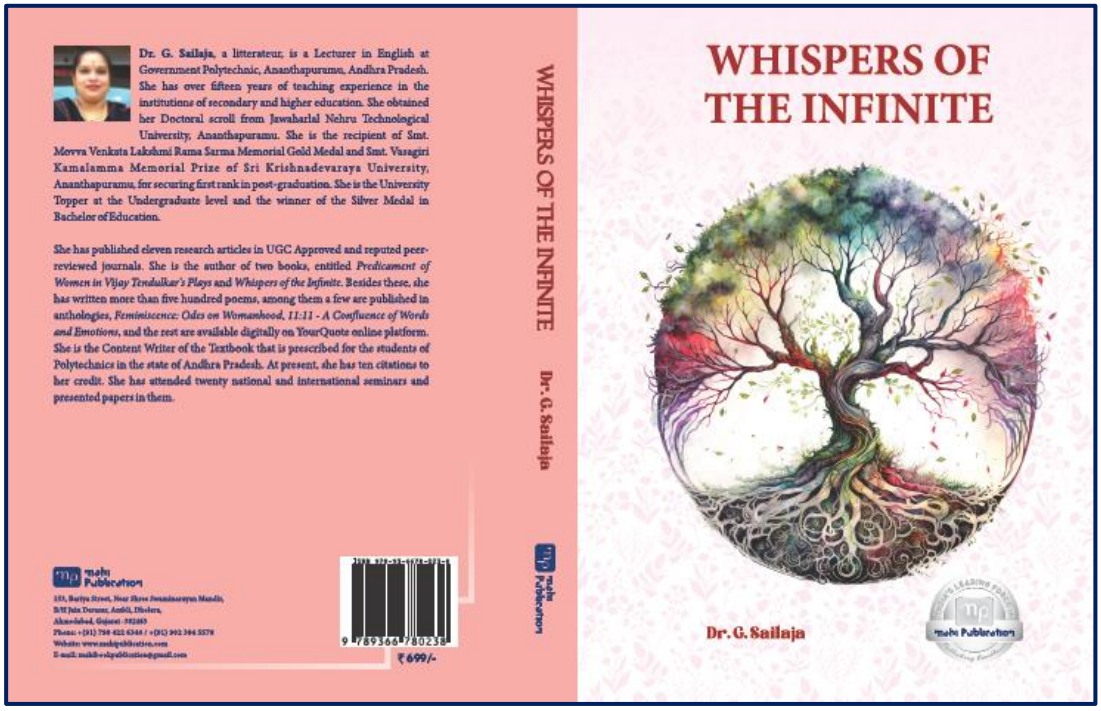
Whispers of the Infinite by Dr. G. Sailaja, Publisher: Mahi Publications, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, ISBN:978-93-6678-023-8, Price: Rs.699/-

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Sailaja, currently working as a Lecturer in English at Government Polytechnic, Ananthapuramu, is a good teacher and littérateur with a commendable command of English literature and language. She, having bestowed faith on me, I have come forward to write a foreword to this anthology Whispers of the Infinite by taking the Roman dictum as "It is always honourable to save a citizen than to kill an enemy," as Dr. Samuel Johnson does in his Preface. Sitting lonely under the colossal canopy of the life's tree, the poet muses on the various facets of human nature. With gleaming ideas and glittering thoughts, she imbibes the past and imparts the present for the future. When the world is asleep, the poet awakens from her dreams and whispers infinitely for the good of mankind.

Dr. Sailaja's debut work entitled *Whispers* of the Infinite is a collection of poems on nine different subjects which are like 'navaratnas' well studded in the anthology of her precious poetic ornament.

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The first section, 'Inspiration,' glorifies unconditional hard work with unwavering determination. The poet commends the 'strenuous strivers' and 'born fighters' and condemns those who make a mockery of the great endeavours. Success closes all the 'mocking mouths and snarling faces'. The poet's wonderful observation is that as a brick is transformed into a marble 'mockery and disapprovals will be turned into applause and praise'.

As a successful person in life, the poet writes about the successful people who have taken humanity a leap forward. She is so optimistic to trace out pearls in the dark oceans of misery. She writes:

> A life without worries is
>
> a tale without twists
>
> Feels truly monotonous

She makes myriad expressions about life's mystery, future and optimism. The spirit of the poem echoes Tennyson's 'follow knowledge like a sinking star,' and Hamlet's "what a piece of work is man!". The poems in the section have an epic flow with Miltonic grandeur.

'Human Emotions' is another wonderful section, in which the poet herself presents as a fighter. A world filled with 'drought of emotions, a sense of detachment engulfed the poet's mind, and a smog of pain encircled her heart'. There is a mellifluous flow of metaphorical expressions. Keen observation of failure and success is found,

> Failure is always lonely
>
> But success has several claimants.

Having identified different emotions with different colours, the poet finds the aesthetic amalgamation. The pain of two broken hearts will make flow 'ocean of tears'. Let us have empathy and sympathy for the angelic Desdemona's devoured by the devilish suspiciousness.

As there is a clash between mind and heart, the life becomes an endless conflict between what 'we want to do and what we have to do'. Through these lines the poet leaves time to heal the wounds of dismay.

In the Sections 'Nature,' 'Love,' 'Women,' and 'The Lord,' the poet holds a traditional view. In 'Nature,' the poet walks pleasantly in her memory lane and reflects on her childhood memories with a serene pleasure. A starry sky, moonlit beauty, touch of pleasant breeze, sunrises and sunsets, delight of twilight, blooming flowers, friendship with solitude, luscious green fields, glistening grass all take her to an enchanting land like Keats's 'charmed magic casement'. Like Wordsworth, she believes that nature never does betray the heart that loves her.

In the Section 'Love,' the poet says 'learn to save love for the forbidden self'. A thing of value is known in its absence, not in its presence. She writes,

When you miss someone
You find their imprints all around.

Here, a strong bond of romantic love is expressed with great dexterity and sagacity.

If it was easy to forget someone
Then poetry wouldn't exist
And tragedies would not be classics
And in the animal world,
There is no place for 'To be or not to be'.
The night is incomplete without
a glimpse of your thought.

As a woman in the Section 'Women', the poet expresses the universal predicament of a working woman who is torn between official responsibility and motherly affection, missing the 'giggles of her little one'. She strongly denies the 'celestial citadel' built by men for their comforts and luxuries in the patriarchal society. In 'The Lord', she expresses an unquestionable faith in the Almighty.

I drench Him in the ambrosia of affection
Offer the gorgeous garland of words
And bow down at his lotus feet.

She questions the dichotomy that exists in the Hindu society. Here, women deities are worshipped with great reverence, but women are tormented, ill-treated with great malice. They submerge not just her 'effigy' but her 'doctrine' as well. She believes in poetic justice as Browning's says "God is in his heaven, and everything is right with this world". She will not accept the atheist statement that any person with some historical perception will not glorify or mythify gods or godmen.

Miscellaneous thoughts have been presented in the Section, Miscellaneous. It is a brilliant expression of poetic luxury in 80 stanzas. She philosophises that life is a quest seeking answers to the multiple questions, as every tomorrow is a question mark. Her love for music is immense, as the songs of bygone days bring aesthetic elation. She extols the great masters of wisdom, as Alexander Pope elevates.

Immortal heirs of universal praise
Whose honours increase as the ages grow

As rivers roll down enlarging as they flow.

She pokes fun at modern marriages as a replica of artificiality,

As a scripted reality shows

adorned with plastic smiles.

She describes the deceptive world as there dwells a devil's heart in an angel's face,

Multifaceted mortals

Put on the face of angels.

While writing poetry, the poet evolves herself from admiration to adoration. She knows well how to make life beautiful and meaningful.

The strings of life

Generate umpteen melodies

If only the player knows

How to fine tune the chords.

She takes life's pros and cons equally. 'I love the tranquillity of loneliness and the chaos in the gatherings'.

In 'Technology', she expresses the modern apprehensions about emerging robots and AIs. She questions, 'will replicas replace humans?' Technology degenerates man from sadism to epicaricacy.

With all the pervading nature of a poet, she perceives human nature in its totality and makes eloquent and exquisite expressions.

Defiance to change directs to perishment,

Admittance of change heads to advancement.

These lines are similar to the fact that tolerant nations flourish whereas violent nations perish.

Poetic precision, brevity, and felicity of expression find their place in her poetry. The sky is adorned with dazzling stars. The reader and the listener will have poetic luxury and they drench in 'the drizzle of her amusing ambrosia.' With her gustatory rhymes, that is, turbulent tides of troubles, gorgeous garland of words, mellifluous melody dreamy delighted nights.

She transforms melody into mellifluous listening. The Miltonic imprint is seen in the poet. Post placement of adjectives as ambience amicable, aroma prominent, stars eternal, and serenity cosmical.

Keats' enchantment, Shelley's lyricism, Browning's theism, and Wordsworth's pantheism unknowingly find their imprints in her poetry. But optimism is a major recurring undercurrent theme of her poetry.

For a critic, it is not possible to compress 'a mountain into a molehill' as it is often done by a poet. One has to enjoy and relish the aesthetic taste of her poetry by becoming 'the active performers' as wished by the poet at the beginning.

However, Dr. Sailaja's poetry is not free from certain shortcomings. Repetition of thought and expression and at places she becomes a prey to the end rhyme which is sonorous and monotonous. Written in free verse, at some places, it seems that poetry degenerates into musical prose.

At the end, she makes a humble presentation, that she is no way different from the reader. Her ideas are similar to the ideas of the reader. 'The writer is the written poet' while 'the reader is the unwritten poet'. Finally, she says that there is no end to the eternal cycle, as Sri Sri put it 'poetry is infinite thirst'.

Let us congratulate the poet on her artistic endeavour in the modern days where the poets and poetry are not held in high esteem. Let me conclude with the opening lines of Matthew Arnold, in his 'Study of Poetry', 'the future of poetry is immense,' as Dr. Sailaja has a strong conviction in it.