

**BOOK REVIEW**

***FOR YOU TO DECIDE BY C.L. KHATRI, NEW DELHI: AUTHORS PRESS, 2016. PP- 82, RS. 250, ISBN 978-93-5207-408-8.***

**By Raj Kumar Mishra**

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 shed light on what 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 deceptions and subterfuges. He wants to stop living any more such life. Soul cannot save body from perishing "in the cramped wardrobe of deceptions":

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

X    X    X    X

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.

**Bio**

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