K. Srilata. *Writing Octopus: A Collection of Poems*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2013, pp. 74, Price Rs. 195. ISBN 978-81-7273-785-6.

Reviewed by
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For K. Srilata, poetry is a chiselled marble of language. *Writing Octopus: A Collection of Poems* is startlingly original. Her poems have the strength and variety to surprise readers with rich experiences — revelation, insight and further understanding of elemental truth and beauty as John Keats said:

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.
> ("Ode on a Grecian Urn" Lines 49-50)

One of the most definable characteristics of Srilata's poetry is economy of language. A quality poem is a colourful rose that paints feelings that it holds something more to unfurl:

> I found it at last
> In a grave of misplaced things ("Trace", p. 73)

There are some voices that emphasise the agency that speakers of English in post-colonial societies use the language in their identity formation and to create their own discursive space. Writing is inside out in words. Srilata's poems uncover beauty of the lived moments of our life. A simultaneous feeling of happiness and ecstasy in the variety of subjects and style is what the collection stands for. Poems in *Writing Octopus* appeal to our best senses, and we unwittingly follow a call from within. We soon become part of the poetic flight, and together we move on—the poet and the reader. There is the pleasure in the recognition of a shared moment followed by a revealed anxiety of experiencing beauty in objects and thoughts. Srilata's poems can be read seriously and reveal deeper meanings of life's routine acts:

> Adoption agency file.
> Her first photograph. The only one in the file.
> ("Not in the Picture", p. 39)

Creativity is a red rose of every human heart. There is lyrical celebration in the recognition of a fulfilling moment after reading a poem:

> It's a bit like herding birds.
> Just when you think
> you have done it,
> it flutters away from your grip. ("Writing", p. 74)

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Srilata's poetic-self gasps in 'chamber of maiden thoughts' to search for her emotional root proclaiming it as sap of art is her poetic engagement. A language 'dew-fresh and clear' is the source of vitality for the poetess to voyage within: The *Foreword* by Keki N. Daruwalla is like an entry key to unfold a mysterious casket of delight. In Srilata the element of *Shakti* lies in her use of imagery and that is in an attractive way:

> I am a word with some muscle,
> a lean and mean word,
> a leopard on the prowl. ("Leopard-Prowl", p. 46)

Veritable images in different poems in this collection are woven one into another with rare radiance and effortlessness. Poems dazzle with sparkling cadence. There is a unified sensibility that stitches the poems in a perfect harmony:

> A bright blue bird
> from a distant tree
> flies into my house. ("Bright Blue Bird", p.21)

There is an indomitable gusto that turns the key to a casket of sublime thoughts and ideas. Poetry for *Carl Sandburg* is an echo, asking a shadow to dance. Poems in this timely collection record the moments recollected through the doors of eternity:

> A very old door,
> In need of repair,
> Swings hinge-less. ("Faces", p.70)

Srilata, a responsible soul-maker, does not find it difficult to articulate her poetic commitment into a corpus that beautifully invites her readers' interest. No matter what we touch and we wish to know about, we simply end up in the enigma of heightened awareness that her words and idioms forge.

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