

ISSN: 0976-8165

The Criterion

An International Journal in English

Since 2010

Vol. 5, Issue-I

February 2014

The Criterion



5th Year of Open Access

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite

www.the-criterion.com

Bi-monthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access eJournal

***Mother's Veena and other Poems* by Anna Sujatha Mathai, Published by Authorspress, New Delhi.pp.88, Priced at Rs.195.**

**Reviewed By
Dr Karanam R Rao**

Indian-English poetry, in recent years, has shown up its proliferating maturity and finessed beauty as to branch off into a distinctive genre of writing vying a juxtaposition with poetry written elsewhere. It is no less significant than the British or American poetry, either in theme or form or in its sprawling aesthetic register. With the publication of her fifth volume of poetry, Anna Sujatha Mathai's newest collection of poems, titled "Mother's Veena and Other Poems" seemed to have solidified her reputation as a poet of considerable worth. The present volume under review is to be construed as one more nugget in the chain of her writings, and must be viewed under the rubric of confessional-lyrical poetry where emotional experiences are articulated with the vehemence, and almost obtrusive subjectivism, and yet her poems do not betray the genuineness of impulsion and conceptual brilliance and bear out the typical stamp of her authority, and signature of permanence. I must say, she has attempted a new mode in verse libre that makes her poetry both appealingly nuanced and fascinatingly satisfying, if only it also expresses her preference for artistic *de rigueur*. Her language is limpid and flowing, and at times it is too bald to be disingenuous. I never find any striking imagery in her poetry that captivates the reader's attention, though she says she works under the influence of T S Eliot. She relies, almost deliberately, on the matter-of-fact, and at times surreal reality rather than on intellectually stirred emotionality. Let me cite a few instances from her poem, "Mother's Veena" "where the platitudinous takes precedence over the fervid emotional feeling that would have catapulted the catalogue of events into fervid shared experiences. She merely narrates the incidental details;" My mother's Veena was an old piece of wood, / painted in bright colours, red, yellow and green, / carved by an inspired artisan, / in the temple city of Tanjavur.p.13" It's a statement of fact, but not the emotional deluvium that drenches the poem.

But there is an astounding variety of themes and forms that she has touched upon, and sculpted them with, a rare maturity and rarer beauty. As for instance, she writes, in one of her most important poems "A Winter Landscape in Delhi p.74:"Leaves and rubbish light up/ in smoky glowering fires /That smudge the foggy evening/ with smouldering colours. p." The typical foggy evening that blankets the whole sky in winter is a picture that she seeks to recapture in telling details. What is perhaps the most significant aspect of her poetry is her proclivity for simplicity both in form and structure. When the theme demands of her a heightened perception, the language falls flat, and the imagery that is evoked betrays the emotional gravitas.' As she writes, in one of her poems called "Poetry". "There is no poetry /which cannot include /a family of three/ existing on the earnings/ of a ten year old boy .p. 68." Sometimes simplicity in her poetry works wonders when it is emotionally charged and intelligently limned out. Alternating between these two modes of writing-the one that's bald but vigorously demonstrative, and the other aesthetically blended with evocative brilliance where the tone of voice acquires acerbic ruggedness and fervid notation is obviously a difficult choice for anybody. But with the maturity and skill of Anna Sujatha, her poetry could have acquired a cumulative perfection on both the strains which could have given a definitive edge to her poetry. Here is an example where she puts her simplicity on the pedestal at the expense of achieved achieving fervidity. In a poem titled"

Butterflies”: “Flirting with flowers/ drunk with the pollen of life/Doomed aviators/ seeking the beauty of flowers.p.57.”

It seems that Anna Sujatha has achieved a tremendous popularity both in Indian and western press. She may dole out a few more anthologies of poetry .and carve for herself a peculiar niche that renders her poetry significant, though her literary reputation is not steady and outpouring even after the publication of four books of poetry that are in her kitty .She may have satisfied the interests of the “common reader” but not yet the cognoscenti ,who desire to read more and more cognitive and aesthetically stimulating poetry, in the years to come.