C. L. Kharti. *For You to Decide.* New Delhi: Authorspress, 2016. PB. pp. 82. Price ₹ 250/ US$ 12. ISBN: 978-93-5207-406-8.

Reviewed by
Somasundari Latha*

Prof. C. L. Kharti is a prolific poet, critic and editor. His five collections of poetry include *Kargil* (2000), *Ripples in the Lake* (2006), *Goolar Ka Phool* (Hindi 2011), *Two Minute-Silence* (2014) and *For You to Decide* (2016). He has twenty books on literary criticism to his credit, and is a recipient of Michael Madhusudan Academy Award for his *Kargil* (2000).

For You to Decide contains 49 poems, 8 Three Liners and 25 Haikus. The poems in this collection deal with contemporary issues. In the Postmodern era, man loses the true meaning of life in the mad pursuit of material comforts. Kharti's title poem "For You to Decide" beautifully delineates the mad race modern man engages in. The poet mocks at man's untiring efforts to conquer infinite space and time. In the era of technology and the Internet, when everything is readily available without much effort, Kharti's questioning about motherhood is really thought provoking:

> Sometimes I wonder
> if Bharata's nine rasas would be programmed
> if babies would be sold in shops.
> You want umbilical cord or warranty card? ("For You to Decide" 21-24)

Modern man does not have time to stand and stare at nature. In the name of progress and development man gradually intrudes the ways of nature and finally destroys it. Without any pomp and show, C. L. Kharti simply describes nature's love for humanity. Tree, out of its love for man, willingly gives its branches and trunk to man, but man destroys it completely out of his greed. The poet is conscious about the need and importance of nature in this age of industrialization and modernization in the name of development. Man betrayed nature; as a result nature becomes unmerciful towards man. This results in the death of people in so many ways. The poet writes, "There is no handshake/between the earth and the sky", so the farmers commit suicide. ("Deluge of Development" 9-10)

Kharti's poetic heart not only grieves for destruction and death but also gives us the statistics of the suicide in order to wake up the sleeping conscience of people concerned. His appeals to God to save the country from 'deluge of development' and 'epidemic of synthetic microbes' shows his concern for the humanity, and human values which have been deteriorated with the excuse of globalization. He writes:

> God save the country
> from deluge of development
> epidemic of synthetic microbes.
> Summon the Noah. ("Deluge of Development" 17-20)

* *Assistant Professor of English, R. V. Government Arts College, Chengalpattu – 603001, Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu, INDIA. Email: slathajaya@gmail.com.*

The modern youth donot have the patience to wait. Waiting and then enjoying the fruit of waiting is the way of life. But man is in a hurry to fall in love and try to complete all phases of life with the help of technology – phone even before the marriage. The point of saturation is attained before the normal life begins. They miss all the thrills and the sweet experiences that life brings. There is a saying 'Distance keeps enchantment'. Kharti rightly puts the philosophy of life as, "Separation is a sweetener/that sweetens the tea you sip." ("Pangs of Parting" 13-14) The poet, in simple words, gives the secret of happy life in the "Pangs of Parting". Letters between friends or loved ones carry not only message but lot of emotions, passions and feelings. Unfortunately the art of letter writing is replaced by phones. Thanks to the poet, since he has taken us to the time where we would be eagerly waiting to see the handwriting of our dear ones. He asks us to enjoy 'i-miss you' game.

Kharti has the guts to comment on the hospitals as 'diseased spirit of service' ("Hospital" 22) and 'Perfumed phantoms greet your purse with cupid smile' ("Hospital" 24). As a poet he has the social responsibility, and therefore, he portrays the pitiable condition of functioning of hospitals. He has to hesitation to slam the people for their irresponsible behaviour. His compassion has a bewitching, charismatic effect. In "A Happy Return", the poet's attempt to put all 'beggars' in a hierarchal order is humourous. Moreover it gives a pictorial representation of present day politics.

There is no parallel for Kharti in raising the voice for women. In his new *Ramayana*, Sita rules over Ayodhya in Rama's absence and Rama facing the fire ordeal. A staunch feminist feels the pathetic condition of women in our society. 'Human life in India is pretty cheap' ("Justify the Death" 11). One can understand the anger in Kharti when he says how women are scapegoated and says, compensatory buck and crocodile tears cannot be the substitute for her virginity and life.

Kharti's broadmindedness born out of wide reading, his rich experience and spiritual quest make him define religion as,

> an act of peeling off onion skins of ignorance
> a journey from being to Being
> through love, action, knowledge or Raja yoga
> or whatever leads you to You in you. ("Religion" 29-32)

God has no religion. It seems Humanism is Kharti's religion. The post-colonial elements, like quest for identity, self, hybridity, alienation, disorientation, etc., are found in his poems. His phrases "We are born with/ borrowed senses" ("Postcolonialism" 8-9) have a magnetic effect on the readers. He has the courage to say that all of us are hypocrites, since we are wearing the masks. His obsession with truth forces him to give up his mask and live truthfully in God's land.

As a modern poet, he realizes the necessity, significance and reach of technology. His poem "Eleventh Incarnation" is dedicated to technology. He realizes the omnipotent and omnipresent nature of technology and humourously calls it eleventh incarnation i.e. 'technocarnation'. His imagination is at peak when he says that the alphabet contains

only one letter e – which is invisible, omnipotent and omniscient, though it seems humourous, but it is thought provoking.

Kharti's philosophical musings on life is admirable. Though he presents the pitfalls of the contemporary society, he is not pessimistic. His approach to life is positive. He writes, "A lingering hope against the tide/survives the rickety ride of life." ("Rickety Ride of Life" 15-16) These lines resemble philosophical lyrics of a famous Tamil poet, Kavi Arasu Kannadasan, about life. Kharti's collection of poems almost touches all issues of the society. His specific words like SPT, SQK etc have a magnetic effect on readers. His use of metaphor, like "empty web of dear desires" ("Rickety Ride of Life" 14), and also of similes, "like an arrow from the quiver of Kamdev" "like a freshly ripe Alphonso ready to be squeezed", and "like Kabir's shawl" ("The Bliss of Beauty" 3- 4, and 12) gives new meaning to his poetry.

In his poem, "Poetry Wants to Stand with You", the poet says that one who has the heart to feel the sufferings of creatures of universe, he alone can understand the value and soothing power of poetry. Really the poems in this collection bring one close to this perception and sensitivity successfully. Being a keen observer of life, Prof. Khatri, through his poems, gives us deep and significant messages of life to awaken our sleeping conscience.

❑❑❑