REVIEWS IN THE JIWE

Reviews are an important source of information. A majority of periodicals include some reviews of recent books and similar material of interest to the reading public. They may be little more than brief annotations of the content or full-scale scholarly critical reviews. Book reviews foster literary criticism. Literary criticism and Book Reviews are sometimes used freely to represent the same idea, but they denote different things. In criticism the various aspects dealt within the book are brought out while also commenting on the treatment and style with which the book is written. It is more critical and descriptive in nature. It is a piece of literature rather than an informative piece. On the other hand, a book-review is considered a piece of information brought out by the periodicals. It is more journalistic in nature. The journalist is more concerned with news and naturally his purpose is to bring out the contents of books as they are, noting treatments of style, and authoritativeness. Literary criticism is more subjective.
in nature whereas the book review is more objective in approach. It is an accepted fact that an element of literary criticism will always be there in book-review, but a review is not elaborative so as to form a piece of literature. ¹

Reviewing books may be said to be a continuous search for new illuminations. In the words of K.S. Duggal, "It is the exciting art of marrying the ephemeral with the enduring in literature. Because of the immediacy of its impact, book reviewing has social reverberations. It influences opinions and builds tastes. At its best it helps improve current writing, sets trends and maintains a record of the creative activity in a language, the changing reality. It is witness to the progression and innovation in the world of literature." ² Duggal also suggests the responsibilities of a reviewer. He says: "A reviewer must be as objective as possible. A reviewer must be as

honest as he can. A reviewer's responsibility is grave, he can make or mar an author."³

Optner⁴ gives the pattern of a Bookreview. There are three major parts of the review. They are: 1. Introduction, 2. Body, 3. Conclusion. The order of the items may vary. For example, in the introduction some may wish to open with the title and author; others may wish to start with a quotation from the book, or with an introductory remarks. In the conclusion, some may wish to compare the work with others by the same writer or with others on the same topic. The following checklist will be useful for the reviewer:

Introduction; optional; Brief Statement of your expectations; title, author, publisher, date of publication (and price); statement of book's category (history, biography, diary) and subject matter.

Body: Statement of the purpose of the work, including its thesis; brief quotations showing how the

work fulfils its purpose through different applications of its thesis (a minimum of three); (optional) comment on type of audience that would like the approach.

**Conclusion:** (Optional) Comparison to another work by the same writer, or another work on the same topic; your opinion of the book; whether it is worth reading (why or why not); potential audience.

**JIWE and Book – reviews:**

Review literature occupies a prominent place in the various issues of the JIWE. The editor takes every care to publish reviews at the earliest. In fact, the editor advises the reviewers to send their contributions without delay. He says: "Late publication of reviews hurts publisher's interests as well as periodical's reputation."\(^5\)

Writing an editorial note for special number of the JIWE on R.K. Narayan, Prof. Balarama Gupta states: "Reviewers may not always be Pukka

\(^5\) Most of the issues of JIWE carries this note of caution.
critics and reviews may not be substitutes for regular criticism .... By virtue of being initial reactors, they may be said to set the tone for future criticism. Reviews -- both good and bad are equally important in so far as they may provide the guidelines or points of departure for later criticism". He rightly observes that "reviews open gateways for critical exploration in different directions."  

In fact, the reviews in JIWE have strengthened themselves from time to time undergoing the necessary changes. Introduction of Multiple review scheme, publication of special issues with collected reviews on an author like R.K. Narayan are all new experiments made by the journal. They are all intended to "provide him (Researcher) with a critical graph as it were and help him proceed further."  

Typical examples of multiple reviews scheme are: Reviews on Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya,  

7. Ibid.  
8. Ibid.
edited by R.K. Srivastava. The book has been reviewed by Prema Nanda Kumar and by Surinder Joshi. Reviews on Jussawala's *Family quarrels* by John O. Perry as well as by Sharon Spencer and on P.K. Joy's *The Final Goal* by Suresh Saxena, Norman Simms, I.K. Sharma are other such examples.


from the Financial Expert through A Horse and Two Goats."¹²

This type of presenting the reviews and reviews only at one place "should aid us in arriving at the most salient features of Narayan as writer."¹³ and this is a unique contribution of the JIWE in new direction.

Coming to presentation of reviews, there are a panel of eminent critics who themselves are good authors, and their reviews in the JIWE are well-organised, objective and illuminating. Such reviewers are Srinivasa Iyengar, Premananda Kumar, M.K. Naik, Shyamala A. Narayan and Norman Simms.

Many important books have been reviewed by the JIWE. Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English, reviewed by Norman Simms,¹⁴ Hilda Ponteso's Nayanta Sahgal: Bibliography of Indian Writing in English,

¹⁴ Review of Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English, ed. M.K. Naik, JIWE, XVI, 1(88), pp. 32-34.
reviewed by M.K. Naik, The Commonwealth in Canada
reviewed by Premananda Kumar, The Ironic Vision: A Study of the Fiction of R.K. Narayan, reviewed by Shyamala A. Narayan Sachithanandan's Whitman and Bharati: A Comparative Study, reviewed by Premanand Kumar are some of the representative works reviewed by eminent reviewers, and a glance at them would indicate how the journal aims at perfection, objectivity and coverage of all forms of literature. The reviews are, in fact, important source of information in the journal.

There are, of course, deviations from the stated path of the journal. For example, there are certain reviews which are not related to Indian writing.

in English. Reviews on *Reason and Love in Shakespeare*, *Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism in Nausea* are rather unrelated to the context and do not provide any perspective on Indian Writing in English.

There are certain Reviews which are very lengthy and tedious. For instance, the Review on Premananda Kumar's *Atom and the Serpent* by an unsigned reviewer (indicated by 'S') which runs to nearly 5 pages. It starts with a laudatory introduction and gives unnecessary details like structure and characterisation. It is more a paraphrase of the novel than a review. It would have been better, had the editor included this as critical article than as review.

Another such review is on S.C. Dubey's *The Poetry of Robert Frost*. This can be called

'Spring board review' in which a reviewer uses a given book as a convenient starting point (or excuse) from which he launches into critical essay that covers much more than the specific book being considered. The introductory paragraphs offer an analysis of American poetry, poetry of Frost, in general, which can be easily cut to size. It can be called 'odd man out' in the reviews by virtue of its content and style.

Another limitation of the Journal is that even though the editor gives the note that the late publication of reviews hurts publishers interests as well as periodical's reputation, there are several reviews which are published long time after the publication of the book. For example, Menon Marath by Mohamed Elias, published in 1981 was reviewed in Jan. 1987, Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English by M.K. Naik, published in 1985 was reviewed in 1988. Examples of this kind abound in the JIWE.

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In spite of these minor limitations, JIWE's contribution to Indian Writing in English by means of Reviews is invaluable. The Reviews published so far are of considerable standard and they go a long way in facilitating the reader not only to get at the themes and techniques employed in Indian novels, short stories, poems and plays in English, but also the critical insights to grasp perspectives of the books on Indian novelists, short story writers, poets and dramatists in English. We may say that the JIWE has carved out a niche for itself in the realm of Book Reviews in literary journals.