

MARCH 21
WORLD POETRY DAY

Struggle against amnesia

That's how author K. Srilata envisages the role and purpose of poetry in our lives

Sheila Kumar

This slim volume of poetry packs a deceptive punch, fights above its weight, and what's more, mostly wins too. Like the title *Three Women In A Single-Room House* indicates, the collection has a core story as well as many stories within stories to tell, and does so with a touch of sentiment, wistfulness and the occasional preening to balance things out.

The endpaper print, the interpretation of Queen Maya's dream, complements the evocative poetry inside the pages. As for that poetry, it's a carefully calibrated accounting for a way of living. A self-aware celebration of the things that make a life precious, like the sky floating in through the slats of that one-roomed house. A gentle grieving that is in no way less potent, for an absent father, for all the tender moments that might have been, for the circumstances of a daughter's birth. A wry acknowledgement of patriarchy, of suffering. A coming into own's own, a flowering, a blooming of *three women used to small spaces. Rough diamonds stuck/ in mines that ran too deep/ to catch the light.*

Author K. Srilata writes in her preface

that she thinks of poetry as a continual struggle against amnesia, a mode of bearing mindful witness to and remembering the lives of those we love. This book is poignant proof of her beliefs.

Portrait of a woman

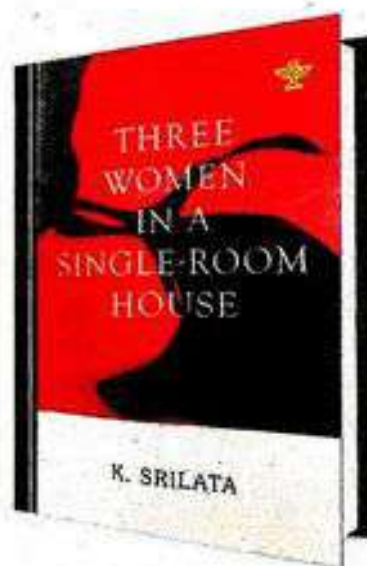
At one point, she shines a soft light on a poem entirely in brackets, about the thing we don't want to remember. *You must*

write the poems you must write/ gently and with love for yourself. At another point, this is poetry as succour: *a glimmer of a poem threw me a rope/ I think I might take hold of it.*

At the heart of the collection is that old evergreen image: woman standing bloody but unbowed. Woman who handles everything that is thrown her way: an abusive marriage, straitened circumstances, relationships that crest and trough in an unsettling manner.

Who says memoirs are better told in prose? This book disproves that; the poems in it serve to give us a

clear picture of three women, their single-roomed house, their trials and tribulations, things that cause them pain, things that bring them joy.



Three Women In A Single-Room House

K. Srilata
Sahitya Akademi
₹100

The reviewer is a Bengaluru-based author, journalist and manuscript editor.