

BOOK REVIEWS

Ashrafi, Afroz. *Urdu and Hindi : Integrating Narrative Fiction*. Delhi : Educational Publishing House, 2019. ISBN : 978-93-88736-47-3, Price : Rs. 200.00, Pp182 +vi.

Taking together various novelists and short story writers of Urdu and Hindi, Afroz Ashrafi has attempted something new in the realm of critical literature. While giving his own impressions about individual narrative writers, he touches upon various literary movements and trends of Hindi and Urdu in the 20th and 21st century. He judges the efficiency of certain literary theories that cropped up from time to time and judges the related works in their historical perspective too. He also analyses the influence of several Indian, European and American critics and writers on the narrative literature of Hindi and Urdu at many stages of their forward movement. In a way, Afroz Ashrafi's attempt has a historical dimension which binds Urdu and Hindi fiction together in the background of Indian domestic and social life as a whole.

In some chapters literary trends have been defined by Afroz Ashrafi with a clarity not to be found anywhere else. In the context of Postmodernism and Urdu fiction, he raises the question whether Modernism can be seen in isolation from Postmodernism or they have a "host-parasite relationship". Very rightly he writes about their manner of approach, "In a way Modernism castigates the loss of cultural roots and Postmodernism seeks a restoration of the same... Modernism cries foul over the cultural decadence while Postmodernism rediscovers the lost culture that forms the basis of its discourse." The writer has examined some of the major trends of thought in progressive Urdu literature showing how Western Modernism affected Urdu literature. In the context of Progressivism, he very rightly evaluates the contribution of writers like Premchand and Sadat Hassan Manto.

While writing on modern Urdu fiction, Afroz Ashrafi covers the period from the last quarter of the 19th century to the present day. Very rightly he divides the period into two sections-the period of the Aligarh movement initiated by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the period influenced by Sir Mohammad Iqbal followed by the progressive movement and movements of Modernism and Postmodernism.

Afroz Ashrafi comments on the contributions of Nietzsche, Freud and Marx as precursors of the theories of modernism. He traces the idea of modernity in Hindi literature from the freedom struggle against the British rule and the emergence of the Brahmo Samaj. He traces the tradition of feminist writing from Rajendra Bala at the beginning of the 19th century. However, he points out how feminism as a movement in Hindi fiction has not been very prominent except some stray voices. He also comments that in India feminism or women empowerment has been more of a political slogan much the same way as it was in the early days of western feminist movement.

Modernism in Urdu literature, as Afroz Ashrafi puts it, can be associated with the uprising of 1857, which created later on a group of writers like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Shibli Nomani and Altaf Hussain Hali. In the context of Postmodernism, his comment that “essentially postmodernism underpins the significance of culture and the cultural studies in relation to the global tendencies” invites the contemporary writers and critics to advance their thinking in this direction.

Afroz Ashrafi’s comments on individual writers and their works are very searching and illuminating. He writes about Shafi Jawed, “Everyday in his life has a moment of clarification about self-doubts, about the pursuit of meaning and the brewing ire within”. Ashrafi considers the story “Glass” by Paigham Afaqui as “revolving round the homelessness of the modern soul which T.S. Eliot calls the heap of broken images”. Ashrafi writes about the so-called literature in Urdu and examines the works of Ghyas Ahmad Gaddi, Mushtaq Ahmad Noori and Salaam Bin Razzaq. He explains how modern Urdu literature is inflicted by a strong sense of alienation and a crisis of faith and moral bankruptcy. He exhibits the elements of ire in the stories of Quasim Khursheed and protest and reconciliation in the art of Zakia Mashhadi.

While touching topics from Hindi fiction, Ashrafi shows how Bhartendu revolutionized its cannons as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan induced a new spirit in Urdu literature. In the context of *Pragativaad* in Hindi and *Taraqipasand Tahreek* in Urdu, Ashrafi makes comments on writers like Premchand, Jainendra, Agyeya, Renu, Yashpal and Kamleshwar. In fact, his criticism covers a very wide context in the development of the Hindi short story.

Afroz Ashrafi writes meaningful essays on humanitarian concerns in the stories of Bhishan Sahni and on human connections in the stories of Krishna Sobti. He draws our attention to a diversity of concerns within the disintegrating values of the culture of a particular generation and makes us feel the need of a detailed study in this direction. Ashrafi has taken up the case of the Nai Kahani movement while interpreting the storytelling art of Kamleshwar and Mohan Rakesh. His remarks on Jyotsna Anil and Rafi Haider Anjum make us curious to know more about the potentiality of fiction-writing in future. His book is a new attempt to coordinate the modern trends in Hindi and Urdu narrative fiction and motivates us for their closer study and understanding.

Reviewer : Dr. Braj Nandan Sahay, Former Professor & Head, P. G. Dept. Of English, Magadh University. Bodh-Gaya.

Verma, Vijay Chandra. *A Critical Approach to Sudha Murthy's Novels*. Ranchi: Institute for Social Development and Research, 2016, price- Rs. 340.00, Pp-124.

Dr. Vijay Chandra Verma's book entitled *A Critical Approach to Sudha Murthy's Novels* is a sincere endeavour to present Sudha Murthy's major novels in new light. The writer has tried to depict not only the major themes of her novels but has also focused on her depiction of the contemporary society, use of symbolism, portrayal of characters, both male and female. Dr. Verma, a budding critic, poet and playwright has very well presented different nuances of Sudha Murthy's technique. Divided in six chapters, the book explores vividly the varied aspects related to Sudha Murthy. We all know that society is an integral part of human beings. Man is born in a family and a family needs society to survive and develop. It is the society which lays the foundation of culture and civilization.

Sudha Murthy's novels reflect society with typical Indian background and Indian ethos. Murthy has proved her worth not only in the world of business but also as a literary artist. The present study consists of six chapters - "Sudha Murthy: A Brief Biography", "Theme : A Critical Analysis", "Characters : A Critical Study", "Picturization of Society", "Symbolism" and "Final Approach".

The first chapter presents biographical details of Sudha Murthy. She has earned her fame as a social worker also; she has done a lot for the betterment and upliftment of the deprived and the depressed sections of the society. In the second chapter the writer has presented variegated themes of Murthy's novels. As a novelist she handles such themes as belong to individuals in a family which collectively forms a human society. She has mainly dealt with the personal complexities of married life. Her novels like *Mahashweta*, *Gently Falls the Bakula* and *Dollar Bahu* are true reflection of human behaviour and a concrete solution too to, all these issues.

The third chapter makes a detailed character study. Among the major male characters Dr. Anand, Dr. Vasant of *Mahashweta*; Chandrashekhar of *Dollar Bahu* and Shrikant of *Gently Falls the Bakula* have been given much importance. As far as major female characters are concerned Anupama and Radhakka in *Mahashweta*, Vinita and Gauramma in *Dollar Bahu* and Shreemati in *Gently Falls the Bakula* have been sincerely depicted. Even the minor characters have been very well taken care of.

The fourth chapter presents the importance of society. Society as a whole plays a very crucial role in human life. None can go beyond the rules and customs of society. Sudha Murthy, being an Indian English literary artist depicts society with Indian background in her novels. In the fifth chapter the writer has explained the symbolic world of Sudha Murthy. She draws symbols from day to day life and

also from the world of nature. She possesses extraordinary merit in using objects as symbols, the most striking feature of her technique is that the symbols which she uses also signify the title of her novels.

The last chapter sums up Sudha Murthy's contribution to the literary world. Dr. Verma has portrayed her ability to make her position in the great tradition of Indian English literature. To her credit are her objectivity, her detached manner of portraying her characters and taking up of ordinary and common themes for her novels.

The book under review focuses on the varied themes related to Sudha Murthy's novels. It not only describes the major themes of her novels but also portrays varied characters. It deserves a serious attention for it is a contribution to feminist literature. It will definitely help the scholars working on feminism. The study makes a significant contribution to the fast growing corpus of feminist studies. The writer must be congratulated for writing such a brilliant book. It is must read for anyone interested in the study of feminism. With a striking cover, the book feels good to hold in the hand and is a delight to read.

Reviewer : Dr. Neeraj Kumar, Professor, P. G. Dept. Of English, Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya.

Pandey, Ram Naresh. *History at the Crossroad : Investigating Partition Novels.* Delhi : Akhand Publishing House, 2018. ISBN : 978-93-81416-89-1, Price : Rs. 700.00, pp 155 + ix.

Much has been written on Independence Movement and the Partition of the sub-continent but the author's endeavour in this direction has been to delve deeper into the diseased and deserted psyche of the tormented scenes and to bring out something new and noble out of it. The five noted novels have been discussed by the author, Dr. Ram Naresh Pandey keeping in mind the artistic realisation as well as the human concern at great length. These novels symbolise the triumph of human values over the wild and ruthless nature of the contemporary times in the guise of Partition. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is the moving love story of a Sikh boy, Jugga and a Muslim girl, Nooran destined to suffer in a trouble-ridden society resulting in the sacrifice of the lover for the sake of love and humanity quite reminiscent of our age - old ethos:

... For God is True and dispenseth Truth.
There the elect his court adorn,
And God Himself their actions honors.
There are sorted deeds that were

done and bore fruit,
From those that to action could never ripen.
This, O Nanak, shall hereafter happen.

Dr. Pandey has dealt with the themes of the Quit India Movement and the Bengal Famine in *So Many Hungers!* The hunger for freedom and food has been quite appropriately illustrated in this novel providing a realistic story of apparently real people. Devesh Basu exhorts the people to fight against the menace of the prevalent ills in society:

Friends and comrades, do not betray the flag,
do not betray yourself. The supreme test has come.
Be strong, be true, be deathless.

In *Azadi*, Chaman Nahal adopts a strategy by employing myths to focus and highlight the trauma of partition resulting in the psychological degeneration of the characters as it were. The author has very successfully captured the anguish and agony of the protagonist. *A Bend in the Ganges*, the most exciting narrative told with great skill symbolically delineates the helplessness of the characters leaving their land with utmost dismay. The author has painted the entire scenes of separation involving different characters of the surroundings.

Riot is all about a larger topic than the undoing of one innocent American girl and the researcher of New York University, Priscilla Hart. It is all about the potential fragmentation of the secular Indian Republic, a tragedy in the making. The Hindus and the Muslims clashed in bloody riots over Ramshila Poojan programme followed by the disastrous consequences, catastrophic in nature.

The novels under review highlight the violence, hatred and religious frenzy, that came in the wake of partition and the innocent and ignorant masses who all suffered its ugly consequences. It is not 'History' rather 'Humanity' that stands at the crossroad. It suffered a great jolt after the partition of this great land whose foundation was laid, cultivated and nurtured tirelessly by our great saints, sages and reformers. If by misrule, they were to come alive today, they would hardly recognise their great land. The 'Foreword' written by Professor Neeraj Kumar seems to be a sincere attempt in that direction. The book, it is hoped, will be of interest to a large number of students and teachers. The author's labour in bringing the best out of these novels is really rewarding and refreshing.

Reviewer : Dr. Dina Nath, Associate Professor & Head, Dept. of English, J.J. College, Gaya.

Verma, Vijay Chandra. *Songs of Experience*. Ranchi : Institute for Social Development and Research. ISBN.978-93-84686-77-2 price; Rs. 250/- Pp-54.

Dr. Vijay Chandra Verma is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, K.B. Women's College, Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribag. His creativity shows his passion for and devotion to English literature. As an author his interest lies in both creative and critical writing. He is the author of four books. Two of them are the anthologies of poems namely, *Songs of Experience* and *Doll's Poems*, the third is a tragic play *Death of a Lover* and the fourth one is a critical work on Sudha Murthy's novels entitled *A Critical Approach to Sudha Murthy's Novels*. Besides these works, he has been a permanent member of and regular contributor to *The Interiors*, a literary Peer-reviewed annual Journal edited by Dr. Neeraj Kumar, Professor, Department of English, Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya. He has also written chapters in some of the widely acclaimed books.

Songs of Experience is a collection of 39 poems that reflect the developing stage of the author's mind from the stage of developing maturity to that of developed maturity. His poems show his immense grasp of poetic sensibility, imagination through the musical and spontaneous flow of words moulded into poetry. The anthology is a collection of various kinds of lyrical poems. Poems like 'My Valentine', 'First Meeting', 'Let me Propose to Her', 'A Ray of Hope', 'Half Face', and 'Breezes' are intensely romantic and passionate in tone. 'A Ghost Story' is the record of maternal uncle's and nephew's conversation that shows the unique capacity of the author to deal with child's emotions delicately. 'Gifted Boy' is remarkable for the humane approach of the author and sounds complaining about the inhuman behaviour towards the helpless. Some of the poems make a distinct collection that shows the restless state of the mind. It unravels the dark aspect of human life that is actually ugly, painful, and disrupting. The class contains 'Too Much the World is With Us', 'Efface me', 'Pain, Pain, Pain', 'Me, Why?', 'What? How?', 'Pain, My Experience', 'Kill Me Not in Installments', 'O Time', 'Regrace Me', 'The Unheard Voice', 'The Unwanted Child', 'Haunting Memories', 'Prostitute', 'A Riddle'. These poems are remarkable for the excess of heart-rending emotions.

Some of the poems are metaphysical in tone. 'Forgive Me' is the record of the author's mistake which he realized instantly and without delaying begged pardon of God. 'God, the Father' and 'Rain, the Root' show the author's firm faith in God, bringing them to the level of metaphysical poems. Poems like 'Mamma! Mamma!' 'Me, Motherland' and 'A Tribute to Guru Mata' reflect the author's devotion to someone to whom one should be genuinely devoted and bowed to.

A few poems like 'Bearded and Bald Headed Asses', 'Urendu', 'Envious Mules', and 'Monster' are scathingly satirical. They show the author's anger upon the villainous characters mentioned in them. Poems like 'Sangam', '25th Anniversary',

'5th September', and 'Let me Quote a Poem' are the record of some of the very special occasions. 'A Love Story' is the longest poem in this collection. It contains a long narrative in the poetic form. The style is very simple and so simple is the diction with lucidity. The poem contains 169 couplets.

In the anthology the poems are highly lyrical and most of them show the subjective mood. But, the emotional intensity never dwindles. The collection is one step ahead the history of romantic poetry in Indian English Writing.

Reviewer: Dr. Vijay Singh, Former Assistant Professor, Department of English, Markham College of Commerce, V.B.University, Hazaribag. (Jharkhand)