after sometimes. Poet opines that great creative moment includes death of the present body, "The created must be liberated as the liberated/ must be created again" (136).

Poet again and again appears mystical in his achievement of 'lalitya'. Sati's self willed sacrifice of his temporal being led to the inauguration of a new era. Shiva is the other self of Sati who represents immanent idea or eternal quest rejecting the pleasure in order to bring new discoveries for the cosmic purpose, "It was a millennium's penance that bred Shiva/ sproutings within the Sati scripts of a new age" (123). Singh's comparative picture of East and West establishes the superiority of the eastern culture. Poetry produced out of futile imagination can bring only chaos and results into aporia while the creative matrix of Kali revives, "the shreds of meaning hanging beneath the lotus / ambiances of *Sri Chakra*" (128).

In the entire collection poet unravels the different forms of the same Goddess. In this world life is cyclic what one gets is the loss of the other, the loss of the one is the gain of the other. The end of the one canon is the beginning of the other. The process is ongoing. *Ten Mahavidyas* is the result of poet's cosmic imagination which enabled him to portray the literariness of Goddess. The continuous exploration of mythical, mystical, historical and philosophic consciousness in his poem provides an opportunity to the qualified readers to have glimpse of sublime exuberance in abundance. The plight and range of the diction is enormous. He employs the jargon from contemporary literary theory and diction of science and technology. His idioms are uniquely constituted of cult, rituals, Sanskrit poetics and native sensibility and culture.

Mahima Singh

Lo(k)cal Knowledge: Perceptions on Dalit, Tribal and Folk Literature by Anand Mahanand, Authorspress, Delhi, 2013, pp. 140, Price Rs. 450/-, ISBN 978-81-7273-735-1

Anand Mahanand's *Lo(k)cal Knowledge: Perceptions on Dalit, Tribal and Folk Literature* is an enriching contribution to the subaltern studies in India. The dalit and tribal communities have always struggled to make their presence felt. They have reasserted

Dialogue: A Journal Devoted to Literary Appreciation
Vol XII No 1 June 2016