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**Reviews of M.K.Raina's 'Pentachord'**  
**(A Collection of 5 Short Stories in English)**

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**Reviews of M.K.Raina's 'Pentachord'**  
**A Collection of 'Stories for the Young' in English**

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☺ Most of the languages from South have a lot of literature for the youth and the children. English language surpasses all the world languages in producing stories for young. 'Harry Potter' is now read by almost all the young of our vast world.

Kashmiri language lacks behind. Some two or three books have come out during past 60 years having poems and stories for children. This is not enough. KPs have been driven out from their beautiful land of Kashmir. This tragedy has affected our old and young. We need literature for our new generations.

Shri M.K.Raina, a well known humble Kashmiri short story writer has come up with a fine book in English named 'Pentachord'. The book has been printed well and priced at Rs. 30.00 only. He needs all appreciation for this badly needed work.

Generally, all young people want to read stories of valour, discovery, suspense and wonder. These stories help the child to grow and know about our past. Fairy-tales and '*Padshah Kath*' (the story of a king) were common in our homes till 1950. In the evening, the members of a family would sit and listen to grand mother's long tales of tremendous interest.

I was in 6<sup>th</sup> class in Anglo-Vernacular Middle School at Shopian, when I heard 'Shahnama', a Persian Epic in the evenings at my lodging. Stories from 'Bhagwata' and 'Baital Pachisi' were common in those old days.

When I asked my friend Prof. Arvin Gigoo to arrange a tutor to teach English to my grandson Neel Naag, he advised me to give him journals and short-story books and that will help him more than a tutor. I did the same and am waiting for the results.

'Pentachord' has five stories in total of a hundred and thirty-three page book, which I read in two sittings. The book is very very interesting. The first story 'Advice' is the translation of the author's 'Naseehath' in Kashmiri, which gives the psychology of the young boys reading in 6<sup>th</sup> class. It gives a scene of Habba Kadal Bridge – selling of old books at half the price. I loved Habba Kadal bridge

most. One could stand on its pathways, see the reflection of lamps in the river Vitasta and talk to a friend standing with you. Some three years back, I saw the bridge in a dilapidated condition and a new bridge coming up near by. My old memories crushed me for some time and I was lost in the days of 1947 to 1955. I was putting up near Ganpatyar in those days in a rented house and working in D.A.V. High School, Magarmal Bag. The scene of the fine old days came running to catch me. I was lost and lost in the Habba Kadal bridge along the scenes attached to this bridge. Buying & selling of Books, chating, Khanyari Haakh selling ladies, groups of young ones bathing at the Soomyar Ghat have become history now. But the story 'Advice' recreates all those scenes and this is the success of a writer.

Shri M.K.Rains deserves kudos for his interesting stories. The story also reminds the old people of their child-hood and young age.

The other stories are The Last Game, Charu & the Witch, Three Questions and Kaal Chakra. This set of stories is well-knit, written in a language which attracts the reader and can very easily be understood and enjoyed by our young generation, not only Kashmiri, but any young one of any country.

The emotions, ideas and wishes of the young ones are same all over the world. There is only the difference of cultures and languages.

'The Three Questions' is a very interesting story and is closer to the story of Mahabharata, in which the Yama asks some questions from Yudhishtara before allowing him to drink water from the spring. When Yudhishtara replies correctly, all his brothers who had died without replying the questions of Yama for quenching their thirst, came alive. Almost same are the questions solved by the young son of the king in 'Three Questions': What a woman loves most ? – Her children. What is the greatest wealth? - The Contentment (Santosha Paramam Sukham). What is that which one can not hide? – The roots of a person (which we have unfortunately lost due to the advent of fundamentalism).

Other stories too have a world of their own. One is lost in the story when it is picturised by the writer in a nice style of his own. I hope that all these stories will be liked by all who read them, may he be a child or an adult.

I wish that Mr. Raina should concentrate on the Literature for Young. It is the need of all times to come. I am not a short-story critic, but I feel that work has been done with keeping in view the

psychology of a child and the small pictures given side by side can create more interest in our young readers. All parents are requested to purchase this book at least for the good of their young ones.

I once again congratulate the writer on opening this new heaven for our budding flowers in the sand, dust and camps all over India.

- **Arjun Dev Majboor, Jammu**

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☉ I have read 'Pentachord', a collection of five short stories written in English by my friend M.K.Raina. I had earlier read his book 'tsók módúr', a collection of short stories written in Kashmiri. These stories are absorbing and interesting. The diction used is simple and the subjects dealt with are varied. On reading the English short stories I was reminded of some old stories of the 'Katha Sarita Sagar'. Shri Raina's selection of themes and the treatment, both are unique, simple and free flowing. As a student of literature, I can say that these stories are of a high standard both in form and content. I congratulate him for his creativity and originality of approach. I shall eagerly await many more interesting stories from his productive pen, both in Kashmiri and English.

- **T.N.Dhar 'Kundan', Bangalore**

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☉ पांचन शार्ट स्टोरीयन प्यठ मुश्तमिल 'प्यंटाकार्ड' छि सानि नवजवान कॉशिरि पुयि अख तोबरुक। अंग्रीज्यस मंज़ लेखनऽ आमऽन्न रैना सॉबऽन्य यि किताब छि पॅज्यपॉठ्य अख मॉर्यमँज़ तऽ अशि दॉर हिश सॉबऽरन।

- **रविन्दर रवी, नई दिल्ली**

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☉ Having read 'tsók módúr', the collection of short stories and other prose and verse by Mr. Raina in Kashmiri language, I had thought that his area of work is in Kashmiri language only. But reading 'Pentachord', a collection of short stories in English, I was pleasantly surprised that he can be as lucid and impressive when he writes in Queen's English also. This collection has been described by Mr.

Raina as 'Stories for the Young', but these can be equally enjoyed by people of all ages. I am however sure, the young can enjoy them better because of the fertile imagination they possess. (See the popularity of Harry Potter these days.)

Only the first story 'Advice' is an English rendering of one of the stories in his earlier publication. This and other stories prove that Mr. Raina is an excellent story teller. He can render the product of his imagination in a form that races through the reader's mind. The flow of the turns in the stories is so smooth that one does not feel how far the author has taken him with himself. The stories may have a moral to convey, but it is subtle and never compelling. Story is the master.

The language, English in this case, is so simple. It appears that Mr. Raina is an English writer and not essentially a Kashmiri writer. His prose can very easily be compared with many English writers of Indian origin. After reading him, it appeared to me that language as a medium of expression is subservient to thought and not vice versa. If Mr. Raina has something interesting to tell, language follows automatically.

When I started the book, read the first story and was about to read the second one, I thought Mr. Raina, as is his wont, will again be portraying his characters and situations in old milieu of Kashmir, which he can depict as nobody does. But going ahead, I found that he has left Kashmir far behind and adopted a universal canvas. These stories can be read by young people of any country, any background and any language with equal interest. His sphere of imagination in stories like 'Charu & the Witch' and 'Kal Chakra' go beyond the ethereal.

I found reviewing the book like this was beyond my capacity. I have liked reading it as any ordinary reader would do, rather immensely. But I am sure those well versed in literary idiom and niceties would find in it much more to comment upon. I find in this work glimpses of some great writing, but I must confess I am not able to articulate it. It is my failing and not of the book. My critical mind of course could discern two or three printing errors which can be avoided in future prints.

- P.N.Wali, Mumbai

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