

Book Review: *Kavya Manjari: A Collection of Poems by R. V. Ram*

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Ram may be termed a contradiction in terms, for he is a rare combination of creative writing and ELT expertise, in a world which considers ELT practitioners as creatures incapable of appreciating literature. *Kavya Manjari* is a delightful, scintillating, thought-provoking collection of 82 poems. Once you open the book, you find it impossible to put it down, until you have run through the whole galaxy of poems. The interest never wanes from the first to the last page—as absorbing as a thriller fiction. Of the very first poem, Butterfly Effect, on Gandhiji, John Leong says, “.....that gave me a brief history lesson on India; really eye-opening!”

Ram’s amazing familiarity with religion, mythology and literature is evident all over the book. Look at his courage, to write on, of all themes,

Absurdity! The poem begins thus:

Is it a new phenomenon?

Known to the world

Through Becket and Camus?

The last line reads:

Christ had known.

The poem, “Identity and Difference”, a winner in Premiere poetry contest, is commended for great story telling. It narrates the story of two rival kings who shared the same language, but different dialects, when the neighbouring king offered to mediate, like the proverbial monkey,

There was no triangle

Only a big red circle.

Marvellous symbolism loaded with irony! The poem, I like Muslims, describes, with a touch of humour, Ram’s friendship with Muslims in Yemen:

Pakistani Gazals are

Always popular in India

And Indian films—nowadays
secretly watched—

Are a craze in Pakistan.

Ram has experimented with different forms of poems like Haiku, Sonnet, etc. Here is his haiku on haiku!

Haiku I tried....tried...

A miserable attempt ‘twas

I admit....I failed.

Ram’s ability to laugh at himself, a mark of best humour, is evident in his Ugly Duckling, which is autobiographical.

My friends pitied me

For my sphinx like face

I don’t approve of my looks either

I would, however, look in the
mirror on the sly,

..And flatter myself on my charms.

Ram’s keen insight into human nature is evident in poem after poem. His poem Catch-22 gives a poignant account of his betrayal by a friend, of whom he says,

You are a round character, after all,

An Iago at that.

I appreciate your motiveless
malignity.

One can go on and on, but I must
stop here, and allow you the
pleasure. This book is a must for all
lovers of poetry.