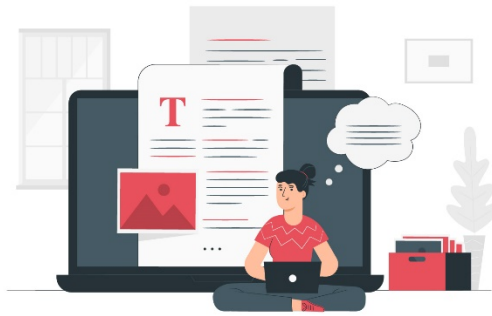


IMPACT FACTOR: 7.86

ISSN 0976 - 8165



# THE CRITERION

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL IN ENGLISH

12<sup>th</sup> Year of Open Access

Bi-Monthly Refereed and Peer-Reviewed  
Open Access e-Journal

Vol. XII, Issue-2 (April 2021)

Editor-In-Chief : Dr. Vishwanath Bite  
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ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

## **Book Review of *Twilight Zones* by A. S. Ratnam**

**Poet: A. S. Ratnam**

**Publisher: Notion Press, 2020**

**Language: English**

**Paperback: 54 pages**

**ISBN-10: 1636330088**

**Reviewed by:**

**Giti Tyagi**

‘Twilight Zones’ by Akella Ratnam, is a collection of forty-four beautiful poems containing ‘some of the best, contemporary, post-modern fascicule of the articulated poetry that exhibit a finessed quality and profundity of imagination and intellectual bravura that have gone into their making,’ writes Karanam Rao in the Foreword of the meticulously compiled anthology.

Life, with its twists and turns, presents itself in myriad forms and offers several paths to be tread by the lone traveler, who despite being surrounded by relationships, has to travel through the journey of life at his own terms and with none other than his own self and wisdom as the sole companions. Life, a marvelous blend of happiness and gloominess, success and failures, ambitions and misled paths presents a beautiful kaleidoscopic view as one goes down the memory lane. Just as a bioscope cinema, the various stages of life are presented in the lonely pensive moments, taking us along and delving deeper into the philosophies of life learnt and put into practice, as the poet describes in the poem ‘Chinks In Memory’.

‘From chinks in memory  
Drips diluted desire drops  
Vengeful fate swallows silently  
To disappear into depths of sadness’  
(Chinks In Memory, p.10)

The poet clearly states his faith in democratic values and opposes the misuse of power by those responsible for the protection of Democracy but still hopes that the flame of justice shall illumine forever in the hearts of the people, burning till eternity. The poem 'Democracy' is a fine example of the present world scenario.

'While people unforgiving  
With the gentry slipping  
Into the dark slumber dripping'  
(Democracy, p. 11)

Words and language are perhaps the most beautiful gifts showered upon the humankind by the Divine. Words can create or destroy destinies. They have the power to create an everlasting impression and a conducive environment for change and betterment of the individual and society, but they also possess the prowess to ruin civilizations. The poet advises to use the words judiciously and to be aware of the power of the mighty words.

'Wise and measured speech reforms hearts  
They become weapons with mischief-mongers  
Beak human relationships'  
(Language, p.12)

From the philosophical to the contemporary themes, A.S. Ratnam has touched almost every aspect of life, bringing forth his deep-seated emotions and observations that are very beautifully expressed in the poems such as 'Loneliness', 'Marriage', 'Lonely in The Teeming Crowd', 'Memories'. The irony of life observed by the poet is depicted in 'Irony' where he has not only described the various contrary and contradictory situations of life, but also provided the readers with an in-depth analysis of the reason and the cause of the contrariness.

'Few live in plenty while others in penury'  
(Irony, p.21)

The poet offers 'The Piper of Sabarmati' as a humble tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, who led India's Freedom Struggle towards the successful attainment of freedom with 'non-violence' and 'truth' as his weapons, proving his valour and charm that mesmerized millions of Indians who followed him and offered, as sacrifice, everything they could possibly offer.

'The Piper of Sabarmati led the flock into the ocean of freedom  
Staff in hand and magic in words'  
(The Piper of Sabarmati, p.27)

Further in the poem, the poet laments the loss of the democratic values in Mahatma's Gandhi's Nation which he dreamed to be ruled by peace and harmony. He hopes for the redemption and restoration of the highest ideals set forth by Gandhiji, who visualized India as a dream nation with truth and harmony as the guiding principles.

'Now the gullible look forward for the arrival of the spring after the  
Winter of buried values'  
(The Piper of Sabaramati, p.27)

The present day scenario, the whole world gripped in the clutches of the ever-spreading Pandemic and the fear of COVID-19 widening with every passing moment is aptly portrayed in the poems 'Lockdown' and 'Covid-19'. Nature is a favourite theme of the poet which he has generously presented in the poems 'Clouds' and 'She Lives In Imagination'.

'Nature incarnate goddess on earth  
Light footed and hard hearted brimming with  
Love, affection, sensuousness in abundance'  
(She Lives In Imagination, p.49)

The eternal incessant cycle of birth and death is an important topic of discussion and contemplation among the wisest human beings, the gurus, the philosophers, the visionaries and even the common men. The transitory nature of life and the futility of the race against time and

destiny form the basis of all spiritual discourses. The poem 'From Birth to Death' is an exceptional presentation of a developed understanding about the process of life and birth and the wisdom thus attained through the life experiences and the impediments-laden life situations that not only strengthen the being, but also enlighten and illuminate the mind, the psyche, the soul in the journey of life.

'Almighty's supreme creature pledges  
To overcome death and time with knowledge  
With sterile tools to conquer death'  
(From Birth to death, p.45)

The poet ponders over the loss of human morals and virtues in 'The Loss' where he has very beautifully compared the physical, the emotional and the moral theft through excellent examples. The loss of property may be compensated but the loss of a human soul and moral values can never be retrieved. The poet is concerned about the degradation of human values as he ponders about the high pace so-called development of the human civilization, which is continually degrading and deteriorating human morality and humanity as a whole.

'To me, nonetheless, it is a loss  
Not easily retrievable as  
Substitutes and replacements hard to find'  
(The Loss, p.53)

'Twilight Zones' concludes with a sparkle of hope shining bright amidst the shaking and splashing stormy waves, bringing relief in the form of heart touching verses and soul stirring messages that shall pave way for the humankind to step forward, armoured with hope, faith and courage, surviving in the harshest circumstances and ultimately emerging victorious.