C.L. Khatri. *Two-Minute Silence.* New Delhi: Authors Press, 2014. pp. 81, Price: ₹ 195.00. ISBN: 978-81-7273-920-1.

Reviewed by
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T.S. Eliot's assertion "the question involved in the phrase 'the use of poetry' is nonsense" correlates with the earlier assumption of Matthew Arnold that poetry can replace religion though with undefined practicality. No doubt, poetry can sensitize our consciousness and awaken our soul without claiming to affect a change-over.

Here is Dr. C.L. Khatri's latest collection of poems with women as the central theme. He has dedicated the book to the memories of his mother. The book has a quotation from a letter of Sir Percy Fitzpatrick to Lord Milner in 1919 in which he has acknowledged the selfless service and devotion of the womankind.

The poems in this volume, nevertheless, present an assessment of subject matter-woman, nature, festivals, folk culture, social satire and personal musings. They show different shades of the poet's mood and mind, both appreciative and critical. The very title of the book is an outright denunciation of the present state of affairs on the national scene in India, a social wasteland. It is a virulent satire on our unruly parliamentarians those who are no better than hooligans uprooting the microphone and tearing the pages of the constitution. It is a satire on the foolish shaking off of our age old cultural values. It is a satire on our thoughtless polluting the environment and killing one another over trifles. The poet's conscious self mourns the loss of such priceless possessions and seeks like-minded company to observe a two minute silence to condole the loss. Here again, he takes a dig as someone makes a mischievous suggestion "can't we do with one- minute silence?" With these words he hammers down the insensitivity of the people who don't even want to spare two minutes to consider the loss of human values. The satire is so pointed that it can pierce the pachydermic mind of man. I wish it could!

The strain of satire carries on in a number of poems, for example, 'government schools', 'Bull's Reaction', 'Election', 'sex', 'Chastity' etc. We all know the sorry state of government schools sans building, sans teachers, just a pigsty of a school. Poor, hungry children rush to such hunts for the love of free mid- day meal, free bicycle and books. Hired teachers know little and teach less. The government and their political agents behave like the three monkeys of Bapu. Their eyes fail to see the evil, their ears don't hear other's grievances and blissfully observe the ceremony of silence. In' Bull's Reaction' mechanization is the butt of satire. As oxen and horses have been replaced by machines for tiling the earth, so will human being be replaced by test tubes. The poet's intended message is to realize the equal rights of animals. 'Election' highlights the corrupt means to gain power. Politics is, no longer the skill of state administration, rather it is a self seeking enterprise. The poet is also critical of rampant sex abuse on and off roads.

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'Mother' shows different aspects of her divinity, love, sacrifice and privations. The poet calls her 'a universal emblem of love and sacrifice' (*Two-Minute Silence,* 27). But unfortunately the same mother is forced to abort her female foetus, at Kalahandi in Odisha out of penury a mother has to sell her child in the present day circumstances. Side by side the poet recounts the mythical women like Kunti who had to cast away her son for public censor, Sati immolated herself to protect her husband's honour. These examples just show the mother's selflessness and her utter vulnerable position in society down the ages. 'Homage to Maa' is C.L. Khatri's personal tribute to his mother in which he recounts his mother's love, sacrifice and aspirations for him. He likens her to Mother Mary and cherishes a series of loving memories of his Mother. It turns out to be a tribute to all mothers, and to female power.

There are poems like 'Naina Hills', 'River,' 'The Falgu' that describe the poet's long association with them and his regret at the present day neglect and nature's apathy. In 'Paean to Patliputra' he nostalgically describes Patna of the past and present, its historical opulence and present day poverty. It was the haunt of Gautam Buddha, the Britishers' Lawn now called Gandhi Maidan, the Harding Park etc. The once divine, now "The Ganga crawlson her knees in north sinking in the sand mixing memory and desire" (p. 24). The pageantry of legendry giants effigy burning on Vijayadashmi and the celebration of Holi festival describe the traditional ritual updated as fun-filled celebrations. "Jogiji Wah Jogiji" is an example of a regional song with all its rural originality.

The book, as a whole, is a good specimen of Indian English poetry showcasing its exterior. Poetry today is a criticism of life more than ever before and the popular reader has no taste and mind for sublime thoughts and high philosophy. As such, the book will definitely appeal to the common reader.

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