

K.B. GOEL: CRITICAL WRITINGS ON ART 1957-1998. By Shruti Parthasarathy (Ed). New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2020. 430+1 pp.

In the introduction to her book, Parthasarathy begins by drawing attention to K.B. Goel's responses to "the avant-garde and the postmodern" (xvii). She dedicates specific sections to the discussion on Marcel DuChamp's rejection of Modernism (xxi-xxii), Cubism and Minimalism, working her way through Goel's skepticism towards the computerization of art and its subsequent ramifications that changed its traditional course (xxv). Using Walter Benjamin as a launch pad, she notes how Goel raises but refuses to answer the question on the inclusion of photography, and its contribution to art (xxx). In the final section, she displays his gradual conservatism from earlier political tendencies by mysticizing his politically motivated criticism, referring to how his inclination for the *Ishopanishad* defined the apparent transcendental standards of Eastern art (xxxix-xl). The Book is divided into five sections. In 'Artists', Goel makes a few standard observations – how Indian painters become repetitive in their methods, lacking an experimental zeal (5), on the dispassionate nature of Jamini Roy's paintings (23), the implications of *angst* in postmodern art (in refutation of Modernism/s) (36), the manners involved in assessing Hussain's art outside the domain of "normally satisfying aesthetics" (48) and so on. Furthermore, Hussain's art becomes reminiscent of what Goel calls "ethnic memories" (58), by which I understand a memory fed by sublated ethnic constructions. F.N Souza contributes to the making of a modern day Hindu *bewusstsein* nurtured on Intuitions, although the author does not qualify which aspects of his paintings are singular and immediate. Satish Gujral exhibits the extremities of an artistic enterprise, while the author tracks a decisive lack of influence of Dada painters in Indian art. Goel makes a seminal statement when he says that "Modernism in India came as an assertion against the all-pervasive cultural nationalism as represented by the Bengal school of painters in the pre-independence period" (144) – something that is worth investigating in all its umpteen varieties. This section closes off with an attempt at critiquing photography as an aesthetic medium of experience (158-161). In 'Institutions' an important contribution of Goel could be considered his criticism of the Lalit Kala Akademi that faltered at several junctures. His solution is to educate art enthusiasts in "art-history consciousness" (173) before striving to remedy fundamental problems related with administration and funds. A historical account of Western art draws flak when "provincialisms" (180) take the upper hand. In 'Triennale-India', there are brief studies of art exhibitions across India. Here, he praises Bhupen Khakhar for the *factness* of his art (211), ending with a brief paragraph on Kitsch. In 'Art and Ideas', he studies Minimalism and the basis of its "semantic tease" (223), reverting back to improvements for the LKA, such as an "anechoic chamber" (237) which should enhance the values of aesthetic experience. Depression Years force artists to come to terms with social realities, often mitigating them from pursuing what is truly great, instead limiting themselves in exhibitions and business transactions. 'Art's distorting Mirror of Consciousness' is a reasonable explanation of everything argued for by Goel in this section, barring explicit references to politics. The volume culminates with essays on photography, Goel's reviews and catalogues of solo exhibitions.

While the editor must be lauded for taking upon herself a task that is the first of its kind, and while the reviewer concedes to the exclusion of ideas not directly pertaining to art criticism, two criticisms of K.B. Goel's commentary on art must not be overlooked – first, there is a decisive lack of intense philosophical, aesthetic or literary reflection, causing the reviews to be lightweight and subject to popular ignorance. Even the best of journalistic criticism is often well-written than well-argued; second, the epigrammatic nature that his writing takes refuge in functions as a bane in absence of true authenticity, missing the nail and lacking any very deep impact from without. Nevertheless, the volume will serve as an inspiration for art critics in the future.

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WOMEN WRITERS OF THE SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA: INTERPRETING GENDER, TEXTS AND CONTEXTS. By Ajay K. Chaubey and Shilpa Daithota Bhat (Eds.). Jaipur & Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2020. 264 p.

The pluralities involved with the very construct of the body of South Asian Cultural Studies repeatedly invite critical inquiries to locate and address the gaps existing within its frame of existence. The trajectories of South Asian Studies in the post-human era offers glimpses of fluid identities intrinsically posited within its construct from which it is possible to negotiate on newer ideas or definitions of gender identity, politics of narration and several other nuanced tropes, some of which Ajay K. Chaubey and Shilpa Daithota Bhat (with a foreword by Mariam Pirbhai) in their publication, *Women Writers of the South Asian Diaspora: Interpreting Gender, Texts and Contexts* (2020), has intensely focussed on. The tradition of silencing women's voices in the name of gender as well as race has been supported by various agents and the situation only worsens when the issue of migration is involved. The trauma of displacement has timelessly affected women denying them of several things such as social position, cultural acceptance or even economic empowerment. Many social developments have contributed towards providing the female subjects their rightful voice but the struggle continues till today.

The world in spite of acquiring a global status with its ever increasing denominations of an inclusive outer structure has failed to accommodate women and refurbish them with equal rights. The world of hyper real with its idea of surplus, however, often fails to even provide the women with their basic demands. The counter image of helplessness, economic despair and emotional insecurity along with several other gaps which are intrinsically linked with the lives of South Asian women are often left unaddressed or even unvalued. While the paradigm shifts of the socio-cultural order of the world had been accredited primarily by the school of postcolonialism, the gender issues were taken into account by the postcolonial feminist school. Diaspora has always been an ever widening field of studies that has dealt with the issues of space, migration, dislocation and fissured identities. In today's academia, diaspora studies competently address the multiplicity of diasporic encounters, experiences and exchanges, gradually shifting away