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**REVIEW OF “FRANK O’HARA’S POETRY AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL STUDY” BY DR. GUNJAN SAXENA**

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**Abstract:**

Literature serves as a trove treasure of experiences, expressing convoluted human conditions that may remain abstruse to the readers. However, a sophisticated reading can unveil the shrouds of mystery. Working on Indian Epistemology, through a psycho-synthetic lens, Dr. Gunjan Saxena, endeavours to lay bare the inner workings of the human psyche during the moments of fecund creative effusions in her one-of-a-kind book titled, ‘Frank O’Hara’s Poetry: An Epistemological Study.’ Dr. Saxena has structured the book into eight organic epistemological sections, each chapter being imbued with novel interpretative approaches to distil the essence from O’Hara’s poetry by employing the psycho-synthetic tools like prismatic mind, experiential chronometry, emotional alloy, and temporal sensibility.

**Keywords:** Epistemology, American Literature, Poetry, Frank O’Hara

**Introduction:**

Dr. Saxena’s book ‘Frank O’Hara’s Poetry: An Epistemological Study’ emerges as a testament to her tenacity, addressing a critical lacuna for the inquisitive scholars who wish to study the works of O’Hara—thereby providing foundational hermeneutical frameworks for further researches in the field. The book stands exemplary for it tells not the psycho-synthetic process of Frank O’Hara alone, but rather elucidates the sophisticated hermeneutical frameworks for extracting the essence from the words and poetic worlds of other writers as well.

In the introduction, the authoress elucidates the manifestations of levels of consciousness in O’Hara’s poetry. The psycho-philosophical paradigms unfold

O'Hara's multiple levels of experience. The corporeal realm presents a panoply of stimuli and indelible influences to which even the poet is inescapably subject. In the same chapter, she endeavours to reveal the variegated experiences and literary influences that could have shaped O'Hara's sensibility and poured his vessel with literary aesthetic consciousness. However, O'Hara's proclivity for solitude and precociousness served to enhance his intellectual puissance. In living and reliving his experiences in his psycho-synthetic domain, O'Hara adroitly transmuted the crucible of anguish into aesthetic manifestations, imbuing his artistic oeuvre with the bittersweet pathos of suffering juxtaposed against sweet embrace. Having attained mastery over the art of Chronokinesis, O'Hara contracted and expanded time like ripple across the placid waters. Dr. Saxena discerns O'Hara's vigorous efforts to always imbibe more from art and life. Terrified from the fragility of human life, O'Hara believed in attaining a semblance of immortality through his poetic oeuvre. Illuminating the theoretical underpinnings of 'Epistemology of Literature' in another chapter, she justifies the epistemological analysis, which elucidates the psycho-synthetic fluctuations and the concomitant assimilation of experience in the poet's consciousness.

Drawing upon Agni Purana, she postulates that the poetic cosmos has only single divinity, i.e., the poet, the prime mover and demiurge of the poetic creation. The world of poet's imagination stands analogous to the self's yearning to expand itself. The psycho-synthetic process and experiential chronometry are elucidated through the philosophy of Bhagwad Gita and Ramcharitmanas. The poetic creation is demonstrated as an orchestrating occasion.

The juxtaposition of emotively-charged homogeneous and heterogeneous images serve to enhance the evocative power and aesthetic taste of the poem. Suffusing the microcosmic 'self' with the macrocosm, the third chapter titled, 'The Mosaic of Images,' asserts that the convoluted and ineffable experiences seek refuge in the use of images, which proffer a deeper imprint of the human psyche, thereby successfully communicating the microcosmic 'self.' Besides, the chapter discusses how simulation and assimilation widen the reader's horizon of imagination. Dr. Saxena deliberates upon the poetic genius propelled by the poet's emotional alloy, which constitutes the collage of images. This emotional alloy emanates from the subconscious or unconscious realms of the human psyche, thereby elucidating the

fundamental underpinnings of Rasa theory. Explicating the "images juxtaposed" and "images eclipsed," she exemplifies the synthesis of the objective image and subjective temper in O'Hara's poetry, which emerges as an artistically fecund masterwork.

Navigating O'Hara's greatest fears and anxieties of 'death,' she instantiates:

*How much greater danger  
from occasion and pain is my vitality  
yielding, like a tree on fire!*

The next chapter titled, 'The Temporal sensibility,' exhibits O'Hara as a chronometric and spatio- metric creature. The conscience (chitta), a repository of lived experiences is rendered a museum, through which O'Hara digs deep to fathom out the ineffable soul and breathe life into his poetry.

Besides, the authoress instantiates the constructs of linear time and the relative feeling of time. O'Hara's imaginative faculties seem to emanate from the stream of consciousness, which serves exemplary of the relative feeling of time. Being elastic, it can be either contracted or expanded which is contingent upon the vicissitudes of subjective emotive states and individual experiential contexts. This chapter distinguishes itself for its "Graphical chart of Experiential chrono-kinetics" which illustrates how our sense of speed of time is contingent upon the depth or lightness of our attention, object and space, thereby painting the tenor and timbre of our existential landscapes. In the initial lines of 'Drifts of a Thing That Bill Berkson Noticed', Frank exhibits how his wounded soul was nursed by time:

*April's over is May too June and thundershowers tomorrow you wouldn't want those  
tears to stick to your cheeks long*

The fifth chapter titled, 'Projection of the self' expounds upon the intricate nexus of microcosm and macrocosm of space. The centripetal contraction and centrifugal projection of the 'self' exemplifies the "self's spatial sensibility." The next chapter titled, 'Psychosynthetic Shades' illustrates how O'Hara evolved from rajasic to sattvic in his poetry.

The annals of O'Hara's experiential corpus manifest as the soul of his poems, whereby the readers imbibe a novel approach to discern and cultivate a profound appreciation for poetry.

The seventh and perhaps the best chapter titled, 'Fluctuation of Levels,' draws upon the Upanishadic literature and ideates the "Numerical Presentation of Experiential Intensity Value." Such poesisraturgraphy in O'Hara's poetry, proffer an avant-garde and pioneering conceptual framework to engage in hermeneutic examination of the literary opus. It is modelled upon the theory of three parallel levels of human existence- sthula, sukshma and karans, which is further subdivided into five domains- physical domain, sensory domain, psycho-synthetic domain, intellectual domain, and bliss domain.

Through O'Hara's artistic endeavours, Dr. Saxena elucidates the quintessential essence of seeking the good in the bad. Embracing the tribulations and vicissitudes that life bellowed forth, O'Hara bid adieu at forty, bequeathing his highly conscious and psycho-synthetically charged poetic oeuvre. Her book, through the microscopic lens of epistemology, proves to be sui generis in proffering an avant-garde approach as well as bestowing the plaudits rightfully earned by the lesser known yet much deserving poets like Frank O'Hara.

Drawing inspiration from Dr. Saxena's organic research on O'Hara's poetry, I position myself to distill and devour the same spiritual ether from the oeuvre of my chosen muse for my thesis, Emily Dickinson, an exemplification of the path open to all curious minds. The comprehension of the theoretical constructs like chronokinesis, temporal sensibility, and the psycho-synthetic process facilitate profound epistemological insights into the realms of human psyche, enabling engagement with stream of consciousness which progressively illuminates the levels of consciousness and the multifarious possibilities for transcending the surface charm of the corporeal world.

Upon devouring the book, Dr. Saxena's observation coupled with her promising potential is revealed which is too intricate, innovative, and intellectual. The author of the book and the subject of the author possess a high spatio-temporal sensibility, something I had a hunch for to make my subject of deep analysis. There's a bizarre beauty in O'Hara travels beyond time and space to relive the moments for his poetic creation. Such distillation, in the hands of Dr. Saxena bears testimony to the fact that poetry has the power to create bridges where none exist. Perhaps, O'Hara's poetry lives up to that ideal perfectly:

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*...if there is a Place further from me I beg you do not go*

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