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## BOOK REVIEW

**Title of the Book:** *An Anthology of Criticism on Six Indian English Poets*

**Edited by:** P.V. Laxmiprasad

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Poetry is regarded as the highest creative faculty. Poets are gifted in one sense because they are born with potentials to compose poems. Yet, they are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. But reviewing the collection, I reckon that the Editor of this critical volume P. V. Laxmiprasad has made all the six Indian poets duly acknowledged on par with the established poets. The innovation is on modern poets in India and their contributions. The collection has a whooping 37 research papers. This is the hallmark of the collection. The book entitled *An Anthology of Criticism on Six Indian English Poets* is edited by P. V. Laxmiprasad. It is published by Sarup Book Publishers, New Delhi. The critical book is devoted to Six Indian English poets namely, 1) P. Raja, 2) T. V. Reddy, 3) I K Sharma 4) Gopal Honnalgere, 5) Shujaat Hussain. One wonders as to why P. V. Laxmiprasad, the editor of this book, published it on six Indian English poets. As against the practice of working on established poets, Laxmiprasad brings out this volume of critical essays on the six poets who were yet to see the light of the day. Working on emerging poets gives the critics and the readers a new experience and exposure towards studying and analysing poetry from myriad perspectives. There is innovation, originality and authenticity in the book. Though Indianness is the breath and spirit of Indian English poetry, the poets of successive generation have continued to maintain their control on universal themes. They unravel the mysteries of life by looking into the universe. To categorize the number of papers on each poet, they are eight papers on K.V. Raghupathi's poetry, five papers on I K Sharma's poetry, three papers on Gopal Honnalgere's poetry, two papers on

Shujaat Hussain's poetry, eight papers on T V Reddy's poetry and nine papers on P. Raja's poetry and an interview with P. Raja overall, there are thirty-six well-researched papers on these six poets besides an interview. The volume of critical essays is gigantic in the sense of a big appreciation and an explorative nature of poetry on six Indian poets.

To begin the review, the first paper entitled "Exploring Humanism in I K Sharma's poetry" by Arti Chandel is a study into the behaviour of human beings and their fears and phobias. The focus of this article is actually on the portrayal of human values and attributes in I K Sharma's poetry. To cite, 'Testimonial' is a poem that utters human values and ethics. The poet is surprised to find that the goodness and humanity is also found in extremely poor people. Thus, Arti Chandel concludes that I K Sharma emphasizes on basic humanity and humanitarian traits and delineates the universal human goodness through motherhood and childhood. In the second paper, Vijaya Babu Koganti studies personal observations, people and places from the study of I K Sharma's *Native Embers* and *Dharmasala and other poems*. Analysing Sharma's poem "Excursion", Vijaya Babu makes a significant observation that the best poets never wait for words. A poet of amazing fecundity of imagination, humour and wit, Indra Kumar Sharma selects, analyses and presents his subjects with an intellectual freshness. His poems present great images and yet his style is simple and shines with brevity and succinctness. His poetry also carries a note of pathos and his grief at the destruction of humanity and the loss of values in existence. Like Mulk Raj Anand, he portrays the pain and insult experienced by the subjugated poor.

A thorough critic and observer, Indra Kumar Sharma turns philosophical when he speaks about life. Comparing the unexpected "lanes and by lane", "sharp turns" and "blind alleys" of life with the "straight lines", "clearcut formulas", "neat divisions....and smooth changeovers, like the roads of Jaipur", Sharma presents that we need to change our "stance according to the turns and dips in the road we tread along." (Vigilance, TNE, 1986; 43).

Next in the paper on K. V. Raghupathi, Gobinda Sahoo studied Indian sensibility in the poetry of K. V. Raghupathi. He is Indian in background and imagery. The atmosphere brought up in his poetry is purely Indian in hills and dales, rivers and brooks and historical and spiritual heritage. Raghupathi's realism leads the poems to be replete with Indian sensibilities and themes. The simple Indian lifestyle, cultural background, temples, rivers, mythological characters, pilgrim towns and architectures of the country find significant place in the writings of K. V. Raghupathi. His image of India is both rural and sub-urban and his sensibility is Indian true to the spirit.

In the next paper on K. V. Raghupathi, the critic A. Pradeep Kumar has studied the images from the collection *Images of An Unknown Growing Dying City*. This collection has penetrative and profound observations of city dwellers and their lives. The poet depicts the miserable conditions prevalent in the city life. The gradual decay of city life is best presented through lively images and absolute cultural barriers. The importance of this collection is relevant in the universe because the city is growing and dying every minute. Pradeep Kumar Patra is a veteran scholar who has also studied K. V. Raghupathi's poetry for infinity of life in the universe. He has studied three collections which are replete with images. The magic, the charm, the monuments, the cities and the villages and the nature, all appear in his evaluation and he observes that the poet unconditionally surrenders to the spirit of the universe through in true depictions.

P. Dinakar has studied K. V. Raghupathi's *Wisdom of the Peepal Tree* for mystical elements. *The Peepal Tree* is absolute in its outlook and is a representative poem of human nature through which Raghupathi shows that people are all spiritually dead and have become sterile. The modern man gives importance to the unimportant things and unimportance to the important things. Dinakar explores the wisdom of life through the mystical Peepal Tree and compares the collection with Eliot's *The Waste Land*. S. Vishnu Priya located the metaphysical traits from her reading of K. V. Raghupathi's *Between Me and the Babe*. It is originally a collection of poems on everyday happenings of his life and surroundings. Here one can observe the intelligence, learning and seriousness of the poet from the whole experience of life in terms of metaphysical elements. In fact, argument and persuasion are the two elements of a metaphysical poem. *Between Me and the Babe* is a best illustration to relocate the traits of metaphysical poetry.

Another critic G. Srilatha has explored Eco-philosophical approaches from K.V. Raghupathi's *Samarpana*. The diversity of perspectives between human nature and interrelationships is the basis of philosophy which is meaningful, relevant and participatory. The collection would remind any reader the texts of Thoreau's "Walden" and Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. Srilatha observes that through the poems, Raghupathi has ascertained the importance of nature, side-by-side spiritual life in human being.

In the next paper K. Naresh has studied K. V. Raghupathi's "*Between Me and the Babe* for existential elements. Almost all the poems are reminiscences of life in myriad blooms. Each poem begins like a delightful journey and ends with morale, philosophy and wisdom. In another paper, T. Venkataramana has studied Raghupathi's poetry for reflections on water that is, the basis of ecosystem. The cycle of water starts at the mountains and ends in the ocean. Raindrops,

drainage water, riverbeds, lakes, seashores, streams, pools and ponds, oceans – all make their way in the study on the different sources of water. Water reflects the poet's pathless path, which is his life path, the path of paths, which is the Supreme Path for him.

D. Swathi has studied T. V. Reddy's *Melting Melodies* for a critical appraisal with a few select poems. She has studied those poems in which everyday happenings knock the doors of people in different strikes and forms. The analysis of the poems makes for a more comprehensive, absorbing and exciting study of T. V. Reddy's poetry in future. K. Revathy has studied P. Raja's *Dhoti and Other Poems* for humour at all levels. "Dhoti" is the very first poem for melancholic essence and the verses are really touching. Thus, the poet composes a poem on simple things like cigarette and this is personified as a woman and the very fumes are only due to immolation accepted willingly, graciously and waiting to get fired by her man. Thus, Raja's poems are known for hilarious and humorous approach on multiple topics – individuality, ego, love, possession, freedom, gratitude, satire and destiny. The portrayal of poems is physically and emotionally explored by views and reactions and sensations created by his pen. In another paper, Lily Arul Sharmila has overviewed P. Raja's collection *To Live in Love*. She observes that the poet's amorous poems can find vignettes of experience of love in life. The muffled cries of the poet's soul repeatedly muse on love. The poems highlight the speculations on varied aspects of human life and the objectives touches beyond the mere portrayal of conjugal happiness as a worthy goal of life. The love verses combine general subjects in perfect tune with themes like fear, passion and philosophical ideals.

In the next paper on T. V. Reddy, Santosh Ajit Singh analyses the poems of T. V. Reddy from a feminist perspective. "The Widow", "The Indian Bride", "Women of the Village", "An Old Woman", "The House Wife" are taken up for critical analysis. Virginia Woolf once remarked that women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magical and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size (Woolf: *A Room of One's Own*). The remarkable feature of the poems abounds in hard-hitting adjectives employed to substantiate the deplorable condition of women and finally with a message to free themselves from those shackles. In another paper on I.K. Sharma, P. Dinakar has taken up women in the poetic world of I. K. Sharma. He studied poems like "Wedding", "Quest for Mother", "The Nurse", "A Shadow on your Face", "Mother's Lap" and "Address to a Lady". All these poems depict sympathy, empathy, compassion and consideration for women and children. The vivid pictures of women as Sharma presented deal with the actualities and ideals of life and existence. Finally, women are portrayed as wingless birds and vulnerable creatures.

In another paper Candy D'Cunha dealt with Shujaat Hussain's *Heat and Dust* for eco-poetics which promotes ecological solidarity between the humans and the non-humans. Man's relationship with the non-human should be tangible and spontaneous. No one can live as an island. Man cannot live alone without the company of others and he has to encounter the other whether he is the Supreme or the non-humans. The eco-poetic dimension drives us to reflect upon the fruits of the earth. The connection is known for goodness, light, cure, wisdom, mercy, salvation, grace and blessing. In the ultimate analysis, the dimensions of the Creator and the creatures will reestablish the natural link between eco-poetry and ontology.

In yet another paper, D. GnanaSekaran studied P. Raja's poetry collection *Love moves Heaven and Earth*. He has taken up poems like "A New Chapter", "In Search of my Soul", "Thou beside me", "Perfect Love", "How fortunate I am", "A Strange Relationship", "To my Explorer". GnanaSekaran observes that P. Raja has opened his doors to welcome the readers soaked in love. The physical transforms into an emotional meandering and veers around a certain genuineness and honesty.

In another paper, Rajshree Trivedi has studied Gopal Honnalgere's *Internodes* for ontological reflections. She observes that Gopal Honnalgere has written in E. E. Cummings' style in which the poems in *Internodes* do not follow the rules of punctuation. The stanzas are unevenly organized and lines are written in open and free verse. Honnalgere's poetic career was influenced by the poets such as T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens and others from the point of view of the Hindu philosophical and psychological studies. Rajshree concludes that Honnalgere's poems are replete with the element of humour besides notable traces of black comedy, ironic and satirical impulses and simple comic instances that make the reader wriggle in laughter amidst the dark and the serious themes.

In another brilliant paper, Sulakshana Sharma has studied I. K. Sharma's *My Lady, Broom and Other Poems* for vignettes of femininity. The surroundings of his poetry constitute the lens of a poetic microscope for the five details like satire and irony through honeybee, mosquito and peacock. The poet brings about the sordid realities of the society. I. K. Sharma portrays women as living and breathing creatures, honest and true to the core. In the final analysis, Sulakshana concludes that I. K. Sharma's poems bear a light, affirming note and a commendation to women who play a crucial role in creating and sustaining at any cost.

In another scholarly paper, Sheeba S Nair has taken up the select poems of I. K. Sharma for typical irony and wit in the human existence. She finds that the various fringes and facets of Indian society in the poems of I. K. Sharma in terms of degradation of universal human values. The quality of his irony saves his poems from being cynical and satirical. He employs

irony so scrupulously that they never just adorn his poems, rather add new vistas to his creativity.

In another paper, S. Kumaran has studied T. V. Reddy's *Quest for Peace: A Minor Social Epic*. He has studied the entire collection for important regulations from society and other related burning issues. - philosophical, ethical, representative and social. He has depicted the rolling juggernaut of 'Maya' to bring out the human weaknesses and immorality and ultimately it has become a social epic that targets at different issues and problems in the postmodern world. It can be treated as a moral text for the society.

In another paper, V.B. Vadapalli Rama Rao has explored "Fun and Fecundity in the Poetry of P. Raja" in which he has studied the poems for striking imagery, fun, wit and humour. Raja's poems are mischievously humorous and titillating. The highest reward for any poet is to understand his work first in the proper spirit. Raja is an example of this category who speaks and makes us feel his verses in the realistic world.

In another paper, Sheeba S Nair has studied T. V. Reddy's Select Poems for scintillating glimpses of India. The reading of T. V. Reddy's poems proclaims the unswerving critical insight of the poet on the matters of his country. His keen perception, expertise and creativity make his poems unique. He succeeds in giving a fair picture of Indian life and its people, their professions and its political and social scenario in an effective and elegant way. All the social issues of the country have been explored.

In another paper Rita Nath Keshari has studied the poetry of Raja from "The Twin Signifiers of Love and Death: KAMA and YAMA". The images, the brevity and the language, the lucidity, the lyricism and finally the themes of Love and Death are enlivened in the collection. Kama and Yama are ancient Sanskrit terms employed to depict love and loss and divorce and downfall.

A. Pradeep Kumar is another critic who has studied T. V. Reddy's *The Fleeting Bubbles* for social criticism. Being a son of the soil, Reddy depicts the plight of Indian women of villages and the Indian bride with a focus on dowry problem in vivid pictures and images. He represents the Indian society in all its problems and challenges. The poems vibrate with a natural rhythm, sweet melody and sympathetic understanding of the human predicament. Pradeep concludes that the poet's human concern lends universality and enduring quality to his poems.

In another poem V. Sunitha has studied T. V. Reddy's poems for love and loss. The verses are so grave that they may make an ascetic adjure his celibacy and savour adoration. The callus veracity that death entraps all mortals regulate T. V. Reddy's poems. The



contemporary generation regards marriage as mirage. To them, Reddy's poems are an eye-opener. The Indian tradition is known for sanctity of marriages. Sunitha concludes that Reddy's poems are a reaction to those evils of marriages which plague the society everywhere.

In another paper, Sudheer K. Arora has studied the poetry of I. K. Sharma that Sharma's poems are not obscure jottings that try to masquerade as outpourings of a sublime kind. He is always alert to the realities around him. Sudheer concludes that I. K. Sharma chisels words to make monuments and structures, make the readers feel for the society with his social commitment, laughs at the human follies with his satire and irony and muses over life with his philosophical touches.

G. Srilatha has studied imagery in the select poems of Gopal Honnalgere. The imagery is at once striking and arresting. When the poet narrates the past, it has the immediacy of the present, the wildness of the childhood and the joy of feeling. The child image helps the poet to escape from the external world and find joy, happiness and fulfilment in ruminating the innocent childhood days. There is a child's sensitivity in Gopal's presentation of the world through the eyes of the child. The various moods of the child are recaptured throughout the select poems.

Banibrata Goswami has studied Gopal Honnalgere's *Internodes* for dancing waves. Internodes means a reign between two joints on the stem of a tree from where leaves or branches grow. It is a flight to that coveted abode where many lines in a network cross and join. The poems have sanctified the efforts and the claims of the author. In the ultimate analysis, postcolonial anxiety grows to a certain postcolonial agony as the volume moves to its end. S. Vishnu Priya has compared two poets Sri Aurobindo and P Raja as prophets. The themes are more or less philosophical, spiritual and romantic. Here the prophets are supporting the new idea or theory to drive away the fear of common folks about death. The verses are in a unique style and propose the basis of new life.

In the last paper on T. V. Reddy's *Grief Rains*, K. Shantakumari has studied the modern elements and the echoes of past poets like Shakespeare, Keats, Milton and Tennyson as being evident in Reddy's poetry. There are references to the Greeks, to Shakespearean characters, to the Bible and to the Romantic poets.

In conclusion, I hold that all the six Indian English poets included in this book have made significant contributions to the muse of poetry. Their poetry is multi-dimensional in different settings, themes and locales. All the contributors have explored the poets in different thematic varieties. The critical volume is useful for research scholars in future.