

Review of Danielle Hanson's *Sightlines*
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Book Review

Sightlines: View Points on Susheel Kumar Sharma's The Door is Half Open edited by Danielle Hanson anthologises 24 insightful academic commentaries on various thematic aspects of the poetry of Susheel Kumar Sharma. This book is divided into two sections, the first section, Section A: Articles, comprises of 20 remarkable reviews exploring myriad thematic representations of Susheel Kumar Sharma's second anthology of poetry, *The Door is Half Open* published in 2012, and the second section, Section B: Interviews, comprises of four insightful interviews with Sharma on his life, perspectives and poetry.

While the Prelude throws light on how the book focuses on Sharma's anthology *The Door is Half Open* to bring out different facets of his poetry, the Introduction broaches upon the significance of writing, reading and reviewing poetry, as well as the significance of applying critical theories and promoting constructive criticism. The various reviewers of section A present their analysis in myriad ways. Arbind Kumar Choudhary delves into a comparative analysis of myth and contemporary poets, while also highlighting the naturescape and the strife-stricken society, as well as providing an interesting take on how Sharma's usage of native Indian words has enriched Indian English literature in glossary, thought and conception. Binod Mishra and Rangnath Thakur trace the spiritual journey towards human consciousness in Sharma's poetry which revisits Indian mythology, tradition, and scriptures, Indian and Western schools of Philosophy, and juxtapose them with issue of pollution thereby mirroring the contemporary man's problem of sustaining his faith in an ever-changing world. Gurrapu Damodar calls attention to contemporary issues of modernity as well as various other aspects of Indian

mythology, ecology, social evils, psychology, and such. Kalikinkar Pattanayak brings out a comparative analysis of Andrew Marvell's "Thoughts in a Garden" and Susheel Kumar Sharma's "Mangoes" by highlighting the imageries of the objects of Nature as catalysts to thoughts corresponding the inner world of human beings and the external world of green environment and claims the poets to be green activists echoing the philosophy of Emerson. Again, in "Reflecting on *The Door is Half Open & For Reasons Unknown: The Ecological Perspective*" Kalikinkar Pattanayak brings out a number of comparative analyses such as of Sharma's and Jaidka's poetry in the backdrop of war and precarity, eco-criticism and feminism while contemplating upon the idea of creation versus construction in the context of ecology mirroring the ecological and political stance of the society. While Karen J Head encapsulates the 'epic' ventures of Sharma's poetry with references from Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian traditions, Mary Mohanty highlights the conflict between natural eco-sphere and the man-made 'techno-sphere' by comparing the representations of the relation of man and Nature as reflected in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and Sharma's "Ganga Mata: A Prayer." N.S.R. Ayengar refers to classical scriptures and verses to apprehend man's ignoble selfishness while at the same time reflecting how Sharma posits devotion as the guiding principle to lead a fruitful life and attain spiritual development. Nataša Miladinović broaches upon perspectives of ancient as well as contemporary spiritualism to reflect upon the symbolism of doors and similar motifs as expressed in Sharma's poetry. Nikunja Kishore Das underscores a comparative study of how the Ganges has been represented in the poetry of Keki N. Daruwalla, Arvind K. Mehrotra and Susheel K Sharma in an attempt to showcase the myriad attitudinal bents of perceiving a river. Om Dwivedi & Navya Aravind Karalingannavar examine *The Door is Half Open* as an embodiment of ecological consciousness by delving into Sharma's poetical imagination, ancient Indian tradition and knowledge systems in the platter of ecology and identity. Pragya Mishra foregrounds an analysis of the poetic devices with its symbolical nuances of Sharma's desire to explore the unexplored in the paintings of his poetry. Rabindra Kumar Verma attempts to showcase how Sharma's poetry collection *The Door is Half Open* transcends the limitations of imitative, assimilative, and experimental style to present a spiritual and political reality of Indian society and culture. In his review of Sharma's poetry collection, Rama Rao Vadapalli V B focuses on the deep sensibility of the poet with reference to both human and non-human representations, while providing a brief thematic

analysis of each of the poems of the collection. Ramji Yadav's presents a review of the cultural and mythological symbolisms as reflected in the 52 poems of immediacy in *The Door is Half Open*. Ranjita Barik revisits the poems of Sharma and Jaidka to explore the poetic beauty by applying the Indian theories of *Rasa*, *Dhvani*, *Alamkar*, *Vakroti* and such. Rashmi Jain analyses the poems in *The Door is Half Open* on the basis of ideas and theories concerning myths and archetypes as propounded by Frye, Bodkin and Jung while also talking about tradition-modernity and mythology and philosophy. Savitri Tripathi's paper juxtaposes social concerns such as poverty, malnutrition, pollution, crime and corruption with philosophical contemplations on Karma yoga and humanism and spiritualism. Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi accentuates how Sharma's poetry accommodates the nuances of spiritualism which are reflective not only of the mood of the poet but also of the complexities of the times, and also focuses on how myths and memories of local and racial history have played a major role in shaping the modern Indian poetry. Wendy J. Truran juxtaposes pain, desperation, and injustice with hope, belief and peace to delve into humanitarian aspects as reflected in the poems of Sharma.

In the succeeding section, dealing with the interviews, T. Sai Chandra Mouli engages in an insightful conversation on Sharma's childhood, studies, on being a poet, his concerns as a poet, the art and influences in his poetry, his social and ideological perspectives, and his take on various issues of academic trends, relevancy and contemporary speculations. In the excerpts of Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi's interview of Sharma, they engage in a conversation on the implications of creativity, motive and message, thematic aspects symbolism, title and philosophy of his poetry. Raza also broaches upon the contemporary and recent trends and movements, as well as budding, contemporary and other poets and their take on poetry. In another interview, Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi engages Susheel Kumar Sharma in a conversation to understand the poetic mind and personality of the poet behind his poetry. Suresh Chandra Dubey's interview of Sharma broaches upon the idea of 'righteousness' in the context of political, personal and social correctness to which Sharma advocates truth to be the quest of every poet and cites instances of various poets and countries to delve into the nuances of righteousness and moral policing. Dubey further engages Sharma regarding how Indian English Poetry draws from Sanskrit, Hindi and regional poetry, and the distinguishing mark of literature written in India and outside India. Upon further asking if Sharma writes for various social classes such as the elites, farmers or

Dalits, Sharma opined that one cannot write as a representative of the subaltern but can only sympathise and describe their plight. They further talk about the digital platform, Buddhism, his accomplishments, achievements, goals and community service as well as presenting a defence on writing in English. Danielle Hanson with Sharma explores various trends of poetry such as epic and spiritual poetry traditions where Sharma talks highly about John Crowe Ransom and the Poetical-Religious-Political-Personal intersections ingrained in his poems, showing instances from Milton as well as the Indian epics. They also engage in various topics as that of ecological and environmental degradation, human/social aspect of the duty of Man-Nature, role of poetry in society and academics, to which Sharma brought references from the scriptures as well as his own poetry.

This ambitious anthology of reviews and interviews not only identifies Susheel Kumar Sharma's exceptional stance as a poet but also encapsulates a polyphonic presentation of Sharma's poetry as well as perspectives which would be immensely instrumental for scholars as well as budding poets to comprehend and contemplate on various aspects of poetry, and the importance reading and writing poetry.

Bionote

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