

## **Review of *The Golden Rendezvous***

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<b>Title</b>	<i>The Golden Rendezvous: An Anthology of Essays and Short Stories</i>
<b>Editor</b>	Dr Prasanta Chakraborty et al.
<b>Publisher</b>	Macmillan Publishers India Ltd
<b>Price</b>	Rs. 160

This is a collection of selected stories and essays – all in one place, as the title suggests. I should say the compilers have kept in mind while choosing well-known and often-read stories and essays, not only the interests of the present generation but also the issues that are highly relevant to our times.

I was away from Chennai for a retreat a few days ago and I am glad that Dr Prasanta Chakraborty had just then sent me his newly published anthology to take with me there. What a pleasure it was to read it through! It gave me not only immense pleasure but also made me reflect upon life, men and matters.

There are seventeen stories and thirteen essays. Among the former, some of the gems included are “The Diamond Necklace” by Guy De Maupassant, “The Bet” by Chekhov, “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry, “A Day’s Wait” by Ernest Hemingway and “Love across the Salt Desert” by Keki N. Daruwalla. There is also a short story by one of the most popular storytellers of the last century, Somerset Maugham, but it is not one of his best ones. The same should be said of the stories of Tagore and Premchand also included in this anthology.

Essays that find a place in this anthology are all by well-known essayists like Bacon, Addison, Lucas, Chesterton, Bertrand Russell, and Virginia Woolf. Not only authors of different ages but also essays of different types are included.

Another noteworthy feature is that most of the essays are highly relevant to the present times. For example, “Mass culture” by

Jeffrey is of great topical interest and should be read particularly by young men and women in developing countries like ours. They should know that, by aping the manners of the Westerners, they unknowingly contribute to the slow death of our own cultures of the elite as well the common folks.

Another current issue, namely gender prejudice, is dealt with by Virginia Woolf (“Shakespeare’s sister”) in her own persuasive style from a historical perspective. Again George Orwell’s “You and the Atom Bomb” is of great topical interest to us all. How prophetic he is in saying the world would come under the control of a few superpowers which possess the atom bomb! What Addison says, in his essay, “Mischief of Party Spirit”, about the Whigs and Tories of his times dividing the society into two enemy camps is very much true of the parties functioning in our democracy also. Essays of profound thinkers like Bertrand Russell (“An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish”) are also there. G. K. Chesterton’s essay “On the Pleasures of No Longer Being Young” and E. V. Lucas’ humorous piece “Bores” would immensely delight us.

The compilers have given an exhaustive introduction about the author and his works at the beginning in each case and at the end we find ‘Notes’ to help us understand the text better. I wish a clear demarcation had been made between the stories and essays on the ‘Contents’ page. Also, the names of authors could have been given against their contributions.

Nowadays in the teaching of English in our country emphasis is on the development of communication skills in our students. It does not mean that the teaching of literature is not important. Our students should be exposed to at least some of the great writings of well-known literary figures in the English language. This book would give an inkling to them of what rich treasures await them in

their study of English Literature if only they get interested in it. Universities may think of prescribing this anthology for the undergraduate students of Advanced English and also post-graduate students.

*The Golden Rendezvous* is a welcome addition to the anthologies of this kind we already have and it should certainly find a place in every college library in our country.