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## DEPTH AND DESPAIR: A SAGA OF DIFFERENT SHADES OF LIFE

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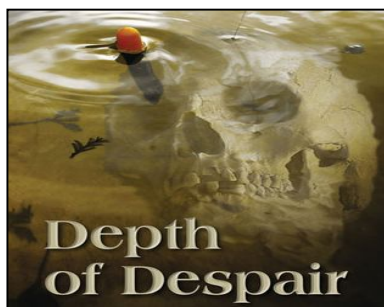
### ABSTRACT

Well renowned as a poet of human experiences R C Shukla is the son of Dr. Tulsi Ram, a renowned vocalist and the author of various books on Indian classical music. Unlike most of Indian and English poets Shukla doesn't go to fancy, imagination or nature to add charm to his poetry. He is typically a poet of Man, his emotions, experiences which everybody will have harmony with. Comprised of a great consoling power his works has the expressions reflected in the life of every individual. That is the real charm of his poetic collections. *Depth and Despair*, third collection of his poems, was published in 2001. The book contains one hundred seventy seven poems. This collection shows problems of world, blows from the society, loneliness and differences. But at the same time it gives strength to overcome it. Shukla's treatment of all these expressions is really a great message for all to take part in the struggle and challenges of life. Moreover the divine benediction which reflects each poem is a way to think beyond this world, to think sublime which provides bliss even in the calamities of life. The current paper will discuss these themes in the poems in *Depth and Despair* by Dr R C Shukla.

**KEY WORDS:** *Depth, despair, divine benediction, loneliness, challenges .*

### INTRODUCTION :

*Depth & Despair*, a collection of poems by Dr R C Shukla was published in the year 2001. This rich volume contains the poems based on the harsh realities of life which every man would have experienced. The poems here show the negativity of world everywhere. He shows that we are living in a world where desires are left unfulfilled, promises are broken, friends are not found, and all of these situations are inevitable. Man starts to desire, and craves for getting them fulfilled, becomes very stubborn to accomplish what he wants but after struggling a lot he accepts the glooms of his life and becomes ready to keep his patient with him. Realism is the base of each poem in this volume. Fancy and imagination are missing. But at the very time they don't give the expression of depression and failure. This is what makes this volume of Dr Shukla special. They show the consciousness about truth. He starts the volume declaring:



*It is not my fancy  
Nor Experience alone  
Nor the range of my observations  
That capacitates me to compose my poems.  
They are, in fact,  
The consequence of some divine benediction (1)*

Every next poem I read in this volume, I recall above lines. Presence of some divine benediction can be felt very clearly while reading the volume. It seems that Dr Shukla not only experiences his life

but also beholds all the experiences objectively and then he personalizes them and accepts them as something very own. He observes everything surrounding him and perhaps without being affected immediately, he examines, evaluates and tries to search out a glimpse of positivity in that. He finds ways to console himself in the midst of extreme harshness of the being. There is reality, but not bitterness in Shukla's treatment of life.

The very first poem of the volume *I Wish to Sweep My House before I Go* gives the expressions of a matured mind or rather I would say a spiritual mind, an experienced one who knows divine benediction. The poet is thinking about his departure from this world. At this stage, he is found quite aware of transience of this life. Whatever he has done, he wants to give it a proper sum up too. The poem starts with a wish to rectify the errors and to donate wisdom. It shows his eagerness to make his life meaning full before he leaves. But the poem ends in wisdom like poems of Robert Frost as towards the end the poet seems to be quite unconcern with this world. He feels that he would be free from all the anxieties or in simple words all the worldliness after leaving it. He wants to leave all desires to live more before his departure. He says:

*I also wish  
I should not feel the necessity of some more hours to live.....  
.....  
I should go mollified  
No load of liabilities  
Because  
Once the actor has left the stage  
It must not be his concern  
Whether the audience laughs or weeps. (02)*

His other poems like *When Without Warning, The Day Becomes Night, The Power Of Death, The One Goes While The Other Does Not Come, Death Everyday Knocks At Your Door, Certainty, Prayer, Our Life Is A Drama Of Acts Five, What Is There That Stays Forever, The Myth, The Current Of Life Does For A Short Period Flow, A Dead Man's Frame, None on This Earth Can Mend* reflect the same. In his poem *Certainty*, he declares:

*The entire land of the world  
Actually belongs to the dead. (03)*

Shukla's poems are full of wisdom. He has a mind that never surrenders to desires, and allurements. His poems like *Each Flower Flows the Same Breath, I Never Stopped Her on the Way, and Man Cannot Live without Hope* etc present him as a man of acute sense and strong resisting power. *Let Me Keep My Patience* is a poem where the melancholy of a rotten man, trying to console himself by binding himself with his patience is expressed very touchingly. Each of the poems in this collection tells the story of man's gloom; man's desires unfulfilled; man's hopes resulting in failure; but it never leaves the reader in depression. At the very time we find a strong individual ready to accept it all, willing to face the reality and taking all of the happenings or mishappenings of life as a natural part of it and very wisely he gives the ways to deal with the struggle of life. At the same time Dr Shukla is found as a non believer of love. Many of his poems depict disappointment, detachment and depression in love. In *The land of Despair*, he starts as

*The sentiment known as love  
Is the land of despair (04)*

While he seems to advocate the spiritual affection or union of husband wife relationship in my favorite poem of this volume: *A Clean Confession*. He confesses that husband and wife may experience arguments, negativity, disappointments, and contradictions but are complement to each other. He starts as:

I fear death most  
Not because they do

---

I dread it because  
It will separate me from you  
For ever and for ever  
Never to see you again  
Never to sit by your side  
And be bitter with you  
Which is my pleasure  
Although I Woo... (05)

The volume is based on his experiences of life. The real picture of life and the real story of man's troubles in this world have been taken as subject of almost all poems in this volume. It seems that the poems are written at a stage when mind after wandering behind many temptations and after getting the results in negative and realizing the truth of life comes to the conclusions and feels no restlessness anymore. Life is full of miseries. The world is the place to suffer. This is what Dr Shukla has taken as the subject matter of the poems in this volume. He declares In the Exegesis of the volume *Darkness at Dawn* and continues with the same expression in *Depth & Despair*. He himself declares that the subject matter of his poetry is the harshness of man's lot, the anxiety and the pain that lie at the heart of life.

*Depth & Despair* actually is a volume meant for a matured mind set; a person who has experienced life. All bitter realities of life are expressed very beautifully. But the most importantly the way of expressing it is remarkable. There is suffering; there are troubles, hurdles, anxieties, failure, and negativity of world. Even then the poet has expressed it all in a very positive manner. He seems to accept it all as inevitable part of the life of individuals. It gives strength to all to live happily and to fight in the struggle of life.

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