

M.K.Raina's 'Pentachord'

Pentachord

Author: M.K.Raina,

Publishers: Expressions, Vasai 401 202.

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.