

BOOK REVIEWS

THE RHYTHM OF LAW (2023). By Raman Mittal. Satyam Books Pvt. Ltd. 2/13, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002, India. Pp.xiii + 204. Price Rs.595/-.

“In the very end, civilizations perish because they listen to their politicians and not to their poets.”

- Jonas Mekas

POETRY, AS an art form, serves as a profound tool for exploring and comprehending life’s complexities. Through carefully crafted words and evocative imagery, poetry offers a unique lens through which we can interpret our experiences and emotions. The book under review here, is a compelling and beautiful endeavour to marry the most sophisticated reflection of human civilization *i.e.* law and the most creative reflection of human emotions *i.e.*, poetry. While law serves as the mirror and reflects the experiences of the society; poetry serves as both a mirror and a window: reflecting the innermost thoughts and feelings of human beings. In this, book¹ the author, a professor of law, has given us an insight into his experiences with both- life and law. Mittal offers in this collection, a unique blend of law and poetry, making it a valuable addition to both the libraries of students of law as well as students of poetry.

Any student of law, will have inevitably pondered over the concepts of ‘justice’, ‘truth’, ‘morality’ *etc.*, abstract yet intrinsic to both the study of law as well as life. Poetry does not just reflect our realities; it challenges us to transcend them. It encourages us to contemplate the deeper meanings behind everyday occurrences and to question our assumptions about life. In this book, the author has reflected on the manifestations of these abstract concepts in real life over changing times. As the author puts it:²

*Law is temporal
To change is moral
Time tests every law
And finds its flaw.*

Mittal has curated a set of hundred poems, exploring a diverse range of themes- from ‘truth’ to ‘justice’ to ‘what is moral and what is just’. The ‘quest for justice’ and ‘quest for truth’ have both earned their spot in this poetic endeavour. The poet toys with the perceived relationship between ‘law and truth’, and paints a picture of the society that the law serves- as ever changing and ever flowing.³

1 Raman Mittal, *The Rhythms of Law* (2023).

2 *Id.*, “Time and Law” at 155.

3 *Id.*, “Precedent- Whether a way to Truth” at 11.

*But truth is not dead; it's very much alive
 To new places it likes to drive
 Like universe it is ever growing
 Like time it is ever flowing.*

As society grows and changes, so does its truth and so should the law. This is a fundamental characteristic of law, to respond to the changing times and to reflect the 'truth' of the community it seeks to govern. Law and truth are intricately intertwined concepts within the framework of society and justice. While they are distinct in their definitions and applications, their relationship shapes the foundation of legal systems worldwide. The poet here asserts that the 'quest of truth' shall force its seeker to shed their prejudices and biases. In this respect, the poet does not shy away from touching upon the contradictions and complexities of the legal world, rather, the authors sheds light on them to provoke the reader to further engage with their own prejudices and reflect upon them. The poetry collection under review here, includes various poems that reflect on the concepts of 'truth' and 'justice' and their relationship with law, it furthers this ever evolving dialogue and compels the reader to contemplate the same.

The quest for 'truth' then gives way to the quest for 'justice', and asks the perineal question, what is the end-goal of law. Is it to seek justice or is it to seek the truth?⁴

*A choice of right laws
 An application without flaws
 Created with hand, head and heart
 Justice is indeed a work of art*

The poet here uses profound and vivid imagery to showcase the ethical dilemmas and the perpetual search for balance within the legal system. While 'law' represents the system of rules and regulations imposed by the society to govern itself; 'justice' on the other hand, is the moral and philosophical principle of fairness and equity. It concerns the distribution of rights, resources, opportunities, and burdens in society. The poet in this section explores this relationship that formulates the bedrock for any legal system. Justice as a principle seeks to achieve a fair treatment of all under the legal system, in this respect justice is the yardstick against which laws are to be measured. As the poet puts it:⁵

*Every law longs
 To reach where it belongs
 Justice is that scared place
 Where law comes to fruition and grace.*

4 *Id.*, "Paint and Painting" at 70.

5 *Id.*, "Body and Soul" at 67.

Achieving justice through law involves balancing competing interests, interpreting legal principles, and addressing societal inequalities. And by continually striving to achieve justice, the legal system seeks to keep its biases and prejudices at bay. The first two sections of the book set the tone for the reader, which then moves into the complex concepts challenging humanity like ‘climate change’, and ‘rights and duties’. This collection of poems around the complex concepts of legal philosophy is remarkably versatile in its presentation, it seamlessly shifts from contemplative philosophical reflections to formal and precise discussions on contemporary challenges. It offers its readers both intellectual stimulation as well as evocative poetic depth. The book calls upon its readers to engage with and reflect upon both the transcendental concepts like ‘truth’ and ‘justice’ as well as the contemporary crises like the triple crisis of environmental degradation, climate change and loss of biodiversity.

As the world is grappling with an existential crisis with issues like ‘climate change’, the author also touches upon the demands that these issues lay upon the legal system. Law and the need to protect this planet manifest in profound ways, environment is finding its way into discussions about core legal principles like principles of human rights and justice. Climate justice lies at the heart of discussions within the legal fraternity. The poet writes beautiful verses to reflect these interactions:⁶

*Our planet urgently needs care
Everyone must be made aware
With posterity we must share
Enough of resources and clean air.*

Environment and law are intertwined in this journey to save our only home, law then becomes an instrument to save all that is scared about our planet. The poems in this collection look at the environmental issue from the lens of the interlinked issues of human apathy and greed that is destroying our ecosystems. The poet urges human beings to slow down, to look around at the destruction being perpetrated in the garb of development. The book under review mirrors the helplessness of the numerous people at the forefront of this fight.

The author’s personal expertise on the technical subject of ‘Intellectual Property Laws’ also finds its well-deserved spot within the collection. The poems employ innovative imagery in various poetic stanzas to illustrate the protections afforded to the owner and creators of intellectual property, and the tools provided by laws to protect these rights:⁷

⁶ *Id.*, “Trash to Treasure” at 118.

⁷ *Id.*, “The Loop of New” at 136.

*You need to keep it out of the view
But under promise you may share it too
And if someone steals, make sure to sue.*

The poems in this section of the present collection brings the complexities of intellectual property to life in a vivid and poetically resonant language. In this section the poet has attempted to bring make the legally complex and technical aspects of intellectual property law accessible and relatable. And in this respect, this particular section stands out on its own accord, it offers a masterful marriage of intellectual property laws and poetic expression.

As a whole, the poet has addressed complicated themes that law interacts with and provided readers with insight into his observations about the evolution of the legal system through the eyes of a professor involved in its learning and dissemination during the last few decades. This thematic coherence of the book is remarkable, every section of the book contributes to the larger discussions on the various aspects of law. The reader gets a glimpse into the author's own experiences as he embarked on the journey pen down his musings with law, taken together these poems form a beautiful mosaic of the authors' experiences as a professor of law. In addition to its appeal to the intellectual side of the readers, it also appeals to the artistic side of one's psyche via some beautifully curated illustrations. The illustrations at the beginning of each section in the book lifts the entire experience of reading into another artistic experience, they visually reinforce poems through creative symbolisation. These illustrations perfectly complement the poems that follow.

The collection at hand, is a unique poetic dive into the philosophy of law, and is recommended for everyone who is interested in witnessing this dance of legal philosophy and poetry. From young lawyers to experienced jurists, every student of law will find something that will resonate with their experiences. The poet manages to make dense legal concepts engaging without sacrificing their depth. The interplay of juristic reflections and evocative poetry makes this collection a unique experience for its readers. The poet's ability to present to these complex legal ideas in a manner that they can be consumed by the reader without any prior training in law adds more value to the book. That is whether the reader is a student of law or just someone that enjoys the play of words that's poetry, this collection offers a refreshing read.

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