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The Votive Pen

Nilanjana Sengupta

Keyline

A riveting look at the fiercely original, intellectually brilliant mind of Singapore's unofficial Poet-Laureate, Edwin Thumboo whose poetry is key to understanding the emotional hinterland of the city-state.

Description

A riveting look at the fiercely original, intellectually brilliant mind of Singapore's unofficial Poet-Laureate, Edwin Thumboo. Born of Tamil and Teochew parents, he embraced the Protestant faith late in his life. He has a self-confessed fetish for Yeats and Pound and yet completed his doctoral thesis on post-colonial African poetry. He taught himself the Ramayana and I-Ching but found traces of the Odysseus in the shadows of the Merlion. He is brusquely vocal about poetry with a purpose and yet appears a hopeless romantic in his poems about his wife. What happens when a mind which is such a melting pot of brilliant ideas and contrary emotions tries to unscramble the identity of a country like Singapore which is complex, multiracial, has known a fierce economic growth that has often elbowed aside everything else? *The Votive Pen* sets out to see Edwin Thumboo's poetry - steadily and see it whole - without the intervening static of earlier critical writing and with an intense alertness to the text.

Sales Points

- v *The Votive Pen* goes where no biography has gone, into the deepest recesses of an intellectually creative mind in an attempt to delicately peel off the layers and decipher its workings.
- v The book would be a key to understanding why it is imperative to maintain the multiracial balance of Singapore and simultaneously, help it achieve a singular identity which is based on its inherent multiplicity. The book not only looks at the whys but also some of the hows .
- v Internationally the book in exploring one of the most brilliant minds of the nation would showcase Singapore s creative potential, which yet remains a fledgling area of research.
- v Edwin Thumboo's poetry is infallible in understanding the internal life of the city of Singapore. In joining the dots between the city and the poetic psyche, *The Votive Pen* helps in better understanding the emotional hinterland of the various stages of development that the city has known. It also explains some of the rationale in decisions taken by the city administration.

Author Bio

Nilanjana Sengupta is a notable author of Singapore who has built a reputation in writing books which travel to unchartered territories. In *A Gentleman's Word* she chronicled the legacy of a forgotten war hero, Subhas Chandra Bose across Southeast Asia. In *The Female Voice of Myanmar*, she wrote of the latent masculine bias of Burmese culture and women voices which have managed to cut through the clutter. A Biography of M Bala Subramanion was a nuanced look at the Tamils of Singapore who though the majority Indian community, struggle with vulnerabilities of their own. Sengupta, a research scholar at NUS and ISEAS-Yosuf Ishaak Institute, has been critically acclaimed, widely read and her books have been translated and included in the university course.