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# THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

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## EDITORIAL

Life and literature are as inseparable as food and water, the basic needs of human life. The urge to fulfil these needs emanates from scarcity, which takes different nomenclatures, such as absence, emptiness, tension, void, gaps etc. All these go a long way in human life and become base for creativity. Such a stage of strife and suffering results in the emergence of great literature. The literary output of today all over the globe is the acute realizations of people who live a suspended life, often oscillating between life and death or rather death in life. In this sojourn, we often interface impediments of various sorts. Creativity, as many observers feel, gets a boost in such a milieu. Literature becomes an outlet for pent-up feelings suppressed within for long. Literature finds substance and syrup to chisel it into alchemy for lost loves, lost homes and lost identities. Modern life, which is sandwiched amid these painful realizations, vies for creative expression, which appears in various forms and modes. The synchronic realities of the cultural discourse at the fulcrum of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic realities have brought forth a new form of literature which can be observed in the firmament of novels, fictions, poetry, drama, short stories, literary theory and criticism.

An optimistic approach can reveal the fact that technology has also generated new verve and vitality among mankind. It appears visible by the onrush of new kinds of literature. Expressions from all walks of life through web have given literature a kaleidoscopic reality. New tales take shape in the forms of blogs, campus novels and various online sites. Literature seems to have received a new kind of social and cultural discourse. Since we cannot change the reality, we have to find out ways to accept it. In a shrinking geographical space, we have to learn the ways to accommodate, to adapt to the new realities of space and time in order to justify the idea of *vasudev kutumbakam*, i.e. the entire world is but one



family. Indian literatures in general exemplify the multicultural identity of our country in all its hues. Indian writing in English, since its inception, has maintained its responsibility of transporting its multi-faceted identity to the world literature and our writers, critics and scholars have stood true to their ethos in this quest.

The *Indian Journal of English Studies* has attained its fiftieth year of publication. The golden jubilee issue of the journal is an outcome of the quintessential quest of academic fraternity. Through this issue, an attempt has been made to accommodate maximum scholarly papers presented by the delegates of 56<sup>th</sup> AIETC held at Bareilly, in December, 2011. While the majority of papers in this volume address Indian writing, papers on diasporic writing, African writing, ELT, Poetics, translation studies, literary theory, criticism and literary research, too, have been given due consideration. Apart from incisive articles, book reviews and creative writing, too, have been given more space in order to bring to light some major creative talents who continue to replenish the literary world despite the rough and tumble of life. I hope that the quest made through this volume will bring forth desired results.

**BINOD MISHRA**

**Editor-in- Chief**

## Fictionality and the Identity of Literature\*

*Rajnath\*\**

Derrida's deconstruction levels all distinctions between literature and non-literature. To him, literature does not possess any exclusive properties, as language as such is literature, whether it is the language of what has so far been reckoned literature or that of any other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. The present essay replies to Derrida's questioning of a distinct identity of literature by focusing on one of its exclusive features.

That the domain of literature is fictional has been generally admitted by philosophers and literary theorists down the centuries. Plato and Aristotle in the classical Age, Sidney during the Renaissance, Samuel Johnson in the New-Classical Age and several critics and philosophers of language in the twentieth century have debated the nature and function of the fictional world. John Crowe Ransom lists fictionality, along with metre and trope, as the devices that poets employ to express their perceptual impulse which he contrasts with the practical, former being the territory of poetry and the latter of science. Of poetry he writes: "Over every poem which looks like a poem is a sign which reads: This road does not go through the action; fictitious".<sup>1</sup> Ransom argues that the object described by art does not have an actual existence and as such gives only an "illusion of reality." He lends credence to Kant's view that the authentic judgment is "so far from depending on the object's existence that it really depends on the object's non-existence."<sup>2</sup> Ransom's assertion that the objects in the world of art are mere illusion of objects is no disparagement of art, although he goes some distance with Plato as in the following citation:



If jealous science succeeds in keeping the field of history for its own exclusive use, it does not therefore annihilate the arts, for they reappear in a field which may be called *real though one degree removed from actuality*.<sup>3</sup> (emphasis added)

The italicized portion may give the impression that the world of art is inferior to the world we inhabit, but this is not Ransom's intention. Unlike Plato, Ransom believes that the fictional world of art is superior to the surrounding world. He takes a hypothetical case. Suppose we enjoy an object in the world of art and subsequently find the same object in the real world. Which one shall we prefer? Presumably the former, as we do not enjoy the real object as much as its artistic representation. Moreover, there are other considerations in the real world such as the desire to possess the object and we may not have the wherewithal to buy it. All this goes to prove that to Ransom, fictional representation is not only different from but superior to the real world.

In an essay published as late as 2009, Maximilian De Gaynesford takes up once again the issue relating to the fictional and imaginative character of poetry and the seriousness and otherwise of poetic statements. He takes stock of the controversy between the philosophers of language, J.L. Austin and John Searle, on the one hand, and the poet Geoffrey Hill and the scholar, Christopher Ricks on the other. Gaynesford finds the crux of the matter enshrined in the following statement by Austin:

And I might mention that, quite differently again, we could be issuing any of these utterances as we can issue an utterance of any kind whatsoever, in the course, for example, of acting a play or making a joke or writing a poem in which case of course it would not be seriously meant and we shall not be able to say that we seriously performed the act concerned.<sup>4</sup>

The controversy that stems from this pronouncement centres on Austin's attitude towards drama and poetry which Hill and Ricks find dismissive. At any rate, Austin's clubbing of poetry and the utterance by an actor in a

dramatic performance with joking is unfortunate, as joking is not a serious utterance, but what an actor speaks on the stage or a poet says in his poem, is sincerely and seriously communicated to and taken by the audience. Austin's argument is that all the three are identical speech acts, as in all of them saying does not result in deed. The point is well taken but the parallel ends here. A joke is cracked and received in the real world in a particular situation and the communication takes place between persons who know each other. But when an actor on the stage or a poet in his poem speaks even to the audience who know them, they presume that the speaker is making an imaginative enactment and he is different from the person they know. Hence a joke may not be taken seriously but the speech by an actor or a passage in a poem is taken in a different spirit which is far from non-serious.

Gaynesford's quotation from Austin comes from the latter's essay on "Performative Utterances" included in his *Philosophical Papers* where joke is perched oddly between drama and poetry. But Austin seems aware of the difference, which has escaped the attention of Gaynesford, between a joke and the utterance by an actor in a dramatic performance and a character in a poem and hence he refrains from taking the example of joking and replaces it with soliloquy in *How to do Things with Words* where he writes:

... a performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void, if said by an actor on the stage or introduced in a poem or spoken in a soliloquy. ... Language in such circumstances is in special ways - intelligibly - used not seriously, but in a way *parasitic* upon its normal use - ways which *fall* under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language.<sup>5</sup>

Austin believes the trio mentioned by him makes statements, or performs, to use Austin's term, speech acts which cannot be taken seriously, as they do not result in deeds. "Go and catch a falling star" in Donne's poem, for example, is not an order in the usual sense to perform a deed. The two words in the above citation, "parasitic"



and "etiologies" have obvious pejorative implications which undermine the status of literary creativity.

Geoffrey Hill and Christopher Ricks take umbrage at Austin's "not seriously" in the statement above as if Austin's denigration of poetry were like Plato's and therefore they felt it incumbent upon them to defend it as Aristotle did in the ancient past. The controversy took on the complexion of philosophy versus poetry as is evident from Hill's rebuttal. "It is a 'Philosophical irony' Says Hill, that a mind which strove for accuracy of definition . . . felt free to regard poetry as one of the non-serious 'parasitic', 'etiologies of language', as a kind of joking."<sup>6</sup> As a poet he cannot accept that poetry is what Austin makes of it. He turns the tables on Austin in his poem "On the Reality of the Symbol" where he calls metaphysics a joke: "Metaphysics remain/In common language something of a joke." Hill's reply is tit for tat. The philosopher and the poet are at daggers drawn. Austin "unprincipled levity" is answered with levity.

Ricks is less vitriolic in his critique of Austin's view of poetry. He agrees with Austin that "performative-apt utterances in poetry do not perform" but he cannot accept that poetry is non-serious. He appreciates Austin's sensibility and his sensitivity to words as they function in and outside literature and therefore his aversion to and dismissal of poetry can be accounted for only in terms of professional rivalry, "a philosopher's slighting of the poet's enterprise."<sup>7</sup>

John Searle defends Austin by saying that he is concerned with the way words function in speech acts and hence he rightly excludes from consideration non-standard speech acts like utterances by actors on the stage or novelists in their novels:

Austin's idea is simply this: if we want to know what it is to make a promise or to make a statement, we had better not start our investigation with promise by actors on a stage in the course of a play or statements made in a novel by novelists about characters in the novel because in a fairly

obvious way such statements are not standard cases of promise and statements. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Searle also leaves out joking and restricts himself to literary creativity in major literary forms like drama and the novel, though one fails to understand why he leaves out poetry. Although Searle replaces Austin's "non-serious" with his "non-standard", there is hardly any difference in the attitude towards imaginative literature. Both are dismissive of literature if only became literary utterances are fictional and as such do not result in deeds.

Austin's argument that words in poetry, or in any form of literature for that matter, do not result in deeds, is unexceptionable. It is perhaps this gap between words and deed in the domain of poetry which makes Auden blurt out in his elegy on W.B. Yeats that "poetry makes nothing happen." That words are not deeds in the imaginative world of literature has never been questioned, though these words can propel people to deeds in the real world. It seems that what has offended Hill so much is the joking with which poetry is clubbed by Austin and which has rightly been dropped by him elsewhere. Ricks's reaction is more sobre and sensitive. As Ransom has argued, fictionality is one of the essential features of poetry. There is a striking similarity between Ransom and Austin as far as fiction in poetry is concerned, but they differ in their assessment. If Austin had not aimed at a disparagement of poetry by calling it non-serious, he would have helped us in our endeavour to identify literature. In fact, the weakness that Austin discovers in literature is the very factor that separates it from non-literature and thereby lends it a distinct identity.

If Hill and Ricks attack Austin for what they consider the philosopher's dismissal of literature, Derrida at the other end of the spectrum cuts the ground from under his feet by converting philosophy itself into literature. Fictionality, which is a bone of contention between Austin and Hill, is no longer confined to literature but is inexorably present in all writings including philosophy.



The very distinction between the real and the imaginative, the factual and the fictional is demolished. As is well known, Derrida does not accept the two-language theory propounded by philosophers and literary theorists and instead forcefully pleads for only one language which is literary.

Austin's distinction between constative and performative utterances, the former which answers the question of true or false and the latter which does not, and his argument that the performative is dependent on the constative have been subjected to a deconstructive analysis by Derrida in his "Signature, Even, Context" where he concludes that these effects [of the constative] do not exclude what is generally opposed to them term by term, but, on the contrary" presupposed it in the dissymmetrical fashion the general space of their possibility."<sup>9</sup> Derrida believe that the distinction between serious and non-serious utterances is untenable. If serious utterance tells or intends to tell the truth, then for Derrida there is no such utterance, as all utterances are in the nature of literary utterance which has nothing to do with truth. If the meaning of an utterance is determined by the context, then no determinate meaning will inhere, is Austin's serious utterance, as the same sentence can be uttered in an endless member of contexts generating disparate meanings. Turning the tables on Austin, Derrida writes: "no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation."<sup>10</sup> "The one distinction which is often drawn between imaginative and non-imaginative, or fictional and factual writings, is that in the former meaning is indeterminate while in the latter it is determinate. But meaning, argues Derrida, is always indeterminate and "illimitable", as the context which determines meaning is itself unlimited. What Derrida misses in Austin's philosophy of language is that the constative is the fixed meaning of a sentence, while the performative is its variable meaning depending on the context. Austin is right in saying that the constative is

the base on which the performative depends. It is after a lot of hair-splitting that Derrida completes his deconstructive demolition of Austin hierarchies of constative/ performative and serious/ non-serious.

Both Hill and Derrida oppose Austin, but their responses are radically different. Hill objects to Austin's calling literature non-serious, a kind of joking and dismisses philosophy itself as a kind of joking. However, he is at one with Austin in viewing philosophy and literature as independent entities. Derrida ends once and for all the conflict between philosophers and literatuers by dissolving the very distinction between their respective disciplines. If literature is non-serious, philosophy is just as non-serious, if serious means truthful and factual. Discussing the identity of Philosophy as well as literature in the wake of deconstructive, Alan Bass writes:

What then does one call the writing, the text in which philosophical concepts turn again themselves, explode themselves, in order to demonstrate their own (im)possibility, their irreducible doubleness. Since they obey no philosophical regulations of truth, these texts have a certain "fictive" or "literary" quality. . . .<sup>11</sup>

Alan Bass seeks to explain the status of literature as well as philosophy in deconstruction. Literature no longer enjoys the privileged place that it once did, as philosophical text (and by implication all texts reckoned non-literary) do not, and cannot, follow the "philosophical regulations" of truth, since they have the fictionality of literary constructs. Thus the new concept of literature eliminates the distinction between imaginative and factual writings, as all writings take on literary complexion.

Derrida's deconstructive speculations which level all distinctions of genres and concepts have not gone unchallenged. Umberto Eco, an eminent semiotician, a fine novelist, and a perceptive literary critic, reinforces the distinction between the imaginative and factual writings in his book, *on Literature*. In one place in the book, he comments upon the difference between the real world in which we live, act, and communicate and the



fictional world created by writers. The passage is too important to be curtailed and therefore it is being cited in full:

On one hand the world seems to be a "closed" book, allowing of only one reading. If, for example, there is a law governing planetary gravitation, then it is either the right one or the wrong one. Compared with that, the universe of a book seems to us to be an open universe. But let us try to approach a narrative work with common sense and compare the assumptions we make about it with those we can make about the world. As far as the world is concerned, we find that the laws of universal gravitation are those established by Newton, or that it is true that Napoleon died on Saint Helena on 5 May 1821. And yet, if we keep an open mind, we will always be prepared to revise our convictions the day science formulates the great laws of the cosmos differently, or a historian discovers unpublished documents proving that Napoleon died on a Bonapartist ship as he attempted to escape. On the other hand, as far as the world of books is concerned, propositions like "Sherlock Holmes was a bachelor," "Little Red Riding-Hood is eaten by the wolf and then freed by the woodcutter," or "Anna Karenina commits suicide" will remain true for eternity, and no one will ever be able to refute them. There are people who deny that Jesus was the son of God, others who doubt his historical existence, others who claim he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and still others who believe that the Messiah is yet to come, and however we might think about such questions, we treat these opinions with respect. But there is little respect for those who claim that Hamlet married Ophelia, or that Superman is not Clark Kent.<sup>12</sup>

Eco's distinction between the world and the book is tantamount to the difference between the factual and the fictional writings. His observation goes contrary to the common belief that the real world is authentic, whereas the fictional world is subject to change. For Eco, it is the other way round. In the real world which is rooted in facts, it is possible to question and alter a fact but such a questioning or alternation is not possible in the

imaginative world created by the artist, as whatever is in the world of literature is irrevocably present there for all times.

In a vein similar to that of Eco, Herbert Marcuse believes that the represented reality of art, although fictitious, is more real and truthful than the external reality:

... The World of a work of art is "unreal" in the ordinary sense of the word; it is a fictitious reality. But it is "unreal" not because it is less, but because it is more as well as qualitatively "other" than the established reality. As fictitious world, as illusion (Schein), it contains more truth than does everyday reality. . . .<sup>13</sup>

Marcuse reverses the polarities while accepting the basic assumption of Austin and Searle that literary world is fictional. To him, fictionality makes reality more real and truthful. However, Marcuse is also aware of the limitation of art, as is evidenced by his utterance, which resonates Austin's view, that "art cannot translate its vision into reality" as "it remains a "fictitious" world."<sup>14</sup> But this limitation, argues Marcuse, does not detract from art, which transforms transitory historical reality into something richer and more enduring.

Jonathan Culler, who has built his poetics on the model of linguistics, discerns the fictionality of literature in its language. He takes as his example the use of deictics and anaphorics which do not function in literature in any of the ways they function outside literature. The "deictic" is explained by *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition (2010) as "relating to a word or expression whose meaning depends on who says it, where they are, who they are talking to, etc, for example "You", "me", "here", "next week"." In ordinary discourse it is easy to answer these questions, but in literary discourse we can answer them only through an imaginative construction. Culler takes the example of Shelley's "The Cloud" whose "I", the speaker in the poem, is the cloud, but that is acceptable only in the fictional world of literature.



What is true of deictic also holds for the anaphoric article "the". Culler here takes the example of W.B. Yeats' "Leda and the Swan" where the article "the" does not function in any of the following ways in which it does in ordinary discourse:

1. to isolate a general class
2. to indicate a concern with a particular member/item of the class.
3. to refer to something/someone already mentioned

In the line "*The Great Wings beating still/ Above the staggering girl*" (Culler's emphasis), "the" is not functioning in any of the ways stated above. On the use of the definite article in the poem, Culler Writes:

It is not the staggering girl as opposed to some other girl, nor is it the great wings as opposed to some small ones. The definite articles are not working in this way, nor of course, are they isolating a general class ("the staggering girl is a peculiar species"), they are working anaphorically, referring us back to a previous mention. But, of course, there is no previous mention except in the title, so it is as if the poem were forcing us to refer to a scene or a situation we must imagine.<sup>15</sup>

Culler's observations suggest that when we read a work of literature, we enter a world of fiction in which the reader keeps reconstructing scenes and situations with the help of his imagination in order to make sense of the text.

Besides the question of veracity, the fictional world created by imagination has a quality which is altogether absent from the real world. The literary world renders pleasure and pleasure only, whereas the real world gives sometimes pleasure and sometimes pain. Even painful experiences of life become a source of aesthetic pleasure. Commenting on art experience according to Indian aesthetics, H. Hariyanna writes that "it yields a kind of joy which is pure and unstained by the least pain".<sup>16</sup> This is similar to Wordsworth's view expressed in the "Preface" that in the aesthetic universe created by the

poet whenever we sympathise with pain it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on with subtle combinations of pleasure.<sup>17</sup>

We must not forget that the aesthetic pleasure that we experience in the domain of literature is different from the ordinary pleasure in the real world. Aesthetic pleasure comes out of verbal representations of external objects which are absent as external stimuli. The writer creates with his artistic skills another world, which is more real than the real world in which the reader experiences pure joy.

The fictionality described above is an important point of difference between literature and non-literature. A reader response critic like Jonathan Culler will say that the fictionality is created by the reader with the help of reading conventions. But this is only partly true. It is primarily the product of the writer's imagination and the reader makes his own contribution while experiencing it.

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\* The essay is based on one of the chapters of the author's forthcoming book, *The Identity of Literature: A Reply to Jacques Derrida*. The paper is the revised version of the essay which earlier appeared in *The Literary Criterion*.

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## The Dark Animal World of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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The growing problems of India have inspired and aroused both creative writers and aggressive social reformers to present what the eyes see but the tongue fails to articulate because of the organized and even governmental reprisals. The irrepressible urge to highlight, if not to solve the chronic problems of a large segment of poverty-stricken Indians transforms passive observers into active crusaders. Having been a correspondent of renowned periodicals and journals, Aravind Adiga must have observed with microscopic vision the hidden and festering sores which gnaw at the vitals of the Indian society. In addition to writing essays and articles, he also chose to highlight the dark side of the country through his novel *The White Tiger* (2008) so as to project it onto the international screen.

Some Indians object to Adiga's portrayal of dirt, filth and corruption in the country, and attribute a motive as if it has been done to make the novel sensational so as to appeal to the judges of 'Man Booker Prize.' Shobhan Saxena smells conspiracy of the West behind the prize: "The West is once again using our poverty to humiliate us" (*Sunday Times of India*, October 19, 2008). Khoche criticizes "the uni-dimensional picture intended for the West" (2011:195). Such an accusation was also brought against Arundhati Roy when she had depicted dirt and filth in *The God of Small Things*. For Talukdar, Adiga's "projection of the poverty-stricken village Laxmangarh seems to be too convincing to be dismissed as an exaggerated account" (2011:125). Considering the criticism and in justification of his portrayal, Adiga states that "writers like me try to highlight the brutal injustices of



society" because similar criticism by writers like Flaubert, Balzac and Dickens in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had helped in the social improvement of England and France (October 16, 2008). Agreeing totally with Aravind Adiga, I also feel that an honest diagnosis and a painful surgical operation, even amputation, are necessary to cure a chronic, near-fatal ailment.

A large number of lower middle class and poor Indians live in unhygienic conditions and are no different from animals. Sudhakar Apte finds in the novel a "richly observed world of have-nots in India" (mostlyfiction.com). They lack the habit of cleanliness and do not wink their eyelids even for a moment when they throw peels of vegetables, fruits and other items of garbage at the neighbour's door or on the road. The Ganges water which was known for its miraculous purity and medicinal qualities is now "full of faeces, straw, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion, and seven different kinds of industrial acids" (15). Raja Rao in *The Serpent and the Rope* refers to the half-burnt dead bodies thrown into the Ganges to take surreptitiously away the partially-burnt logs.

It is a common sight to see the men from village and from urban slum areas "defecating in the open" as if to form an invisible but stinking defensive wall which cannot be crossed by any respectable human being. Some school teachers breed undesirable habits. They reek of booze and splash jets of red *paan* on the walls or the ground of classrooms. Even hospitals are quite dirty. Lohia Universal Free Hospital had three goats sitting on its steps and the stench of goats faeces could be smelled inside. The patients stamp on the goat droppings dotting its ground. For Bhagabat Nayak, "The authenticity of facts and the incidents in the novel are the reportage about India" (2009: 117).

Balram's father wanted to make his son educated "like a man" who otherwise was treated like a donkey. A rickshaw puller is taken as "a human beast of burden."

Men working in tea-shops are termed "human spiders," who crawl in between and under the tables with rags in their hands. The coal-breakers seem to hail from an alien land. A Rooster Coop gives a perfect image of poor Indians spending their lives in ghettos and slums without any hope of being free:

Hundreds of pale hens and brightly colored roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages, packed as tightly as worms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting on each other, jostling just for breathing space; the whole cage giving off a horrible stench—the stench of terrified, feathered flesh. On the wooden desk above this coop sits a grinning young butcher, showing off the flesh and organs of a recently chopped-up chicken, still oleaginous with a coating of dark blood. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they're next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human beings in the country (173-74).

Indians, particularly the poor, are honest, submissive, suppressed, but caught in the kind of life found in the Rooster Coop. For Tapati Talukdar, this metaphor of the Rooster Coop "seems to be pertinent to the ignominy of the life of the exploited masses" (2011: 125).

Besides the physical side, Adiga describes the human side of the dark picture as well. Indian politicians, being dishonest and dirty, have so badly corrupted the entire public machinery that nothing gets done cleanly and in a straightforward manner. The government program of providing midday meals to school children fails because school teachers swallow the funds. The school uniforms are sold in the market of a neighbouring village. When Khoche raises a question: "Are all the school teachers corrupt?" (2011: 95), the answer is that Adiga does not say so but paints a picture which is fairly representative. In hospitals, ward boys have to be bribed for one's proper treatment. The doctors are appointed not on merit but in "open auction" on the demand rate of Rs 400,000 for each post and the money is pocketed by politicians.



Kiran Desai also writes: "Our parliament is made of thieves, each one answerable to the Prime Minister, who is the biggest thief of them all" (1998: 20). The government spends huge amount in selling a highly exaggerated image of the country to foreign tourists with the slogans of 'India Shining' and 'Incredible India' which turn out to be like fascinating wall-papers to hide the ugly reality. Peter Robins considers this novel to be "a furious and brutal effective counterblast" to the glorious image (August 9, 2008). Such a misleading image can be balanced only by giving the other side of the picture.

A realistic portrayal of politicians has been given through extended images bordering on allegory on two different occasions—before and after India's independence:

Thanks to all those politicians in Delhi, on the fifteenth of August, 1947—the day the British left—the cages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. Those that were the most ferocious, the hungriest, had eaten everyone else up, and grown big bellies . . . .

To sum up—in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies.

And only two destinies: eat—or get eaten up (63-64).

The image of Big bellies symbolizes the corrupt politicians who can appropriately be compared to voracious animals. Rather than preserving and establishing the rule of law, they have been a law unto themselves, and could be equated to be in a jungle law.

The more a politician violates the law, the greater is he considered to be. The Great Socialist had ninety-three criminal cases against him relating to murder, rape, grand larceny, gun-smuggling, pimping and many other such things, but he got no punishment because the judges too are corrupt. The movements of Anna Hazare and Baba Ramdev against black money stacked in Swiss banks suggest the same thing. The Great Socialist embezzled one billion rupees "from the Darkness, and transferred that money into a bank account in a small, beautiful

country in Europe, full of white people and black money" (97-98). Even the policemen take petty bribes for minor acts of lawlessness.

Prostitutes constitute an inescapable reality of modern India, as also of the whole world. For Krishna Singh, prostitution represents the double marginalization of the native woman "by virtue of her relative economic oppression and gender subordination . . . . Prostitution is another dark area of India of Light" (2009: 125-126). Adiga gives a powerful picture of prostitutes who jeer and taunt others from behind their own windows, begging for sex from customers. There are eunuchs, teenagers, Nepali girls and light-skinned women. In addition, there are girls from decent families who too indulge in the same type of activities somewhat stealthily; they enter into big buildings late at night and come out with substantial cash in the morning. Men would stop their cars at the painted women to negotiate a price. Balram calls them "parrots in a cage. It'll be one animal fucking another animal" (251).

Adiga talks of two countries in one: "an India of Light, and an India of Darkness" He gives contrasting pictures of the village Laxmangarh and other such Indian villages symbolizing 'Darkness' whereas the 'Light' refers to cities like New Delhi and Bangalore which abound in riches. For Talukdar, darkness "seems to be used as a generic name to symbolize Laxmangarh and other villages like it" (2011: 22). These symbols are also used for the poor and the rich who eternally try to cheat the other side. Balram articulates the difference between them through the metaphor of liquor: "We have two kinds of men: 'Indian' liquor men and 'English' liquor men. 'Indian' liquor was for village boys like me—toddy, arrack, country hooch. 'English' liquor, naturally, is for the rich: rum, whisky, beer, gin—anything the English left behind" (72-73). The rich are not as much considerate to their drivers and servants as they are to their dogs. Balram was asked not to pull the chains of two white



Pomeranian dogs very hard because they were worth more than he was. Balram's father died of tuberculosis, because the disease of the poor does not get treated in the absence of money.

Drivers and servants broadly fall into the same category of poor people though somewhat different. India's grim poverty makes its human beings cheaper than machines or animals. It is the trustworthiness of servants rather than machines on which Indian economy rests. The poor consider it an honour to be in perpetual servitude of the rich rather than to die of hunger and poverty. They clean floors, wash dishes, feed children, press feet—all for a negligible amount. The easy-availability of servants as slaves makes a rich man feel like a king. No wonder Balram does not envy the wealthy people of the U.S.A. and the U.K. who have no servants—a luxury which even middle-class Indians can easily afford. Facing the problem of sheer survival, the poor are willing to bear any humiliation, any ill-behaviour to satisfy their hunger. In Bangalore, employers scrutinize the healthy bodies of potential servants in the same way as human beings scrutinize chickens, goats, oxen, and horses before buying them. They squeeze the nipples, slap the butts, and poke a stick into thighs of their naked bodies to test how work-worthy they are.

Used to ill-behavior from their employers, the servants abuse other servants like Alsatian dogs. Though Balram's intelligent replies in school made him 'The White Tiger', he is also considered a 'Country-Mouse' and a monkey. When Pinkey leaves her husband Mr. Ashok, Balram ensures that his boss ate and slept well because the desire to be servant had been hammered into his skull and fused into his blood. While acting as a mechanic, Balram emerges from under the taxi like a mud-soaked pig. He also performs the duties of cooks, barbers and tailors, and plays cricket or other games with other members of the family to boost their spirits.

Most drivers run for their favorite paper *Murder Weekly*

"like a bunch of dogs rushing after a bone" (126). They secretly fantasize killing their bosses in order to grab their money. On sighting the mobile, they gaze like monkeys. Balram goes to Tihar jail in place of Pinkey, his boss's wife, who had killed a girl while driving the car. The drivers dissect the secrets of their masters in their "monkey-circle." They cheat their employers by siphoning petrol from their cars, manipulating inflated bills from corrupt mechanics, and by picking up wayside passengers to earn extra money.

Balram, who had woven the myth of honesty and faithfulness around himself, on finding Mr. Ashok with 700,000 rupees, killed him "the way the Muslims kill their chickens" (285). With this money, he purchased a fleet of cars in Bangalore, and using them as taxis for picking and dropping employees of a call centre, he reversed his fortunes, saying, "Once I was a driver to a master, but now I am a master of drivers" (302). Balram is only as much apologetic over murdering his boss as someone might be on spilling tea on the dining table. His words of repentance have a tone of mockery when he seems to parody Lady Macbeth's confession in her somnambulist state in saying, "All the skin-whitening creams sold in the markets of India won't clean my hands again" (318). Balram escapes being arrested because he had shifted from Gurgaon to Bangalore. The police searched for him "in darkness" of his village while he hid himself "in light" of Bangalore.

It is an inescapable fact even if unpalatable, poignant and embarrassingly painful that the entire country is inhabited by human beings who in one way or other are so de-humanized that they are comparable to animals—both victims and victimizers. In the style of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Adiga describes human beings who are like animals, and animals who resemble human beings. Through his animal imagery, Adiga brings animal and human nature together to suggest a similarity between the two. Nayak too finds "Orwellian echoes" in the novel



(2009: 131). Adiga sounds like Shakespeare's Iago when the latter says:

There's many a beast then in a populous city,  
And many a civil monster (*Othello* IV.i.56-57).

In a zoo, Balram finds the lion and the lioness "apart from each other and not talking, like a true city couple" (276). Mr. Ashok ill-treats Balram, sends him to jail for the crime he had not committed, but humanizes his Pomerian dogs and wishes the driver to treat them gently.

Nearly all the characters are compared to animals—Balram with a white tiger, a lion, a donkey, a pig, a monkey and a country-mouse; his act of murdering the boss as a Muslim's killing of a chicken. His father Vikram Halwai was treated as a donkey. The landlords are termed Buffalo, Stork, Wild Boar, Mongoose and Raven. Drivers appear to be a bunch of dogs and monkeys whereas the Honda City car becomes a wild stallion. Other quarrelling servants are like barking Alsatian dogs whereas the rickshaw pullers are the beasts of burden. The tea-shop workers become human spiders, prostitutes the caged parrots, and the sex partners as animals. The inhabitants of Laxmangarh are termed the wild bear, the buffalo and the raven. The women pounce, like wild cats, upon the husbands returning with money earned from cities. The undercurrent of the animal imagery is such that its frequent use strikes the reader's imagination with a feeling of disillusionment that the country is inhabited by all sorts of animals—each one operating in his own part of the jungle, with a constant thought of exploiting others for selfish ends. Through his realistic portrayal of the country, laced with animal imagery, Aravind Adiga paints a picture of the people who are human beings merely in biological terms but are no different from animals in attitude and temperament. It is a vast dark world of animals masquerading as human beings.

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## Poetry and Other Genres

*Stephen Gill\**

I believe that arts in every form, including poetry, painting, dance and music, are the fundamental products of self expression. In Greek mythology, Apollo is the god of poetry, music and also healing. Apollo is included in the category of healing, because music has a deep healing capacity. Music and poetry, as well as other forms of fine arts, are the celestial touches of peace. Music and other forms of fine arts speak to our souls. They provide a therapy for emotional and physical health. They help to cope with the challenges of life. Every genre of arts is the higher form of communication as poetry is. Music itself elevates listeners, affecting the centre of emotions in the brain. Certain sounds have power to slow down the rate of the heart and breathing, and can transport listeners into a relaxed state.

Like music, poetry has healing properties. If Apollo is the god of music and healing, he is also the god of poetry. Reading and writing grief poems act as a balm for the spirit. Writing poetry has the effect of catharsis. Writing about key memories is emotive that causes a powerful purgative result to get rid of unhealthy feelings. Poetry is also used, as music is, for therapy – to encourage self-expression. From time immemorial, humans have been writing poetry for chanting at religious rituals. Poetry therapy is quite old, but it started to be recognized in the 60's. Reading often helps aggrieved patients to unlock the portals of their emotions, especially when they start writing their own feelings and experiences in poetry.

Poetry and music walk together. Both have healing properties. Poetry is communication, and communication is the oxygen of life. Even animals and plants communicate



in their own way. Human communication is of highly developed nature. Healthy poetry takes humans to a higher level of communication. Communication in poetry, as well as in music, as well as in dancing, is through artistic beauty, and beauty is peace. Artistic beauty deepens the awareness of life. The world is filled with fruits, trees and flowers in every shape and colour for humans to celebrate these beauties. Some people have poisoned these beauties, turning the world into a dismal place.

Artists revive beauty in their works that make life more pleasing. Poets, dancers, musicians, painters and artists of other categories bring out their feelings, emotions, thoughts, experiences and dreams in their own language. Their languages or ways may differ, but they all have the same goal. A poet uses ink, a painter uses brush and colours, a dancer uses the movements of the different parts of the body and it goes on and on. Artists of different categories use different modes to express what is within. I call it god with a small 'g'. This god within is in abstract form, it is intangible, it is inexpressible. The question before the artist is how to bring it out in a tangible form, so that people may read or touch or see it. This needs tools and the proper use of these tools needs training and practice.

In the preface to *The Flame*, my long poem, I mention that it is a myth that poetry strikes a poet like a flash or a divine bolt. For a serious poet, or artist of any genre, it may be a bolt and divine but mostly it is cooking. I strongly believe that there is beauty everywhere. I also strongly believe that beauty is poetry and poetry is beauty. But everyone does not have the ability to bring out the god within gracefully. It is a poet who gives that god a shape with the beauty of language.

Language is a medium between an object and a poet that gives life, as the Supreme Power did when He created the universe with His words. What is important in a poem is the arrangement of words. This is an intellectual exercise that needs dipping into the amazing universe

of words. These efforts need the proper knowledge of the tools. Every artist is a poet. The only difference is the language that he or she uses for expression. The language of a poet is different from the language of a dancer and the language of a dancer is different from the language of a painter and the language of a painter is different from the language of a musician and so on. Poets are painters who use words, instead of colors, and also they are dancers, who use lyrics instead of using the movements of hands, legs and facial expressions.

Poetry or any art form is an unusual experience that shakes a poet thoroughly. It is an inner experience that is symbolized through a language. To describe or illustrate, poets need tools and the struggle to master the use of the tools is perspiration. It is not only to paint that experience or the god within, it is also to paint that experience with a creative instinct and that creative instinct should also be something like a new and delicious dish. That is where perspiration gets involved.

In my paper "Symbolism with a Special Reference to My Poetry", I have discussed this aspect in further detail. This paper has appeared in several publications and also in the book *Essays on the Poetry of Stephen Gill*, edited by Dr. Shaleen Singh. The perplexing situation that artists face is the accurate visual representation of the feelings, thoughts, moods, sights, ideas and a variety of emotions. Without going into any philosophical or logical depth, I would call them the god within. Language, either of a poet or a dancer or a musician or a painter is inadequate to bring out the god within, because this god or deity is intangible. In addition to a mastery over the language, communicators need special skills to use movements of hands, raising of eyebrows, changing tones, shrugging of shoulders and other gestures.

Still communications are not fully accurate; they are likely to be misunderstood. Verbosity does not help either. Communication becomes more difficult in poetry because it is a form of condensed expression. No human language



is fully equipped to paint the god within properly. It is because language is the product of the intellect that is used to paint the intangible tangibly, using the tool of comparison buttressed by symbols. In a way, every word that we use is a symbol. Take the case of water. The word water is not the liquid that is needed to satisfy thirst. It is a symbol. No matter how hard we try, the word water cannot quench anyone's thirst.

Let us take another example. When the Scottish poet, Robert Burns, says in one of his poems, "my love is like a red, red rose," he tries to compare two things. This symbol or metaphor cannot stand for the actual object of beauty. The actual feelings are within the poet. That is the god within. The poet is presenting his god with the help of a comparison. This is a copy of the reality that is within. When a potter tries to give a shape to clay, he is representing what is within. Artists try different ways to copy what is within. It depends on education, training, dedication and several other factors to make the resemblance as close as possible to the god within. Still the copy bears only a resemblance of the exact object. This is the problem not only of a poet, but also of painters, musicians, dancers and of any artist of any form of fine arts. It is a painful process of trial and error to paint indelible pictures hung within the walls of the poet's blood. The process of this painting bears similarities with Carl Gustav Jung's theory of the individuation process that is the integration between the conscious and unconscious features of the inner self. The story does not end there.

A poet constantly faces the demons of dry spells and depression because of his or her limitations on bringing out what is within. It is a painful reality of a poet's life. Just the awareness of the survival of this god within is not enough. As a skilful fisher, a dedicated poet is constantly searching for spots, for ways and for tools to ensnare the creatures of water. The god within is in abstract form that can manifest itself through unconscious means such as of dreams, visions, hallucinations and so

on. I know poets who write poems in their sleep. I myself have composed poems in my sleep or dreams. On the other hand, the means of a poet are deliberate to establish a dialogue with the within. Every poem, every dance, every painting is a glimpse of the reality within.

It is often a frustrating process to be close to reality, particularly when the writing is tight without the use of cliché. This process causes several wrong turns before finding the right one. It needs extraordinary patience, deep thinking, wider studies and more and more explorations. I have written about this sweating in search for fresh symbols in my prefaces to the collections of my poems. Formation of this dialogue or the mastering of the tools is painful. The process becomes more painful when a dedicated poet paints the god within in an individual way. It becomes even more painful when an artist tries to find time to paint the god within while facing the demons of daily life. Turning back to pleasure is itself painful. It requires sacrifices, adjustments and a total unshaken dedication that becomes an obsession even at a young age when worldly pleasures are difficult to keep at a distance. Struggle and suffering are painful.

Poetry like other arts, needs dedication and dedication is a preoccupation that becomes an obsession and obsession becomes intensely emotional and economic loss and where there is loss there is pain and suffering. This painful process of a dedicated poet is like the process of a mother. A poet gives birth to poems that are full of life. I call them robins. When these robins are properly fed and nourished, their feathers become stronger to be able to fly independently in the borderless skies of freedom and beauty. This creation is an incarnation of the god within. Just giving birth is not enough. To take care of them and let them grow to be independent is also painful.

A sentimental attachment or obsession itself is responsible for pain. Dedicated poets are attached to their creative process. They are drowning individuals who long for air. As long as such poets are drowned in the



waters of creativity they suffer, longing for the oxygen to complete the process. There is joy for them in hope and in the anticipation of completion. That joy provides energy to move forward to finish their works. It is like the suffering of the birth of a new life.

I believe that poetry breathed long before the art of writing breathed. In the beginning there was water, and so was poetry. Water is life, and so is poetry. Human body is seventy-five (75%) percent water, and water is life, and life is poetry. There is nothing left if life goes out of a body. In the same way, world is lifeless without poetry.

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## Theme of Love, Nature and Devotion in Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*\*

K. Balachandran\*

### Tagore's Father

The first literary giant who fetched the much coveted Nobel Prize for Literature to India is none but Tagore. Born on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1861 in Calcutta, he ruled the literary kingdom unopposedly. His father, Debendranath Tagore, the great saint or Maharishi has a remarkable influence on Rabindranath. His possessions were a sense of deep piety, adherence to moral principles and worship of the Invisible God. He didn't like Hindus worshipping idols; didn't accept the identity of Individual self and God. To him individual soul and God are separate entities. God is the supreme spirit. The world is the result of a spontaneous overflow of his creative energy. His attitude to God is Vaishnavite and it reaches forward in Tagore's philosophy of life.

### His grandfather

His grandfather was Prince Dwarkanath. As his name suggests, he lived a splendid and luxurious living. He was friendly with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of Brahma Samaj. The Tagores were Brahmins but Orthodox Brahmins hesitated to take them in their fold. But they were more or less Vaishnavites in their religious outlook. Dwarkanath helped Ram Mohan Roy in his social reform movement and died in England in 1886.

### His Age

Tagore lived in an age which was significant because of three movements - religious literary and social. The family of Tagore's contributed much to each one.



## Religious Movement

In the Religious movement, Raja Ram Mohan Roy's role was significant especially his war on superstition and abolition of 'Sati' and to him God is one. Tagore's father Debendranath was one of its leaders. So naturally his father's religious influence was there in Tagore also.

## Literary Movement

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the great Bengali literary giant tried his level best to rescue Bengali language from the degradation of dead forms. This literary movement tried its best for the growth of the Bengali language. Tagore wrote mostly in Bengali since it was his mother tongue.

## Social Movement

The social Movement may also be termed National movement which partly included cultural aspects too. When Indians were humiliated in the hands of the Westerners, this movement raised its voice of protest to protect Indian culture and values. All these three movements had their impact on many Bengali writers including Tagore.

Rabindranath Tagore is well known for his poetry, drama and to a certain extent for his novels and short stories. Mostly he wrote them in Bengali. Later he himself translated *Gitanjali* as the 'Song offerings'. Roughly 2000 songs he wrote, running to 150000 (one and a half lakh) lines of verse.

Can poetry be translated? Yes, if it satisfies the ideas and thoughts alone. No, if its rhythm, rhyme and internal rhythm cannot be translated whether it is from Bengali or English or vice-versa. Mallarme says poetry is penned not with ideas but with words. "Poetry is not the thing said but a way of saying it" (A.E. Houseman). The magic of poetry lies in the way of saying it. Though the regional language may have its beauty, it is very rarely brought into English translation. Not only *Gitanjali* but also the

poetry of Tagore is rich because it has been decked in all the intricate beauties of tune, rhythm and the subtle blending of rhyme. Hiren Mukherjee comments that translating from Bengali is not that easy for "the language (Bengali) is more than usually coy and unwilling to yield her secret is alien vestments." (13)

Are they really translations? Yes, since they are "semi-poetic (some time pseudo-poetic) summaries and paraphrases, much truncated in body and emasculated in spirit and without the slightest suggestion of his metrical variety and virility. They gave little and often they gave a wrong idea of the best that Tagore could do." No, because Tagore has not given us translation of his poems. He tried to re-live the movement which led to the creation of his Bengali poems and express himself anew in English. Hence, his English renderings are often very different from their originals in Bengali.

### Devotion in Tagore's *Gitanjali*

One cannot compartmentalize the treatment of Love, God and Nature in the poems of Tagore. For e.g. his *Gitanjali* though it consists of 103 lyrics, almost all lyrics reflect his views on Love, Devotion (God) and Nature. Even in the very first poem, he speaks of the Devotion. He compares God to a good Musician and the poet to a little flute. As a musician takes a flute and plays on it, here also he wants to be a flute in the hands of God. When God commands him to sing, all the jarring discordant notes melt into harmony. The poet knows well that God takes pleasure in his singing and with the wings of his song he likes to touch God's feet. In his ecstasy he calls God his friend.

Drunk with the joy of singing I forgot  
Myself and call thee friend who art my lord.

(*Gitanjali* Song II)

Tagore calls God the master musician and the light of His music illumines the world. The life breath of his music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream of his music



breaks all stony obstacles. His heart longs to join in the song of the God.

And thou hast made my heart captive in the endless meshes of thy music, my master!

(Song III)

Where is God? God is in his body, mind, heart and action. He calls God

Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

(Song IV)

He will try his level best to reveal God in his action and it is God's power which gives him strength to act. He longs for a union with the Divine and asks for a moment's indulgence to sit by the side of God. And he will finish his work later on.

I ask for a moment's indulgence to sit by thy side the works that I have in hand will finish after wards.

(Song V)

He is not only a poet but also an advisor to other poets by saying a poet should not believe in vanity; and also he should lead a simple, honest and straightforward life.

My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight....

....let me make my life

simple and straight, like a flute of reed for

Thee to fill with music

(Song VII)

He humbles himself before God by calling himself fool. He wants to place himself in the hands of God. Service to the poor is service to God; love of the poor is love of God. He lies among the poor and lowliest people.

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest and lost.

(Song IX)

What is Devotion? Is it Chanting? Singing? Telling of beads? God is not in these rituals. He is with the tiller and the path maker.

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship is this lonely

dark corner of a temple with doors shut?  
open thy eyes and see thy God is not before thee!  
.....

Meet him and stand by him in  
Toil and in sweat of thy brow  
Where can you seek God? God is within every one  
and not outside. He prepares himself to meet the Lord.  
The time has not come. For that, the temple (i.e. his heart)  
should be cleaned and lighted.

(Song XI)

The lamp has not been lit and I cannot  
ask him into my house  
Buddha preached that desires are the root cause for  
sufferings. The poet also has the same opinion. Human  
desires are impediments in the realization of God. God  
has gifted us (a) body (b) mind and (c) life. Are we  
keeping them pure?

(Song XII)

Day by day thou art making me worthy  
of thy full acceptance by refusing me ever  
and anon, saving me from perils of weak,  
uncertain desire.  
Life should be meaningful and useful. It should not  
be useless and meaningless. He has full faith in Divine  
love and mercy.

(Song XIV)

When the hour strikes for thy silent  
Worship at the dark temple of midnight  
Command me, my master, to stand before  
thee to sing.  
Seeing the face of beloved or lover is a must for  
motivation, and happiness.

(Song XV)

Now, I ask, has the time come at last  
When I may go in and see thy face and  
offer thee my silent salutation?  
Even if God does not speak to him he'll fill his heart  
with His image only.

(Song XVI)

If thou speakest not, I will fill my heart  
With thy silence and endure it.  
Spring has come and gone with faded flowers. He  
waits in vain for the appearance of the Divine lover. He  
feels a thrill passing through the air and hears the song

(Song XIX)



coming from the other shore. It is nothing but a Divine call. He should launch his boat to meet his Divine Lord and master.

Do you not feel a thrill passing through the air with the notes of the far away song and floating from the other shore?

Now-a-days a lady love calls her lover 'friend'; similarly the lover calls his beloved 'friend'. But Tagore calls God,

Oh my only friend, my best beloved, the gates are open in my house, do not pass by like a dream.

(Song XXII)

*Gitanjali* is an interwoven fabric of Divine Bliss and woes of near death. Both are complementary components of life. The mystic mind of Tagore has softened the cruelty of death. He has expressed joy in his songs. It was possible because of his touch with the Divine. The melody of the Divine fills the entire cosmos. The same is the mind of the poet and hence it renews its tone in different ways. Henry Vaughan once commented that he heard "The great chime and symphony of nature. There is a mystical tradition of joy in the composition of the God - chosen poets. Tagore... gives birth to utterance ineffable"(115). Tagore feels joy in singing of the Divine. His song is often a 'cry'. He finds a kind of cosmic unity in our life. He perceives a running spirit moving in the objects of Nature. To enjoy this bliss, one must have purer spirit. The rust of evil must be removed from the soul, lest the music in Nature won't be heard by anyone. Thus through his poetry he makes us feel the Divine Bliss. Devotion is a must for Divine Bliss. Let us have devotion to get Divine Bliss.

### Treatment of Nature in Tagore's *Gitanjali*

Though Tagore had love for Nature and devoted his precious time in observing Nature, he is not a Nature poet like Wordsworth. Wordsworth believed in pantheism - seeing God in the various objects of nature. Tagore is not Wordsworthian in his approach to Nature.

Wordsworth is a Nature poet but Tagore is poet of the man. He values much man and his ways of life. That does not mean that he rejected Nature. Wordsworth was attracted by Nature, whereas Tagore was by man or man's nature.

In the first song of *Gitanjali* in the second verse para, he speaks of Nature where he compares himself to a little flute of a reed.

This little flute of a reed thou hast  
carried over hills and dales, and last  
breathed through it melodies eternally new.

(Song I)

In Song VI, he compares himself to a flower requesting God to pluck it and delay not, for, it may droop or drop into the dust.

Pluck this little flower and take it, delay  
Not! I fear lest it droop and drop into the  
dust.

(Song VI)

Here the flower is not characterized with a natural charm as Wordsworth does in 'Daffodils' - it assumes a significance similar to human life. Tagore wants the flower to be plucked, lest, its petals may fall or the flower may droop. In the act of plucking, the pain of death is implied. But it has been softened by the symbol of little flower. Human life is like a flower, i.e. a fit object for the offering of God.

The cosmic width is symbolized by the stars and planets. Tagore has no astronomical interest in them. They are important as poetic symbols of the vast space which a human eye sees. His longing to meet the Divine is there. But the true time has not come. This he records using images from Nature.

The blossom has not opened; only the wind  
is sighing by...

(Song XIII)

By this imagery he hints that purification is a must. Here blossom means his inner devotion. When he writes, "The blossom has not opened" it refers to the non-fruition in his case. He lives in the sighing of the wind which indirectly refers to the agony of the separation of the



lover from the beloved. Providence provides the sky and light to human beings; they are the gifts and it is for their life of convenience. He is thankful to God for this.

Later the lotus bloomed. There was a sweet trace of a strange fragrance in the south wind. That vague sweetness made his heart ache with longing - longing for God. The blossoming of the lotus refers to appearance of the glory of God which the poet (mystic) could not see it. "My basket was empty and the flower remained unheeded." In his heart, sweetness blossoms. It is the result of the Divine pursuits. 'Faded futile flowers' refer to the worldly drudgery and the material significance of human life. Yellow leaves which flutter and fall symbolize sickness and death as in P.B. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind".

Tagore's love for Nature is second only to his love for humanity. He believes Nature's influence upon the growth of human mind. Tagore loved the dynamic aspects of Nature, the storm, the cloud, the river, the sea-waves, the sky, the light as Shelley did. Shelley placed the idea above the real. But Tagore seized the real without losing sight of the ideal. His description of Nature is realistic - primarily interested in the gay and peaceful aspects of Nature. It doesn't mean that he has left out the darker aspects. His treatment of Nature is realistic and comprehensive. In his description of Nature, one can see an amalgam of music and pictures. Nature and human life are closely interlinked. Humanity is portrayed as a background of Nature and Nature is an essential part of human life.

The narration of Nature in *Gitanjali* is purposive - both for the beauty of Nature and also for symbolical significance. The ecstatic joy of the mystic, the agony of the adorer, expectations of the tryst with the beloved - all these have been explained through the objects of nature. Like Wordsworth, Tagore did not draw conclusion from Nature. Brief and intense feelings are studded in poems look fresh in the light of the natural objects. From there Tagore's imagination flits on to the different mode.

*Gitanjali* is not essentially a poem composed with the sole object of illuminating the life of Nature. It is a harp which strums upon the different aspects of life.

All that is harsh and dissonant in my  
life melts into one sweet harmony and  
my adoration spreads wings like a glad  
bird on its flight across the sea.

(Song II)

Here the ecstatic mood of the worshipper of God is described beautifully in the flight of the bird flying across the sea. The life-sustaining music of the Divine runs through the skies. The holy stream of God's music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on. Thus, one can see that objects of Nature are not self-accomplished but related poetically with the moods and thoughts in the poem.

The poet listens to the melodies floating on towards him from the other shore and that is life. His objects of Nature are charged with feeling and emotion. But no great thought dwells upon them. There is no continuous description of Nature in his poetry. The objects of Nature have certain values which make the idea glisten for a while and are thrown back. It is not the spinal cord to support any single sustained theme. Thus, Nature has not been given a sustained reception. His moods and objects of Nature are for illuminating and explaining thoughts; "The night is black as a black stone". The average man, away from God, lives in darkness. The earthly freshness of nature, the joy that runs through glades, the soothing cluster of trees, the enchanting landscapes are missing in Tagore - it is because they are irrelevant to the spirit of the poem. So the immanence of Nature felt by Wordsworth may not be in Tagore. Beauty and sweetness exist in nature, no doubt. But Tagore is in a different mood and in a different frame of mind. He is not in glory of Nature. With the help of the objects of Nature, the ecstasy of a poet (the gloom) has been described.



### Treatment of Love in Tagore's *Gitanjali*

As there are opposites North - South, East - West, left - right, positive - negative, attraction - repulsion, there is man - woman. What do they imply? A reconciliation of the pain of opposing forces? Like the right hand and left hand of the Creator, though they are in opposite direction, they have to act in absolute harmony.

**Band of Harmony:** Is there a band of harmony between our two eyes? Yes. It makes them act in unison. Similarly, there is unbreakable continuity of relation in the physical world, e.g. between heat and cold, light and darkness, motion and rest. Do these opposites bring confusion in the universe? No, but harmony.

**Rhythm:** Waves rise and fall; they go to the shore and return. Do they do and return erratically? No, but in a rhythm which is marvelously beautiful. It is a rhythmic dance. Rhythm is not the outcome of haphazard struggle. Its underlying principle is unity and not opposition.

**Unity:** The principle of unity is said to be the mystery of all mysteries. Some men lose the feeling of mystery, which is at the root of all our delights when they discover the uniformity of law among the diversity of nature.

**Poem: A Set of Detached Sounds:** A great poem can be considered as a set of detached sounds. A reader has to find out the meaning which is nothing but the inner medium that connects these outer sounds. It is the law of music.

When he speaks of love it means not only between a man and a woman but also between a human being and God. He believes in sacred love. For this one should be holy.

It is unholy - take not thy gifts through its  
unclean hands. Accept only what is offered  
by sacred love.

(Song IX)

Pleasure lies in giving whether it is about human beings or Divine one. The lady love is waiting to give

herself to the beloved, a man. Similarly, one should be waiting to surrender to God.

I am only waiting for love to give myself  
up at last into his hands.

(Song XVII)

The lady will have doubt if her lover will come or not. In the same way a devotee will have doubt if God will come or make him wait.

Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait outside  
at the door all alone?

(Song XVIII)

Longing to see each other's face (in the case of lovers and also a devotee) is a normal behaviour as a babe longs to see its mother's face.

If thou showest me not thy face, if thou  
leavest me wholly aside, I know not now

I am to pass these long, rainy hours.

(Song XVIII)

Patience is a must for lovers and devotees. One should not be ready in a hurry to meet either the lover or to see God. Even in temples patience is needed to have the darshan of God/deity.

I will keep still and wait like night with  
starry vigil and its head bent low with patience.

(Song XIX)

If a beloved (lady) waits for the lover, she will not go to sleep but she will be wakeful. Is it not so? But here Tagore writes,

He came and sat by my side but I woke not  
what a cursed sleep it was, O miserable me!

(Song XXVI)

So he missed meeting God and hence appeals for the light of God. The meeting between the lover and the beloved must take place at least during the darkness. Here the poet (the beloved) likes to meet God the Divine lover.

Misery knocks at thy door, and her  
message is that thy lord is wakeful and  
he calls thee to the love - tryst through the  
darkness of night.

(Song XXVII)

Tagore doesn't deal with passionate love in *Gitanjali* like other poets, as Keats does in *The Eve of St. Agnes*,



or Robert Browning in "Andrea del Sarto". His interest is the psychological insight is delineating the mystery of love in its different aspect. His "The Gardener" is about the attraction between man and woman. The first stirrings of love bring with them a strange sort of thrill. A girl has a tender feeling; without saying anything it comes and goes away. By sending a flower from her hair to him, the silent gesture of love is responded to. In another situation she does not know what to do, because she is in confusion. The wild youth comes to her door, sings a new tune which enthralls her. She couldn't decide whether to talk to him or not. Some poems depict a combination of intensity of love and womanly coyness in the heart of a girl, yet she expects joyous excitement. Passion of love in its varied colours, serenity, light heartedness, light and shade all these can be seen in his love poems.

His *Urvashi* portrays a live picture which transports the readers to a world of thrill. She is not an embodiment of intellectual beauty but physical beauty. Sen writes,

Tagore is a great love poet. He has capture the myriad forms of love and painted it with great originality and delicacy. His poems reveal the ecstasy of love some where it is a love of devotee for his beloved god, somewhere Tagore is lost of ardent lover for his beloved: *Gitanjali* is one of the collections which sings the songs of love: love for nature, love for mankind, spiritual love of human and passionate love of a woman for her lover. (75) S.K. Paul observes,

The poems of *Gitanjali* have a largely metaphysical outlook, and much of the poetry talks about an union with the supreme, but the union also has in it much of the discourse of two earthly lovers. This type of anthropomorphic depiction of celestial love is quite common in the Vaishnava literature of India since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. (29)

Thus, one can see Tagore's love for Nature is laudable and his treatment of devotion is captivating and enthralling and extols mortal love to immortal love. He

is a permanent moon in the literary firmament of both Indian Writing in English and World Literature.

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## Problematics of Tradition in Indian English Poetry

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The present paper aims at discussing the problematics of tradition pertaining to Indian English poetry from Henry Derozio down to Dilip Chitre and traces various traditions—major and minor, which shaped the poetic sensibility of Indian English poets. In literary historiography talking about tradition has become a 'cliche' and in every literature this is an issue that invites critical attention. So has been the case with Indian English poetry. Here the issue has assumed greater dimension so much so that the critics and literary historians need to deal objectively with it.

The first question that emerges in this context is: what are the reasons behind this problematics. Probably, the answer to this question lies in the controversy arising out of the denial of any tradition by the votaries of Bhasha literatures who believe that the Indian English poetry has no indigenous cultural roots and hence its flowering is merely imitative and derivative—a synthetic creation of the colonial encounter. Another reason may also be found in the vehement denial of any tradition by the post-independence poets who have drawn a great divide-line between pre-independence and post-independence poetry and most of them maintain that the poets, before independence, have done great damage by not writing 'real' poetry and in the words of a contemporary poet, "Indian verse in English did not seriously begin to exist until after the withdrawal of the British from India" (Parthasarthy 3).

This first reason, time has proved, is no more tenable. On that account no one now denies the existence of a cherished tradition of Indian English poetry. Indian poets

wrote poetry in English as early as 1825. Once started, it became a never-ending line. The Indian English poetic tradition, since then, has been enriched and made memorable by individual poets both major and minor. Some became famous on account of their poetic merit and considerable skill in the use of imagery and poetic techniques, whereas others were notable for their historicity. At any rate, an independent tradition did emerge. To quote Dr Narsingh Srivastava, "Indian poetry in English has developed into a representative and rich literary tradition during the last one hundred and fifty years." In the course of its development it ceased to remain, as Professor V.K. Gokak remarks, "a mere satellite moving around the sun of English poetry and has now developed into an independent tradition that thrives on the meeting of two vital cultures - the Indian and the English." (63).

Also, this controversy has never been one-sided. It was generated and fed by votaries of Indian writing in English as well, who rather invidiously claimed that only these writings were national and all other literatures written in Indian languages were local and provincial. Providing a pan-Indian status at the expense of Bhasha literatures continued adding fuel to this controversy. Fortunately, the whole controversy is almost over now and today probably no one doubts the question of nativeness and rootedness of this poetry/literature. Also, recently a new trend has emerged in Indian English literary criticism, which, on its own divests Indian writing in English of its self-proclaimed national status and takes it closer to regional/Bhasha literature - once dismissed as narrow co-ordinates of imagination. Penguin has recently published an anthology of writings in English from Kerala. An anthology of English poetry from the North-East has also just come out. This development is a positive sign in the realm of Indian English poetry as it would localize and bring it closer to the roots. Akhshaya Kumar, in a recently published article, has rightly



suggested that "this localization is by what we shall truly empower Indian criticism in days to come". And what he pleads in the context of Indian English novels may well be applied to poetry as well. "The address of the novel cannot be unproblematically national when the nation in question is as big as a subcontinent in terms of its cultural heterogeneity and expanse" (75). This premise is equally applicable to other languages also, for instance, Bengali poetry written in Tripura and West Bengal are not altogether a product of an identical sensibility.

The other reason, however, needs an objective analysis in order to be resolved. Post-independence poets and critics like P. Lal, R. Raghavendra Rao, Dom Moraes, Nissim Ezekiel, R. Parthasarathy, Kamala Das, K. N. Daruwalla etc. have no esteem for their predecessors who wrote during the pre-independence period. Before we diagnose this negative view, let us look at some instances of opinions held by these poets about their predecessors.

The first frontal attack on pre-independence poets and especially on Sri Aurobindo was launched by the editors of *Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry*, in their Introduction to the Anthology (1959). They warn fellow modern poets that "the temptation to slip into greasy, weak-spined and purple-adjective 'spiritual' poetry always exists, and also express the fear that "there is a strong likelihood that the blurred and rubbery sentiments of a Sri Aurobindo will slowly clog out our poetry" (Lal and Rao vi). Regarding Sarojini Naidu their brashness is no less intense : "We claim that the phase of Indo-Anglian romanticism ended with Sarojini Naidu and leave the fireflies to dance through the neem" (vi). However, ten years later in 1969, Lal partially revised his opinion but still concluded on a negative note. Nissim Ezekiel, unrepentant, on the other hand, held, "anyone who thinks highly of Sri Aurobindo as a poet has no feeling for the English language (169). It is more interesting to note how cleverly and diplomatically some other contemporary poets have

reacted to the achievement of pre-independence poets, for example. Kamala Das tells us, "I have not read either Toru Dutt or Sri Aurobindo" (103). K. N. Daruwalla cleverly confesses, "I have read only one poem each by Toru Dutt and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, and have no intention of reading any more" (94). Also some like K. D. Katrak, a very minor poet, and many more like him associated with the Writers' Workshop, have no hesitation in declaring that Sri Aurobindo 'was probably a very great mystic, but a very poor poet' (242).

Offended by such scathing remarks by these poets on their predecessors, scholars and literary historians like Srinivas Iyengar, M.K. Naik and C.D. Narasimhaiah have reacted sharply against them as "militant modernists" and reminded them that 'they stand on the shoulders of the older poets and the shoulders in question are broad enough to carry quite a few lightweights'. (Naik 1) C.D. Narasimhaiah also wrote a full length essay as a rejoinder to Dom Moraes's derogatory comments on Toru Dutt, Aurobindo and Tagore. Narsimhaiah retorted that Moraes "ought not to have given himself the impression that he is an oracle" (84).

However, it seems that these great stalwarts did not probe deeper into the psychology involved in this controversy created by the post-independence poets. Probably, these modernists could not appreciate earlier poets because they could not understand the mode of language used by the pre-independence poets. Every age uses language in its own way; and if P. Lal and others found in Aurobindo "a failed Titan", it was because they failed to understand the application of language of Sri Aurobindo's. And instead of widening their aesthetic sympathy, they started drumming up their own philosophy of aesthetics by negating the earlier one and tried to justify their aesthetics as the only and real one. One must understand that even a genius like Tolstoy did not like *King Lear* not because it was bad but because his taste was for something, more realistic and restrained.



An analysis of the attempts at the periodization of Indian-English poetry can also reveal some aspects of the problematics of its tradition. The first significant attempt at periodization of this poetry has been done by Prof. V. K. Gokak. He makes a demarcation of twenty-five-years spans to categorize the poets in his anthology, *The Golden Treasury* (1978). This scheme, though based on the changes in style, is too arbitrary to be logical and also it spans up to 1965 only. A more acceptable periodization has been attempted in his *History of Indian English Literature* (1982) by M.K. Naik who proposes four specific periods: (1) From beginnings to 1857; (2) From 1857 to 1920; (3) From 1920 to 1947; and (4) Independence and after. But the main weakness of Naik's plan seems to be that it does not read like a periodization of literary history; rather it looks like the periodization of political history or the history of the freedom struggle in India. And this periodization seems neither to consider the sensibility nor the expression of the poets in question. This defect perhaps has been rectified, to a great extent, in the periodization by Makarand Paranjape in the introduction to his anthology of *Indian Poetry in English* (1993) and his plan seems to take into consideration both the sensibility and expression of the poets. Paranjape suggests the following phases : (1) 1825-1900: Colonialism - period of Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt and Manmohan Ghose; (2) 1900-1950; Nationalism - of poets like Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu and Tagore; (3) 1950-1980; Modernism of poets of Nissim Ezekiel, Jussawalla, P. Lal, Kamala Das, A.K. Ramanujan, A.K. Mehrotra, R. Parthasarathy, Shiv K. Kumar, K.N. Daruwalla, Jayant Mahapatra, Arun Kolatkar, Prithvi Nandy, Dilip Chitre and so on; and (4) post-modernism 1980 and after - of poets like Agha Shahid Ali, Saleem Peeradina, Vikram Seth, Manohar Shetty, Imtiaz Dharker, Tabish Khair etc.

This plan also seems to take into consideration, besides sensibility and expression, respective historical milieus which brought changes in the use of English language

with changing times. As this plan does not keep the history of British poetry as model, it succeeds in carving different phases in respective contexts, which in their turn give a comprehensive picture of a long and varied tradition from Henry Derozio (the first Indian English poet who published his poem in 1827) to contemporary poets like Saleem Peeradina and Vikram Seth. Looking in this perspective, tradition thus established seems to be the product of an indigenous cultural situation negated, altered, assimilated and recreated through the inevitable logic of an epoch of colonial encounter. This is the way our regional/Bhasha literatures have also come into being. They, too, had not existed in the soil from time immemorial. In fact, each one of them was the product of long-drawn historical processes of different cultural interactions from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The only difference in the case of Indian English is that the British colonialism played a major role in its evolution and therefore Western traditions also became major thread in its cultural fabric.

Having thus discovered the genesis of this tradition, let us examine how it has been enriched by different cultural components whose interactions gave birth to it. The long tradition of this poetry is, indeed, the product of a cultural environment of interacting traditions - major as well as minor. It came to be composed of the Western traditions, the prevalent native traditions, the emergent traditions of nationalism and modernity, and the classical Indian traditions. Depending, thus, on the diversity of its native formative cultures, it came to assume a complex multiculturalism and sought to discover new myths, new modes of expression, which embodied the diverse traditions in its complex fabric. And its dynamics always laid emphasis on internalizing these diverse traditional structures within its creative matrix.

It we look into the poetic works of the representative poets belonging to the different phases, as per the plan of Paranjape, we can easily locate the operation of this



multi-traditional matrix in their practice in different degrees and with varying emphases. There is also another way to understand this matrix. Among the post-independence Indian English poets if we take the examples of A.K. Ramanujam, Jayant Mahapatra and Arun Kolatkar, we can easily see that each of the three belongs to a separate regional cultural identity and if they are seen together in entirety, it gives the picture of multi-cultural perceptions and modes of expression. This is where Indian English poetry stands distinguished from our Bhasha/regional poetry.

The nineteenth century Indian English poetry in the hands of poets like Toru Dutt and others quite clearly projects a phase, which are the cultural intersections from within and without. Whether Toru Dutt and Manmohan Ghose are good or bad, imitative and derivative or original poets may be debatable but regarding multi-culturality and multi-traditional matrix there cannot be any two opinions. Toru Dutt's *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882) published posthumously, quite obviously makes her the first Indian poet to write about Indian myth and legend.

In the next phase, what Paranjape calls 'Nationalism', the idea of multi-culturality and multi-traditional matrix assumes greater clarity and vividness, notwithstanding the romantic aura of the 19<sup>th</sup> century British poetry. The three prominent poets - Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Sarojini Naidu - stand firm in their poetic creation on these two planks. M.K. Naik, concluding his essay the *Romantic Dawn* in a recent book, rightly observes:

The three poets are Rabindranath Tagore with his devotional fervour, Sri Aurobindo with his symbolic richness and Sarojini Naidu with her ecstatic celebration of Love and Nature. And it is highly significant that all the three are firmly rooted in the Indian tradition, for without roots no poet can grow and flower. (23).

It can also be seen that this 'tradition' is in no way monolithic, for in India, no tradition can be monolithic, it is in fact multi-faceted, produced by various cultural

interactions. For example, in Tagore we have interactions of Vaishnavite, Sufi-mystic, folk, Bhakti traditions and classical Indian tradition; in Sarojini Naidu we have interactions of folk, Indo-Islamic, Persian love and devotional, Bhakti, Buddhist and classical Indian traditions etc., whereas in Sri Aurobindo we have, interactions of mystic, devotional, Upanishadic vision, the classical Indian, epic and dramatic traditions.

Similarly, in the modernists phase also we can point out to certain cultural interactions, but it is probably the weakest here. In this phase of Indian English poetry multi-traditional matrix and multiculturalism have been skirted in favour of contemporary modes of expression in the manner of the British modernists. P.K. Rajan has aptly observed, "its preponderant use of themes of alienation and identity-crisis and its reluctance to confront the significant experience of real life give it a sort of elitist, sectarian character - a case where the alienation of the poet ultimately results in a poetry which itself becomes alien" (17). Modern Indian English poetry is, indeed, cut off from the vital springs of communal experiences and aspirations and has turned into a detached scrutinizer of the self and society. Those poets who have, however, kept themselves anchored to the multi-traditional matrix of Indian sensibility and devoted to the multiculturalism of Indian pluralistic society have made their mark firm and rooted. Prof. Naik has aptly summed up this view in his essay the *Modernist Noontide*:

Finally, what is the achievement of the modernist school? These poets have certainly learnt well all the lessons taught by their British masters, but it is significant that they have produced their best works only when they saw themselves in relation to their roots : as Ezekiel does in *Hymns in Darkness*, Kolatkar in *Jejuri* and Mahapatra in *Relationship*. They may not always conform to tradition, and in fact, dissent from it, but the very fact that they find it necessary to refer back to it, shows that it is essentially their 'still points in a turning world. (66).



Thus, the above discussion enables us to consider the rich tradition of almost 180 years of Indian English poetry as a variegated construct on multi-traditional basis with complex multiculturalism as its resource tank. One cannot dismiss it superficially as a monolithic product of the colonial encounter or vilify the entire corpus of pre-independence poetry just because its philosophy of aesthetics could not be comprehended and liked by the insurgent modernists. A discerning analysis can easily prove that all the poets - pre-independence and post-independence - while being deeply indebted to the Western literary forms, use the medium of English to probe their native roots in terms of empirical experiences by invoking their native myths, legends, narrative forms and folk-traditions etc. They also use this medium to explore the concerns of a society in the throes of modernity under colonial subjugation (before independence) punctuated by the preoccupations and dilemmas of a post-colonial situation (after independence). Also, inspired by the classical Indian tradition, they use this medium to search for the metaphysical and transcendental realms of experience and attempt a rediscovery of the quintessential India.

And as such by doing all this, the practitioners of all kinds of poetry build and enrich the great tradition of Indian English poetry for posterity.

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## Marriage, Morals and Money in Girish Karnad's *Wedding Album*

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With his play, *Wedding Album*, published in 2009, Girish Karnad seems to have entered a new phase in his dramatic career. It is for the first time that he has come out with a play on the background of contemporary India, showing life of urban middle class people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Karnad has always written plays dealing with issues relevant to contemporary Indian society but for this he has chosen stories and characters not of contemporary times but from Indian history, myths, legends and folklores. When he wrote his first play, *Yayati*, an existential play which in a way related to his own situation in life, he did not depict Indian society of 1960s but presented a story from the *Mahabharata*. To describe the failure of idealism without practical approach during the Nehru era, he chose the story of a medieval Muslim ruler, Muhammed- bin- Tughlaq. To depict caste and religious conflict in post-independence India, he took us once again to medieval India in his *Taledanda*. Thus, in play after play Karnad took up stories not from India of today but from some bygone era. From this point of view *Wedding Album* is different from his earlier plays. It takes us to a world of non-resident Indians, video-conferencing, internet cafes and mobile phones. Even in his dramatic technique Karnad seems to have moved ahead. He has made a very effective use of time shifts in the play. The element of subversive humour and irony in the play is also new for the readers/ audience of Karnad's plays.

*Wedding Album* is about the India of 21<sup>st</sup> century which is standing at the turning point of past and future, and which is catching up with the Western world of modern

technology and global economy but is still tethered to its old values and traditional customs. Woven into this tension of forward and backward movement is a complex web of personal desires, passions, ambitions and memories. The focal point of the story is the marriage of the daughter of a retired government doctor in a small town of Karnataka. This is an 'arranged' marriage but arranged not by elders of the family but through internet, video tapes and mobile messages. The 'boy' lives in the U.S.A. and represents the success story of the 'gen next' of the Indian youth exploring the global world of prospects and achievements. The 'girl' appears to be a typical middle class, educated Indian young woman but with her own private world of lust. In this background Karnad weaves a complex pattern of human relationships and moral values.

The play is divided not in acts but in nine scenes. Scenes 'One' and 'Five' take place nearly three years after the rest of the scenes. In time sequence the first scene might be taking place later but thematically it represents the proper beginning of the story. It shows Vidula, the daughter of Dr. Nadkarni, being video-graphed by her brother, Rohit for a video clip which is to be sent to her prospective husband. She is introducing herself to him, telling him about her age, education, her family—a sort of 'matrimonial bio-data' of the 'girl' which is generally provided to the 'boy' while arranging their marriage in a traditional marriage set up in India. The 'boy', Ashwin, in this case is an expatriate Indian who has chosen America as a land of opportunities but who nonetheless wants to marry an Indian girl. He, thus, represents a large number of Indian young men who have migrated to America or other developed countries in search of career prospects but who look towards India when it comes to choosing a life partner. Vidula's introduction of herself in the video tape gives us an insight into her character, her honesty, her naivety and also her uncertainty and vulnerability. Later on in the scene, Pratibha Khan the successful producer of television



serials, tells Rohit who is working with her now and who is showing her the video clip as potential material for a tele-serial:

Rohit, we have an audience which is predominantly young. College going. Or young professionals. Westernized. At least potentially. . . . They may believe it, but they won't like it. A girl from an educated middle-class family - a graduate - agrees to consider marrying a man whom she has never met. The boy turns up, all ready to jump on to the altar, without ever having seen her. In this day and age? (8)

Rohit protests by saying that they were not total strangers and that they had exchanged video tapes and talked on phone and sent messages on mobiles. He then adds as an argument in favour of the situation that the 'boy' belonged to their caste. Like Pratibha, Hema, the elder sister of Vidula who lives with her husband in Australia, also questions this arrangement. This, however, is not an unusual situation in contemporary India. Expatriate Indians, earning a handsome salary in America or other parts of the world and whose parents or other relatives live in India, are considered 'suitable boys' by parents of girls of 'marriageable age' who belong to the middle or upper-middle class urban society of India. If the young man belongs to their caste they do not find it objectionable that they do not know him and have never even seen him. The fact that in such cases, dowry is generally not demanded is an added allurements. The young man, even if he has lived in the West for a considerable period of time and speaks very highly of the Western way of life, still dreams of 'purity', 'fidelity' and docility in his wife - the typical male expectations from wife in a traditional patriarchal society like India. And so he searches for wife in India and not in the society where he is living. His only problem is that he has no time for this task. So he relies on his parents if they live in India or on other close relatives here and finally on matrimonial internet sites if the other two sources do not yield a desirable result. In case the 'girl'

is otherwise approved, the 'boy' comes to India on a short leave, meets the girl and if she is finally approved, gets married and after spending a few weeks goes back with his wife or the wife follows him afterwards. It is a similar situation in Vidula's case in this play. What seems to upset the plan is that Ashwin has extended the time of his arrival in India and thus there will not be enough time for both of them to know each other. Vidula's mother reacts:

But that's - that's - how is that possible? It was all agreed. He has to meet Vidu. Spend some time together. And only if they liked each other, only then, we were to go ahead with the wedding. I mean, that's what *he* proposed. If he comes that late, when is all that going to happen? We have to print invitations, inform our relatives. I can't . . . (25)

It is this that makes the wedding plan somewhat tentative. Vidula is going on with her preparations for the marriage but keeps on remarking that she does know whether the marriage will actually take place or not. Hema is irritated that if this was the case they should not have asked her to come from Australia. Mother is also dissatisfied with this uncertain event and so is tense. Only Father seems emotionally uninvolved. He only says, "Let's face it. Marriage is a gamble." (27) Rohit goes on arranging things in a positive frame of mind. If Vidula and Ashwin agree to marry, he can inform the relatives by e-mail and printing cards is now a matter of hours. Moreover, Ashwin does not want it to be an elaborate affair. Rohit says to his mother:

He has already said he doesn't want all this. No rituals, no wasteful *tamasha*, nothing. If he and Vidula like each other, they will go to the Registrar and sign. If they don't, they will shake hands and part. He proceeds to Malaysia. Catches up with his badminton team. (25)

It is this changed face of the Indian marriage that Karnad catches brilliantly in this play. He does not seem to make any moral judgment but the humour and irony with which he presents the whole situation is a comment in itself on it. The eighth scene of the play is a long



monologue of Ashwin addressed to Vidula whom he meets for the first time. He is not interested in knowing Vidula, her feelings, aspirations and fears about her future life with him. He is concerned only with what he wants. He has a vision, rather a mission, of what he wants to do and his wife, whoever she will be, will have to share the burden of that mission, identifying herself completely with him in that. He says to Vidula:

I have drunk life in the US to the lees. Girl friends, affairs, mistresses, one-night stands. And on the public stage, glamour, success, social connections. I have been through them all. And I have come to the conclusion that the whole culture is empty of values now, bereft of any living meaning. It is shallow, you see what I mean, glittering and shallow. The European Industrial Revolution began by rejecting religion in favour of material values. But today that legacy is strangling the West. They have no spiritual moorings left. They are adrift in a godless, amoral world.

I love the US. So realizing where the country was headed was a terrifying experience for me. It threw me into depression. I started delving into myself. What am I? Where am I? I looked to India for guidance. . . . We have to look into our hearts, and discover our ancient values afresh. Begin at the beginning.

That is why I have come to Dharwad to look for a life partner. I have come here because I believe that in places like Dharwad that belief in innocence, the very idea of purity, still survives.

Someone like you carries within you the essence of Hindu spirituality. Woman as Mother, Wife, Daughter. Womanhood as the most sacred ideal. (81)

Karnad not only presents the character of Ashwin with an ironical undertone - particularly his pompous solemnity and his claim that he has money enough to buy up the Congress (80) - but also shows that such a belief in the ideal womanhood as expressed by Ashwin has no real bearing. The sixth scene of the play where the dramatist has shown Vidula's visit to the internet café has already exposed the audience/ reader to the reality. It is in this scene that Karnad has a surprise for us. Never

before has he dealt with sex in such an overt manner in any of his plays. Vidula has been frequenting an internet café where she says she goes to listen to the sermons by Swami Ananga Nath. Rohit says that she goes there to play video games about which she seems to be crazy. The truth, however, is quite different. She goes there to have a clandestine session of 'audio sex' with someone who seems to be a foreigner. Ironically, the password for him is 'Ananga', the bodiless. The sixth scene of the play gives a description of their proceedings. They begin with an elaborate act of undressing which of course consists only of oral instructions and compliances without Vidula making any physical movement. But the whole thing is highly titillating. That they do not reach the stage of the final act is only due to the fact that the session is interrupted by the forced entry of two young men in the café supposedly for moral policing. Karnad does not look with any moral censure at the physical desires of a woman. In his earlier plays also, whether it is *Hayavadana* or *Bali: The Sacrifice* or even *The Fire and the Rain*, he does not take a superior moral stand condemning the sexuality of a woman. In *Wedding Album* also, he notes with a knowing smile Hema's response to erotic letters written to her by an adolescent boy of the neighbourhood. But he is aware of the typical Indian attitude towards it. In the first scene when Pratibha asks Rohit if Vidula had a boy friend, he reacts sharply, "No, no. she was a nice girl." (9) At Pratibha's rejoinder, "Ah! That's your definition of a 'nice girl' then?", he replies defiantly, "Why not? She was a genuine innocent. No one stopped her from having boyfriends." (9) Ashwin's expectation from a small town girl is indicative of this very attitude. That Vidula accepts him shows her vulnerability. She begins to conform to Ashwin's ideal of womanhood by giving up eating fish. We get only a casual reference to her life with Ashwin in America by Rohit - "She became pregnant. Miscarried. He was worried about her frail health, so wouldn't send her home. She is expecting again."



(9) We do not learn anything about the outcome of Ashwin's mission.

Like other plays of Karnad, *Wedding Album* has a complex blending of themes and sub-themes. Along with Vidula's marriage runs the story of Rohit's marriage. Rohit is in love with a Christian girl, Isabel. The other members of the family know about it and obviously do not have any strong opinion about it. Father, as has become the case now, is no part of any family plan. Vidula has no opinion about this affair either way and Mother also does not see anything wrong in a Saraswat Brahmin boy marrying a Christian girl, if such an occasion arises. Her only comment is:

I don't see any difference between Christian girls and Hindu girls these days. Take that Vidya and Sarika. Their blouses are open right down to their navels. Boys at least button up their collars properly. (43)

It is only Hema who has an objection to this affair: "Why should you take up with a Christian girl? Aren't there nice girls in our community" (42) Hema's comment, along with other stray remarks in the play, underlines the importance that caste has in marriages in India. Marriages are still arranged in India by parents and relatives within the same caste with an eye on the worldly considerations of the suitability of the marriage. Money, material prospects and social pressure play a considerable role in marriages. Karnad has presented all these factors in the case of Rohit very effectively. Amrit Srinivasan, in her 'Foreword' to the play, remarks:

This added coercion on the boy to marry and marry right, was a civilizational ace card up Hinduism's sleeve, which sealed the heresies' fate in South India and can certainly be presumed to have done so in Karnataka, the regional location for *Wedding Album* . . . . The coaxing of men into matrimony, away from the selfish, unsocial path and the appeal to their ambition (worldly or self motivated and spiritual) is brought out in the play, couched in the language of obligation and duty, even 'mission'. (xii)

Rohit is virtually coaxed into marrying Tapasya.

Mohan and Mira Hattangadi, who are relatives of Nadkarnis, have been trying for quite some time to settle the marriage of Rohit with Tapasya, the daughter of Gopal and Vatsala Sirur, who are also their relatives. The Hattangadis have been visiting Nadkarnis from Hubli for this purpose on every Saturday for the past few months. In Mohan and Mira, Karnad has presented the type of people who have been a vital part of the Indian marriages - the match makers. Though this custom has weakened to a great extent, at least in cities, the elders of every community looked upon it as their social duty to arrange marriages of the young boys and girls of the community. They did not have any selfish motive in this task; rather they took it as a social obligation and did everything in their capacity to see that their efforts culminated in marriages. Karnad has captured this spirit brilliantly in Mohan and Mira. They kept visiting the Nadkarnis religiously on every Saturday and though they did not find any encouragement from them, they were not deterred. They even concealed the fact from Sirurs that Rohit had repeatedly told them that he was not thinking of marriage and invited them to visit Dharwad from Hyderabad in the midst of Nadkarnis' own preparations for Vidula's marriage. Rohit is outraged at this and reminds them of his repeated refusal to consider his marriage, but Mohan is unfazed and says:

This is what you have been saying, of course. But how long are you going to go on waiting? Actually I had even proposed that they should get the nuptials done at the same time as your sister's - in the same *pandal*. (34)

When Gopal asks Rohit the reason of his refusal to get married, Rohit says that he is not settled in life and is thinking of resigning his job and opening his own office. At this Mohan says that the Sirurs are quite well off and since their son is settled in America and doing quite well there whatever they possess will pass on to Tapasya. Rohit's marriage with Tapasya thus can enable him to take any risk in career that he wants to take. Mira says that he can even go abroad for training. When



an annoyed Rohit asks if they are trying to bribe him, Gopal replies:

Rohit, let's be reasonable. You, today's youth, you are Americanized. For my generation, it was the duty of the parents to ensure that their children had a comfortable life. Harmonious and comfortable. We really see no bribery there. We don't mean it. (35)

It is true that Rohit does not yield to these allurements at this stage but what Gopal tells him about his position in this case - that they have told everyone in Hyderabad that the marriage has been finalized and that Tapasya's friends have even given her a party to congratulate her - does put a pressure on him. Mohan's stand is that though Rohit had repeatedly told him that he was not ready for marriage, he had felt that there was a difference in not being ready for marriage and not being interested in that marriage proposal. So he had not conveyed to the Sirurses his unwillingness and had in fact thought it only a matter of time that Rohit would come to accept it. Even his astrologer had promised him as much - "Besides the Shastriji promised us the relationship couldn't not materialize. All the stars matched." (36) This reference to the astrologer not only adds to the subversive humour of the play but also provides a comment on the role of astrologers in Indian marriages.

A stinging comment on the whole situation comes from Vidula who accuses Rohit of not behaving honestly in this case. She asks him why he had not told them that he was in love with Isabel and intended to marry her. To Rohit's objection why he should tell them about his personal life, she says: Because if you had brought in Isabel, that scene would have ended right there. Not just today. A long time ago. I don't think you wanted it to. You were enjoying the grandstand (42)

Mohan Hattangadi's persistent efforts in making Rohit see the worldly wisdom in his marriage with Tapasya and perhaps Rohit's own lack of his total commitment to Isabel finally end in Rohit marrying Tapasya as we

know in Scene Five of the play which like Scene One takes place after three years. In this scene the dramatist exposes the moral hollowness of Rohit further when he reveals through Pratibha Khan that Rohit tried to revive clandestinely his relationship with Isabel, who has come to work with Pratibha. That he did so only after his wife had gone to visit her parents and was persisting with his invitation for dinner at his house even after Isabel's refusal clearly shows his intention.

*Wedding Album* makes observations on different aspects of the Indian marriage through two other marriages - those of Hema and Pratibha. There is just one speech in which Pratibha talks of her marriage but it speaks volumes about what marriage should really mean. She says to Rohit:

Rohit, I am forty. I am from Orissa. I came to Bangalore for reasons of my own and built up my business. Three years ago I married a man ten years my senior. A Muslim. I married him when the anti-Muslim riots were at their worst. Because he offered me affection and security. (61)

Hema's marriage presents a different facet of the Indian marriage. Fifteen years after her marriage she still nurses the grudge that her parents did not spend a befitting amount of money on her marriage, and all this when her husband is a high official in a multi-national bank and she does not have to think about money. She complains:

Big! My poor husband. He said he would be quite content with a small fire altar and seven steps round it. That's all. And he was taken at his word. Literally. If he had made a fuss, wouldn't you have given him the whole caboodle? (15)

Mother puts the whole blame on Father:

Hema, you were a witness. You saw how I pleaded with your father. I almost fell at his feet. I said our daughter and son-in-law are going abroad, let's get some jewellery made for them. But has he ever listened to me? He just snarled at me: 'Our son-in-law isn't asking for anything. So what are you making such a fuss about?' (15)



Hema's caustic response to this is "Wasn't that convenient?" (16) The whole episode shows the importance of money in Indian marriages. Not only the son-in-law but even your daughter may resent it, and continue to do so, if you have not spent - no matter how - a decent amount of money on their marriage.

*Wedding Album*, thus, captures the various nuances of the institution of marriage in contemporary middle class urban society of India. It is both serious and hilarious. While the issues dealt with are serious at the core, the treatment that they get in the play is quite hilarious. The dramatist is not condemning what he finds wrong in our society but asks us to share his bemused observation of them with him. The character of Father with his rather absent-minded observations is a never failing source of humour. That scene is particularly hilarious when Mira appeals to him to say something as Rohit is refusing to marry and he says, "What can I say? I have got a wife already." (35) The spats between Mother and Radhabai, the cook, over the use of spices in food also provide some highly entertaining moments. The description of the occasion when Radhabai came to serve food to a visiting relative wearing the same sari that the relative had gifted to Mother and Mother had given to Radhibai since she had disliked it makes us laugh along with Hema and Vidula. It is a different Karnad that we encounter in this play but we enjoy the difference.

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## Childhood Experience in *Rishi*

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Taya Zinkin (1918-2003) was a prominent English journalist and author. She wrote several books on India. She is famous for the statement she made in the 1950s: Pakistan is obsessed with India, and India is obsessed with herself. She wrote several book of reportage as well as books on Gandhi and caste. She was married to the ICS officer and author Maurice Zinkin.

The number of novels dealing with childhood experience is very limited in world literature when compared to those dealing with adult experience. The Anglo-Indian fiction is no exception to this general phenomenon. *Rishi* by Taya Zinkin belongs to the rare species of fiction dealing with the protagonist's experience of childhood. But a special thing to be remembered is that it is not part of children's literature nor is it an autobiographical picture of the narrator's childhood. On the contrary, it is a novel written by a mature author about the experiences of a child (i.e. her son) through the technique of omniscient narration.

The title of the novel *Rishi* is very misleading in that it gives an impression of an ascetic life that might have been depicted in it. But when one opens and reads through it, one finds oneself in the midst of childhood experiences of a British boy born in India just before the expiry of the colonial rule in the subcontinent. It deals with the colourful experiences of the British boy from his birth to his school-going age during which period he is made to stay in India. The novelist, Taya Zinkin, offers very beautiful insights into child psychology not only probing the mind of a child, but by depicting the child mind against the background of bicultural encounter between



Britain and India. The novel is set in colonial India. The main action of the novel happens just before the independence of India around 1946 when the British were about to leave the colonized country. The child protagonist is born to the British parents i.e. Sally and Peter Clarence, who have been living in India. Peter Clarence has been a member of Indian Civil Service of the British Administration of India. He and his wife Sally have been living in a specious house in New Delhi.

The colourful encounter between Britain and India was paradoxically marked by a love-hate relationship. Though politically they hated each other, emotionally they had cordial relationship with each other. But in the present novel, the cordial relationship between the British and the Indians is foregrounded whereas the political hatred between the two is relegated to the background. It is on account of the emotional attachment for India and Indian culture that Sally and Peter Clarence decide to christen their child as 'Rishi', which has multiple cultural connotations. India, which is a land of rishis, easily suggests the spiritual achievements of saints and yogis of the land. The Clarence couple naming their child as 'Rishi' is, obviously, indicative of their attachment, love and admiration for India and her culture. It also shows their wishful desire that their son should be another rishi or visionary. It is this cordial relationship with the colonized country that softens their political hatred for the same.

Rishi is, thus, a British boy bearing an Indian, especially Hindu name. He is made by the circumstances of his life to lead an amphibian life between two cultures i.e. British and Indian. It is against this background that he encounters the world around him through his growing consciousness. The novelist tries to delineate the child's observation of and reaction to the world. His perception of the world is partly natural and partly colonial and together it provides a very interesting experience for him. Through the depiction of the child's reaction to the

environment - including things, beings and events - the novelist reveals the working of a child's mind and provides good material for the application of child-psychology.

Rishi is born in a Delhi hospital in 1946 and is affectionately watched by the servants like old Dias and Abdul and even by the dog called 'Pish'. Rishi, the new-born baby is not conscious of anything around him. But he slowly develops the consciousness of the world after a lapse of one year after his birth. It is only then that he learns the pronunciation of 'Pish' and develops a sort of friendship with it. But by then India achieves independence on 15th August 1947, which is accompanied by communal violence among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs involving mutual stabbing and burning etc. The one-year-old child 'Rishi' is, therefore, sent to England by his mother so that he could be taken care of by his grandmother there. Rishi returns to India along with his parents two years after independence and stays in Bombay and later moves to the city of Calcutta.

Like most children, Rishi has a special liking for animals. That is why he is very friendly with the dog, 'Pish' and observes its pranks and movements with great curiosity and fellow feeling. He feels deeply saddened when the dog is gifted away to a Frenchman called Dupont by his parents before their departure to England. On his fourth birthday Sally presents him a guinea pig as a gift. Rishi enjoys playing with it. Similarly, he wants to observe the monkeys with great curiosity and admiration not realizing how troublesome they can be. Once the garden in front of Rishi's house is crowded with a large crowd of monkeys. A baby monkey picks up a burning cigarette-end and puts it into its mouth and screeches because of the pain of being burnt. Consequently, some forty or so monkeys march on the lawn to scare Sally. But Sally lifts up Rishi and rushes into the house and bangs the door. Rishi, in spite of his general admiration for monkeys, asks his mother as to why his father should not shoot them down. His mother answers him in the



negative and explains the Indian, especially Hindu cultural background according to which "monkeys are sacred in India and nobody can hurt them" (P.52).

Rishi takes a special interest in the lion-cub, which is gifted by the Government of Saurashtra to Sally. When Sally brings it home in a wooden crate, Rishi grows ecstatic about it. But when the lion-cub disturbs the peace of the family and the neighbourhood, Rishi is also scared by it. He likes the animal so much that he names it as 'Asha' after his own little girlfriend. One day when a party is going on, Rishi's friend Fardoon hits the lion-cub with a brick and is bitten by it on his knee. Consequently, the whole party is disturbed. Finally, Sally realizes her folly and sends the animal to the London zoo. Rishi enjoys watching the crows on the seaside trees although they pose a problem to the elders. When he is taken by His Highness Shivaji to the private zoo at Porbander, he enjoys watching the black bucks, hyena and tiger-cubs. Thus, Rishi, the child absorbs the experience of the external world with great wonder and curiosity.

Like most children, Rishi, enjoys watching the world around him with extraordinary curiosity and enrich his knowledge of life. The cultural contrast between England and India adds to his curiosity. For example, he goes to Chowpatti along with his parents and friends to watch the Ganapati Puja and the immersion of the idol into water. They hire a fisherman, who takes them in a boat to enable them to watch the puja. Rishi and other children, obviously, enjoy the sight whole-heartedly. Similarly, Rishi enjoys the Durga Puja and the immersion of the idol in Hoogly River when he and his friends are taken to the spot by Uncle Chattopadhyaya. He tries to understand the symbolic significance of the ritual explained by Chattopadhyaya.

The child mind is known for its innocence, which can be comic, hurting and embarrassing at different situations. Rishi exhibits a good deal of such innocence in his

encounter with people in India. For example, Mr. Khandelawalla has lost his son Farouk almost of Rishi's age. The doctors opine that Farouk must have died of cerebral malaria. The Peters feel very sorry for Khandelawalla and therefore, never refer to children or Farouk in his presence. They ask Rishi also not to be seen by Khandelawalla lest the latter should be reminded of his lost son. But in spite of the parental warning, Rishi asks Mrs. Khandelawalla about Farouk's death, not knowing how much agony that reminder would cause to the bereaved parents.

A child's mind is generally very rich in imagination and therefore, builds up an exaggerated picture of things and beings. But it is rather disappointed when reality falls short of ideals imaginatively conceived. For example, when the Peters plan to go to Ponderbur, where they are likely to meet the Maharajah Shivaji, Rishi's mind becomes alert and conceives of a grand and very impressive regal personality of the Maharajah. But he feels rather disappointed to see the un-regal appearance of the Maharajah, who is clad in blue jeans. Similarly, when Rishi is taken to the residential quarters of a forest officer called Bahadur Singh, he imagines a glorious picture of the 'thunder box' referred to by the people there. But later he is disappointed to know that it is only a commode.

Rishi, like all children, wants to extend the realm of his experience by learning new habits, especially the ones belonging not to the British, but to the Indian culture, which is inclusive of Hindu and Muslim ones. His mother Sally does not like him to learn the alien habits, innocent as he is, he is very eager to learn them not only for the pleasure of it, but for achieving close companionship with his friends. His innocent mind, which tries to see the unity of humanity, does not discriminate between the so-called superior culture and the inferior one or between the colonizer and the colonized. Rishi, for example, has developed a liking for the typically Indian food items like *chappatis*, *chana* and chillies. The servants in Clarence's



house know that such habits are not approved by the British parents. One day Hari confidentially advises Abdul not to spoil Rishi with Indian food and eatables like *chappatis* and chilies lest his parents should dislike it. But Abdul does not have the heart to displease Rishi whenever the latter requests the former for *chappatis* and chilies. When Rishi goes to Bahadur Singh's house along with his parents, he faces the problem of cultural difference. When he has to have his food with Radha, the eldest daughter of Bahadur Singh, he cannot identify the food items like *poori* and curds etc. He tries to imitate little Radha by eating with his fingers but miserably fails to do so. Radha, therefore, arranges to get a spoon for him. Rishi feels shy of not being able to eat with his fingers. He likes the curd immensely as it tastes like yogurt. A little later he learns how to eat with his fingers and drink water without touching the rim of the glass. Similarly, he wants to extend the frontiers of his experience by tasting new drinks. When Rishi's host Bahadur Singh asks him if he would like to taste *nira*, he does not know its meaning, but after learning its meaning he wants to taste it. Bahadur Singh, therefore, orders the *mali* to climb up the Palmyra tree and get some *nira* in an earthen pot. Rishi, thus, tastes *nira* and finds it better than cider as it is sweeter than the latter.

Rishi feels so much attracted to the Oriental culture that he wants to practise some of the Hindu rites, but alas! he cannot do so as he is not born as a Hindu. One day Sally, being a journalist, and a personal friend of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel attends the funeral of a great leader and watches the public burning of his body on the pyre. She does not wish to describe that scene to Rishi. But when he hears the description of the same from Hari, he feels sorry for not being a Hindu to light the funeral pyre of his father. Here, the childlike habit of imitation is intensified by the colonial encounter and bi-cultural or even multicultural situation. Rishi has heard from his mother how the Parsis throw their dead on the

Tower of Silence. Likewise, he has heard about the Hindu belief in the transmigration of soul. But his childlike mind makes him believe not in the philosophical or symbolic truth of such beliefs and practices, but in the empirical or literal veracity of the same. He, for example, wants to experiment with funerals. He has a toy monkey (called Coco brought from England) with which he wants to experiment the funeral practices of different cultures. First, he tries the Muslim practice. He, with his friends, wraps the toy-monkey in a towel and buries it under the nursery carpet. Then he tries the Parsi method by keeping the toy-monkey on the window-sill and waits for crows to come as vultures to devour the dead body of the monkey. But the crows refuse to do so. Then he tries the Hindu practice by keeping the toy-monkey on a few bits of twigs and burns it. He waits to watch if the soul of the monkey leaves the body. But Abdul and Hari get the smell and rush in there to extinguish the fire.

On another occasion Rishi is presented a guinea pig as a gift by Sally. He likes it immensely and calls it Babar. He has heard about Hindu belief in reincarnation. But being a child, he mistakes the philosophical truth for pragmatic truth. He, therefore, wants to kill the pig for fun just to see if the pig would be reborn as a Brahmin. He does not listen to Abdul's warning against it. Sally is shocked by Rishi's experimentation with reincarnation and therefore gives away the pig to a friend of hers.

Being a child Rishi does not discriminate between native British culture and the colonial Indian (i.e. Hindu or Muslim) cultures. Sometimes he exhibits calf love when he thinks that he is in love with Nisha, the wife of Bahadur Singh. After a couple of days Rishi goes out with his father Peter and embarrasses him by asking him as to why he did not marry Nisha. Further he opines that his mummy i.e. Sally is fat and old whereas Nisha is young, slim and beautiful. Although embarrassed by Rishi's absurd question, Peter tries to convince him by



saying that he has married Sally according to his choice. Though a British boy born in India, Rishi has come to know a few details of Muslim and Hindu cultures. He, for example, knows that a Muslim can legally marry up to four wives. He, therefore, tells Abdul one day that he wants to marry two wives, one like Nisha with black eyes and black hair and another with blue eyes. This attitude of Rishi speaks of his desire to see the unity of life and his ignorance of the inalienability of cultural things, beings and behaviour. Abdul, the servant tells him that he cannot do so legally. Then Rishi says that he would become a Mussalman so that he can marry up to four wives. But Abdul convinces him that having one wife is better than having two or more wives, as it would be very difficult to lead a happy life.

Rishi is deeply interested in human bondage. He is so much attached to Abdul that he persuades the latter not to go to Nasirabad, but to stay in Bombay with them. But Abdul is firm about his decision because of his *izzat*. Tears trickle in his eyes. Rishi is sensible enough to understand Abdul's feelings and does not want to trouble him. Abdul tells Rishi that he would like to open a bicycle shop in his native place. One month after Abdul's departure, a merchant friend of Abdul with red beard comes and enquires after Rishi's well being and hands over Abdul's gifts and takes back Rishi's gift. After six months Rishi receives a letter from Abdul advising him to take care of his health. Thus, both the boys and Abdul maintain a cordial relationship with each other, uncontaminated by communal, racial or national prejudices.

Rishi, like any typical boy, wants to please and surprise his mother by engaging himself in adventures thereby proving his competence. One day he goes to the beach along with his mother. When Sally starts talking to Uma, he stealthily goes to a palm tree and climbs it. He thinks that he is alone on the tree and feels proud of himself. But he is surprised to know that another boy Balwant

Rao Yashvant Rao Chavan has already climbed the same tree much above Rishi. This simple event shows the boy's ambition to achieve something in life and the simultaneous realization of the difficulties involved in it in the midst of competition. In Freudian terms Rishi's desire to climb the tree symbolizes his ambition to rise high in life. When Chavan jumps to the ground, Rishi also climbs down the palm tree. His mother introduces him to Chavan and his sister Uma. Rishi feels rather disappointed to know that he does not have a long name like Balwant Rao and wishes to have one like that. "Rishi felt touched, and at the same time very annoyed at the thought that he had only a short silly name like Rishi, and that there was no special name by which he could tell his friends to call him. He decided immediately that he would give his children very long and important names" (P.148). Rishi's desire to have such a long name is suggestive of the boyish desire to imitate the other people without knowing the practical and cultural difficulties involved in it.

Rishi, Balwant Rao and Uma grow into thick friends, although their parents come from different backgrounds. For example, Balwant Rao and Uma's mother Sushila Chavan teaches biology in Bombay University, whereas the father Krishna Chavan has been a companion of Mahatma Gandhi. Balwant Rao is born on the Independence Day of India. Rishi and Balwant Rao dig canals and high dams for sport. Rishi is a supporter of the big projects like the Bhakra Dam whereas Balwant Rao is a supporter of small projects. "Rishi was a supporter of the big projects, like the Bhakra Dam, the highest dam in the world, which Sally had described to him after a visit. But Babu was in favour, like his father, of small-scale irrigation" (P.151). The ideas of the two boys suggest their natures and priorities. Whereas Rishi is an over-ambitious boy, Babu happens to be a contented boy. Whereas Rishi is idealistic and far-sighted, Babu happens to be practical and shortsighted. When the two



boys quarrel with each other on account of their ideological differences, Rishi's mother convinces him that what India needs is both the big and the small projects. "But darling, you are both right. India needs the Bhakra Dam, but it also needs a well in every village. For how are people to live without water?" (P.152) Convinced by the mother's answer and guided by her, Rishi renews his friendship with Babu (or Balwant Rao). Rishi's behaviour illustrates the juvenile psychology in that boys may quarrel with each other as quickly as they can be reconciled to each other. Thus, quarreling and chumming up go on alternating in juvenile life, which is marked by the absence of deep-seated malice or hatred.

The juvenile friendship between Rishi and Balwant Rao is characterized by a quest for the knowledge of alien cultures and overcoming the cultural differences in order to achieve the unity of life. For example, when Balwant Rao is sitting in the Buddha posture, he asks Rishi, "When you grow up and become an Englishman, will you remember me?" (P.153) Then replies instantly, "Don't be silly. I shall never be an Englishman. I will always live in India near Mummy and Daddy and near you and Uma. And when I am old, say twelve, I will marry Uma and you will become my brother-in-law, my *sala*" (P.153). Rishi's answer indicates his juvenile attachment for India and Indians and his desire for human bondage. Babu wants to clarify his doubts further, "Seriously, you are not going to become one of those Sahebs, who think that God was an Englishman, and that the Devil black?" (P.153) Rishi tries to convince him about the unity of life cutting across the cultural differences. He says, "When people say God is English they only mean the word God. You have other names for God. And anyway, who knows what colour the Devil is" (P.153). Even as a boy of seven, Rishi wants to understand the universality of life behind the apparent differences between the Christian and the Hindu cultures. Then both the boys play the game of the names of God.

Though born in India, Rishi, a typical British boy, exhibits the rational approach to life and questions the Hindu myths when they are not convincingly explained to him. For example, when Ramnath, a Hindu scholar and a family friend narrates the story of Lord Shiva, Parvati and Ganapati, Rishi embarrasses Ramnath by his cross-questioning, "But Shiva cannot be a real god, for a real god knows everything and Shiva did not know that Ganesh was his son" (P.155). Ramnath is taken aback by Rishi's logical argument. Rishi concludes that Shiva cannot be God as God is perfect. Ramnath finally yields to him by saying, "Yes, of course, that is so, but perhaps Shiva is an imperfect incarnation" (P.156). This answer seems to satisfy Rishi, who is quite used to the idea of incarnation and reincarnation. Rishi's curiosity to know the Hindu god is quite appreciable. When he asks his mother why Ganapati has an elephant head and rides a mouse, Sally clearly confesses her ignorance about it. Anyway Rishi, Uma, Hari and Sally go to Chowpatti sands and watch the Ganapati Puja with great curiosity.

Rishi enjoys watching some of the typical Indian entertainment performances. Once Sally pays some money to the gypsies and arranges a show for the children. In the show, the bear, Balu defeats the gypsy leader, walks on its hind legs and plays the accordion. The children enjoy the sight immensely. When Sally's encouragement to street performers is publicized widely, beggars and all kinds of artists begin to flock to her house. Once Rishi and his friends watch a play in which a four-year-old boy stands on a bamboo pole balanced on the forehead of a man. Rishi is so sensitive that far from being thrilled by the sight, he feels sorry for the poverty of India, which compels people to indulge in such risky jobs. He says, "There should be a law to stop things like that" (P.160). Rishi and his friends like Babu and Uma also feel very sad. "For a whole hour the thought that India was as poor as that, made them very unhappy and they felt



aimless and unable to play, haunted by the thought that little children could be made to climb a twenty foot-long pole, not for fun but just to get something to eat" (P.161). Rishi not merely feels sorry for the poverty of India, but even wants to help improve the conditions therein. "It does not matter, you know, I'll live in India just the same, all my life. And perhaps I can invent something, which will make things better, like atomic food. After all I was born here, so I am an Indian too, not quite, of course, but in a way" (P.161).

Rishi's desire to marry Uma is quite interesting. Although Uma dreams of marrying a prince charming like Rishi and going to England, Rishi does not wish to go to England as he wants to stay in India. But paradoxically enough, he does not know the meaning of arranged marriage, which involves the matching of horoscopes, the mediation of priests, the parental approval, settlement of dowry and the unfamiliarity of bride and groom until the wedding day. Rishi tries to understand the meaning of arranged marriages in India. After one year, there is a heavy rain and flood in Bombay. Uma and Rishi watch it with great curiosity. As a Christian boy, Rishi remembers the Biblical Flood and as a typical child with high ambition, wants to construct a Noah's arch.

Boys are normally gregarious and do not like loneliness. Rishi, who is the only son to his parents, feels very lonely and wants to have a companion. "Mummy, why don't you adopt a brother for me? There are so many little children, who could be happy to come to a good home. You could easily choose one to be my brother. He could ride my motorcar and I would let him play with my mini bricks. And I would defend him against bullies, and I would not be bossy with him. Please, oh please, be a sport and adopt me a brother. Someone like Babu" (P.165). His desire for a companion and playmate has a certain effect on his mother, who, therefore, arranges for Rishi and Chavan children living with each

other for alternate weeks.

Like all children, Rishi enjoys picnics; sight-seeing and watching the birds, beasts and insects. When the two families of Clarences and Chavans go for a three-day picnic, the two boys enjoy the experience immensely. They go to the Halfkine Institute, where cobras are kept and their venom is collected for anti-venens. They are shown microbes and germs under a microscope. On the way the children observe people fishing to honour their ancestors, as it happens to be the seventh day of Chand. Then they go to the Rocky Pool and watch the cascades at midnight and antelopes, a cobra, a wild boar, hares, monkeys and a panther thereby enjoying the experience immensely.

Rishi is now seven-and-a-half year old. His parents have decided to send him back to England to join the boarding school. Before that Sally wants to shorten the duration of waiting and therefore takes Rishi to Mahabaleshwar in the high hills above Poona. Rishi enjoys riding a pony everyday for a fortnight there. Like many children, he is quite mischievous, sometimes dangerously so. One day they go for a picnic, where something terrible happens. When Sally roasts a marsh mellow on a stove and is about to watch a pheasant, Rishi puts twig into the fire. Consequently, the forest catches fire. They are all terrified, but fortunately the fire stops after some time. Sally's toes are blistered and her hair singed. Now Rishi realizes the enormity of his folly. "Rishi horrified by the magnitude of his misdeed, stood on the main road, howling with terror; and even after merciful change in the wind put an end to the forest fire and sent it back on its own ashes, he went on crying and howling" (P.186). Rishi's father, Peter is severely warned by the forest authorities against setting fire to the forest. Thus Rishi's innocent mischief has dangerous consequences for everybody.

Though Rishi declares time and again that he wants to be an Indian, he has to go back to England for his



education, as per the parental plan. They pack up his belongings. Rishi has to part from his close friends like Uma and Babu. Uma and Babu present him with parting gifts. Hari garlands him at the airport. Rishi is really moved by the situation and gets tears in his eyes. Sally also controls her tears, cheers him up and asks him to take his school life seriously. Rishi is the only unaccompanied child on the plane. His photograph is taken before the plane takes off. Next day there is a reference to Rishi in the local newspaper.

In this novel, Taya Zinkin has offered a very perceptive and delicate picture of the childhood experiences of Rishi through the omniscient narration. She has portrayed different aspects of children's experience like curiosity, wonder, sympathy, ambition, dreaming, mischievousness etc., against the backdrop of colonial situation and cultural differences between Hinduism and Christianity. Rishi's identification with India and Indians is untainted by political hatred. The Indians believe that children are like gods because of their innocence and purity of mind. Rishi happens to be such a godlike child, whose mind knows no barriers or race or religion, caste or creed as his heart experiences the unity of human life at every moment. Ruskin Bond is, perhaps, the only Indian English writer, who can be compared with Taya Zinkin in the delicate portrayal of children's experience.

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## Music from the Margin: Trends in Contemporary Indian English Poetry

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Indian English Poetry is passing through a phase of transition in which the vanguards of New Poetry: Nissim Ezekiel, P.Lal, Kamala Das, Shiv K. Kumar, Jayant Mahapatra and others have virtually left the scene for the next generation poets to carry forward the tradition. These poets were/ are rooted in India, lived and worked in India. Hence, they could relate themselves to the age old tradition of *Kavya*, myth, legend, 'proud peasantry', as well as the traumatic experiences of an emerging nation and made it their credo to assiduously evolve a body of literature in conformity with their manifesto. Towards the end of the century we find a major shift taking place. People from affluent class went abroad for education and for greener pasture and settled over there in greater number. This, in turn, created a dominant body of Diaspora literature as they were better placed academically and commercially in comparison to native poets or writers and they had something exotic to offer to Indian readers. The theme of rootlessness, alienation, nostalgia, cultural clash were new to us and we looked at them with a sense of awe and admiration. However, the poets who practised poetry from different places of India both from Metros and from small towns continued doing so and are still relentlessly striving despite limited resources and cold shouldering by leading critics, commercial publication houses and academia. As R. K Singh writes, " Quite a number of contemporary Indian English poets, now in their 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s with a 20<sup>th</sup> century consciousness, have learnt to live with a world in upheaval, following the globalization of communication, Information Technology revolution and world wide web culture. They



have been trying to reach out to a larger audience and creating their identities under many different appearances." (Singh, Blurb). The present paper examines select poets from the margin to prove that Indian English Poetry is not dead after Mahapatra, Shiv K Kumar and Daruwalla, rather thriving, expanding in ambit and exploring new avenues and experiences in the fast changing world. This would also bring out the promises and problems of the contemporary poetry in English. The poets included in this study are, Sumirasko, Harin Kumari Majithia, Saba Mahmood Bashir, Vijay Goel, Esther Syiem, Reshma Aquil, K.S. Pal, Bhaskar Majumdar and Tom Jones. Except Sumirasko whom I know personally, I have not heard of others before and I selected eight poetry collections (one for each of the eight poets) out of a stack of more than three dozen books which have been published from Writers Workshop, Kolkata. They have been published during the period 2000 to 2011. The poets belong to different regions of India. They represent different varieties of poetry being practised in India today. The study is by no means comprehensive but certainly illustrative of the richness and diversity of Indian English poetry. If Indian English poetry is post-colonial in the sense of giving voice to the voiceless—women, subaltern, and to minorities like Jews, Christians, Kashmiris, North-eastern, it has also spread in semi-urban areas giving rise to folk and native sensibility besides the continuity of literary cosmopolitanism.

Sumirasko left this world quite early when he was barely twenty two years old and graduating in English (Hons.) from B.N College, Patna. However, by that time he could write about four thousand poems in English, some essays on world personalities like Ramkrishna and others and a sequel to Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karmazov*. None of his works were published in his life time. Some of his works were posthumously published. They are *Lotus in a Cesspool*, *Sumirasko on Ramkrishna* and *Flower of Love*. His third poetry collection *Ladder to Heaven* is

in press. *Flower of Love* published in 2011 consists of one hundred six poems in which he delves deep in his inside, spirit and God. He creates a new idiom of poetry in the contemporary age which at times reads like that of Vivekananda. Wordsworth says 'poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it is emotions recollected in tranquillity.' Sumirasko's poems make us believe that they are largely spontaneous overflow or streaming flow of nectar of wisdom, emotions and visions which he had experienced in ecstasies or in trance; and they are expressed in language that came readily to him. There is no attempt to chisel his language or craft or to redraft his poetry- for grammar sake.

What Lawernce says about his poetry is equally true here '....not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me'. So wind abides by or violates no rules. Compliance or violation is all accidental and not like Meena Alexander or other experimentalists who deliberately contort the language or take liberty with it to drive home their own philosophy of poetry and of colonial language. The only conscious choice is the alien tongue, Hindi. So what is more important in his poetry in not language, though his instinctive utterances can be studied as vitalizing speech, but the Vedantic philosophy, his identification with God, 'I am God', his realization in Bhakti Yoga, "I am you"; and its bliss.

"Ah! maiden your grace infinite  
too shining it was

Ah! your gestures immaculate  
too subtle they were

.....  
Ah! a direct insight

Ah! the third eye" ( *Flower of Love*, 2)

Like a true Vedantic he identifies himself with 'Lucy', Mr. Hyde', 'Russian Square', 'Bohemians' and with everything good or bad. 'I am you and everything/one and only being.' He muses on death:-

"Today or tomorrow the bell may toll  
yet the bell is false, I have all



they will call - 'I am dead'

My dictum will be

Illusions are they' ( *Flower of Love*, 20)

Even when he writes about science or social issues he writes from spiritual perspective. In his poem "On Crime" he hails crime;

"I can applaud crime

it brings to light a real part

more better we can appreciate

if the vehicle is art". ( *Flower of Love*, 3)

He views monism in the act of sex that transcends, though for a moment, into a sort of salvation. He seems to be in search of an oasis in this world of wanton desert and has always been haunted by 'the cactus plant with spikes' piercing his soul. Perhaps, his poetry is the outcome of the lingering pain and there comes a stage in his life when he actually feels that his 'play is done' and voluntarily returns his life - ticket to God in the prime of his youth. His poem 'Who is Normal' reflects on his personal disillusionment, 'The boy that can't Live in this black world'.

I genuinely feel touched by his prolific output of poetry of entirely a different nature in which he speaks more like a soul in trance than like a poet of contemporary age.

Harin K. Majithia is both a painter and bilingual poet writing in Hindi and English. She prides herself on being 'a student of the great bard of Avon' and in teaching Shakespeare for about three decades. Obviously her choicest form of poetry is sonnet. I chanced upon her fifth poetry collection *Sonnets Sonorous* (2001). It consists of twenty five sonnets that sing of human fears and follies which are universal and generic in nature rather than lyrical response to a moving moment in one's life. She draws on Shakespeare in punching the poetic vision of the sonnet in the concluding couplet: Shallow waters never run deep, / And the strong never ever creep. (On This Maze, 20) Or O Pilgrim, move not with a face so grim, / After all the lamp afar is not so dim. (To A Pilgrim, 11)

The similarity ends here. Her Sonnets do not conform to the metrical structure of Shakespearean sonnet; only stanza division is the same. But it has become a trend in which conformity to the traditional structure of a poetic form is not held necessary. Even celebrated poets like Daruwalla, Mahapatra or Mehrotra do not follow Shakespearean or Petrarchan model of sonnet. The dominant trend in modern poetry is what Ezekiel called voicing of 'contemporary Indian culture' or we can say our contemporary concerns. But hers is not contemporary; it transcends time and has universal appeal. In her Preface she makes her poetic credo clear, "...poetry I believe is after all beyond bondage. It flows like a brook, rushing, gushing ahead in its own frenzy, flowing over the pebbles, running smooth or disturbed at times but always straight from the heart." (7)

Saba Mahmood Bashir is a young female voice from Kashmir. Currently she is working as a consultant for the YWCA of India. *Memory Past* is her debut poetry collection in which she amply displays her ability to explore the victim and female psyche in terse and poignant language and maintains stringent economy of words: Incisions go deep/ From trunk to root/ The snake only knowing/The deep dark way.

The bruised self of the valley gripped with paranoia stares in the eyes of the readers silently:

Deadening silence scares.

Yet the tongue flares.

Depth of the little eyes

Also scares

The sigh

says it all.

Words not needed.

And he says it all.

A pasted smile

I promise myself

To save from silence.

The images of 'deserted roads', 'snake', 'spider', 'dazing flares', 'little cobwebs' 'withering leaf', 'lurking

(In Waiting-III 36)



tail', 'fire and ice' palpably reflect on the shocking reality of Kashmir and echoes the anguish, despair, frustration and hopes of its people who have witnessed "Images lost in labyrinth-/ Same as everywhere. / Betraying" (23). "Hamlet, Prufrock and Me" is a truly representative poem of the place, people and their dilemma of to be or not to be:

Hamlet, Prufrock and Me!

Vacillation, indecision, the divided self.

One, To be or not to be.

Next, wondering, Do I dare and Do I dare

Final, To live....

That's it....

Hamlet, Prufrock and Me! (43)

Vijay Goel is another female voice with prolific output in Hindi and English. She belongs to Punjab and is a painter, poet and short story writer. It is reported that she has brought out nine books and they have large circulation. Eight solo exhibitions of her paintings have been held besides participating in other national/international exhibitions. I have taken up her third poetry collection *Sound of Solitude* which was published in 1997 and by the year 2000 its third edition came out. In her poems she creates small stories which she has personally lived. She writes: Let us sing the song/that is our own/the notes churn the life./Let mind be just a flower/for once let us go wild. (50)

It is a common trait in her poetry to question the social, religious and political divisions in the society by narrating an incident in which the climax shows how false and pseudo are the dividing lines. In "Mid-Air Collision" we see how meaningless are the 'narrow domestic walls':

His son had touched his feet

In the vicinity of all, proud he was

One by one they entered the capsule

Together they all flew, breathing the same air

Together they all panicked clutching each other

Together they fell, into a heap of garbage

.....

The cross she wore  
 Were just a part of the heap  
 Which formed just one religion  
 One caste (21)

Usually her poems end with punch lines that leave us brooding or gaping particularly when we see how established poets like 'Daruwalla's endings can be too pat' and 'Hoskote's endings are often chaotic' (King, 333). "Each time I wish to/Return to myself/I reach you," (27) Or "He laughed till tears streamed down his face/He muttered: The mad don't have Gods and castes." (24). We can see how deceptive is her simplicity and how distinct is her Muse.

Bhaskar Majumdar, whose mother belongs to the family of Tagores, has imbibed his poetic gift. Though he pursued a different line, he wrote poetry and short stories which regularly appeared in American journals. He works in an international Bank in the USA. *Dancing with the Flow of Time* (2006) is his first publication in India and presents a positive aspect of life or one can say celebration of life, nature and a diasporic response to his motherland: "My mind craves for a glimpse of you/Through crevasse, valleys, rock face, forests/ show me, show me the way/ (Kanchenjunga 10). The poet seeks guidance from his motherland while living in a foreign land. He appears as a worshipper of Nature like Wordsworth and identifies himself with her:

My tired feet I gently rest  
 I sit amidst rolling green gardens of tea  
 Gazing, wondering on path to trek  
 In a flash I know, as I merge with your flow  
 The choice that I have to make (12)

He often seeks solace in nature as we find in the poems like "The Otters Tekkadi", "Dusk at Simms Park", "Pilgrims of The Sky", "Monsoon Madness" and at times in wilderness as in "Wild Girl". They become the poem of eternity and she rolls in the cyclic course of time to seek universal harmony with the help of images and symbols drawn from different regions:



I walk through the shifting sands of time  
Past the ancient sphinx, contemplating  
The mysteries of the Nile  
A Mona Lisa smile

.....

I wander through the temples and tombs  
Once buried in the sands of an ancient land"

(Orion, 109)

Some of his poems are an Indian's response to his maiden encounter to glitter of foreign land like "Finest drawing room of Europe/ A ceaseless parade of people, pigeons/ and dueling café orchestras of Florian and Quadri/" (21). He makes skillful variation in stanza, forms and rhythm of poetry. In "Cosmic Man" he uses couplet;

"Scratching

E= mc square on toilet paper" ( 122)

"Princess" and "Epilogue" are Haiku type poems:

"He searched in vain/For the snow leopard in winter/  
He found himself" (125). There are other experiments with the language of poetry and there is an attempt to harmonize existential and eternal wisdom that lend a rich texture to it. His poetry on the whole merits attention.

K.S Pal belongs to teaching faculty in the Dept of English, DAV College, Jalandhar. *Descending Dark Stairs* (2007) is his second poetry collection after *The Broken Beat* (1998). He writes poetry in the conventional ironic mode on contemporary subjects/ experiences of fear, friendship, tsunami, corruption, love, betrayal etc. The sense of loss looms large on his poetry which has been an important trend in modern poetry and it is still continuing only the matter and manner of loss vary:

Much is lost in the fog of years  
of a long, dreary winter,  
except a few leftover images:  
the early abode of the child,  
a simple father, and his little town,  
a Gurdwara of historic renown.

(Of Leftovers, 13)

Another example of contemporary experience that

gushes forth as if abruptly in this crisply composition  
in monosyllabic words and swift rhythm:

Don't tell me  
what is truth.  
every loafer  
and scoundrel  
has his truth  
even Lord Osama  
and King Bush(12)

One marvels at quotable poetic expressions like:  
When leaves of memories begin to grey,  
the hold on life loosens on the way. (Memories, 17)

Or

Like a woodpecker someone is repeatedly  
knocking at my tightly closed door,  
perhaps with some message from the shore.

(Growing Old 19)

We can see how tightly structured the poem is that  
expresses deeper truth of changing world and response  
of the old generation through succinct images of  
'woodpecker', 'closed door' and 'octopus past'.

Reshma Aquil, a professor in the Dept. of English,  
the University of Allahabad seems to me a strong  
contender for a place in the contemporary Indian English  
Poetry with her poetry collections *Sleeping Wind*  
(Singapore: Ethos Books, 2001) *The Unblending* (2003). Here  
the *The Unblending* is taken up for sample evaluation. It  
is again representative of contemporary Indian culture  
in an ironic mode. In the title poem the irony works  
through 'cat instinct' to expose cultural incongruities of  
the present day life in an unconventional form:

When Rick's cat vanished into freedom as cats do  
It bound him to the search of an absence  
Whose pervading presence  
So flipped his tight schedule  
That Rick left for a brief holiday  
For the cat  
The situation was culturally askew;  
Rick had moved into an apartment



Of inaccessible verticality

Tenth floor in air (The Unblending 10)

Here the recurrent use of the image of 'cat' works as an objective correlative for the cat culture in men today. Here the personal 'Rick's cat' and the common 'cats' are put side by side to see the cultural dislocation:

So that even if the cat

Wanted to return as cats inevitably do

The elevator would have aired

All sense instincts

Of sound and smell (The Unblending -10)

Her poems are suggestive, reflective and are characterized by the economy of words, understatement, short and crisp expressions with an unerring instinct for the underlying and natural rhythms of English syntax.

The river twinkles through

The dignity of the fisherman's poverty

The wisdom behind his despair;

With his oils barely enough

To see his wick burning through the night

He cannot choke it through pipes, cables, chemicals;

He knows the need to breathe and

Needs what lives in it (Fisherman 28)

See how she communicates the feeling of low ebb of bankruptcy through falling rhythm with pauses in a well crafted poem "Bankrupt":

Having touched my darkness

Into which a painter dips his brush

And the loss from where a poet sings

Stay with me

Like a ray

Like the air

Blaze

My carbon into flame. ( 35)

Esther Syiem is again a faculty member working at NEHU, Shillong. Hers is the voice of subaltern being a woman and being from a North-East state which harbours a sense of alienation within the country as in her poem "Whose is it anyway?"

The claim for their land  
 was made by those, who  
 promised to divest them  
 of the liabilities  
 that go hand in hand with  
 their proximity to the earth,  
 to the steamy scent of their swamps,  
 to the crumbling dirt in their fists,  
 to the weeds that grow unheeded in their soils  
 and translucent (71)

She gives voice to the bleeding soil and nightmarish  
 life of her people and reminds us of Sharmila Erom's  
 fight for freedom and justice in Manipur:

I am haunted  
 by a vision of despair  
 in dreams

.....  
 We wait for rain  
 to wash us clean.  
 but, we are caught  
 in a cesspool  
 of doubt-  
 waiting faithless-  
 till the end of time.  
 What is it that eludes  
 even the best of us

in this day-time of blood-letting  
 and nighttime of unease?(Vignettes Form the Edge 69)

Her poems of nostalgic recollection and recreation of  
 North-Eastern myths and legend and songs of folk  
 tradition are collectively an asset for Indian English poetry.  
 She deserves our kudos for redeeming what she calls the  
 lost oral script for example in poems like "The Tale of  
 the Lost Script", "All about U Pyrthat", "Ka Tiew  
 Lalyngi Pepshad" (The Flower that Missed the Dance)  
 "Rah Kla", "U Lymboit U Lymbiang", "Noh Ka Likai".  
 In "The Tale of the Lost Script" she recreates the story  
 of the messenger who was sent to receive the script from  
 God. On his way back to earth he was caught in a deluge  
 and to protect the script he swallowed the script in his



mouth. It remained in 'the bowels of the ancestor' and what is used as Roman script was crafted by moral cunning and later adapted to the Khasi language. The other recipient according to the local myth was the plainsman who successfully brought the script back by keeping it safe within his knotted ponytail. Similar other mythical/folk stories are recreated and in the process she justifiably uses vernacular words with their footnotes.

This brief perusal of nine poetry collections show a kaleidoscopic picture of Indian English poetry which has gained a solid ground and mushrooming growth over the years. They are hygienic and non-hygienic and it is a universal fact that the best or even the good of them remain the few. English poetry in India has never been so wide spread, so expressive of the age, so divergent in trends and techniques, so free from the British hegemony or from the common trend of India shining or India bashing and yet so representative of India- be it Diaspora, cosmopolitan or rural. Bruce King rightly concludes with a positive note: "There are more such poems and poets around than there were a few decades ago in India.... By now to argue about the appropriateness of English language poetry in India is like arguing whether monsoons are Indian. ( King 354)

Poets are using latest technology to reach out the wider audience. Consequently several online journals and publications have come up and they are regularly published in India and abroad. There are different streams of poetry running effulgent or subdued. We witness the conscious effort to revive the old structured verse forms in H. Tulsi and her ilk's, unconventional haiku being practiced by R. K. Singh and others, philosophical, spiritual or what is called Romantic Indian poetry being practiced by Charusheel Singh in lyrical and narrative modes or strong regional voice in Esther Syiem, Saba Mahmood Bashir or seer's poetry in Sumirasko besides the continuity of the legacy of modern poetry in scores of poets making it collectively a post modern experience in which the

centre is lost and several centres have emerged or emerging.

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## The Nature and Scope of Literary Research

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The task of understanding a literary text from an earlier generation as it was initially presented is formidable. We cannot, on the basis of the evidence available reconstruct completely any period in the past, and our understanding will always be impeded to a certain extent by the conventions of our own times, which change continuously, but from which no one can escape entirely. But this fact should act as a stimulus rather than as a deterrent, since it means that there will always be something more to be done. The frontiers before us have no limit. ... If literary studies are divorced from the larger concerns of cultural history they will eventually wither away. (D. W. Robertson Jr., "Some Observations on Method in Literary Studies")<sup>1</sup>

Drawing upon Hillway's three types of research, this paper seeks to take a look at the nature and scope of literary research. It focuses on early works on the subject: Altick (1950, 1963), Sanders (1951), and Bateson (1972) - to demonstrate how some facts lying there can be uncovered through a slightly different reading of these texts. It highlights the similarities that make literary criticism, literary research, and literary scholarship synonymous, if not the same. It ends by mentioning briefly the approaches and methods of literary research.

The epigraph above encapsulates effectively the enormity of the task undertaken by a researcher. It seeks to assure us that 'the frontiers before us have no limit,' with the word *frontiers* in this context meaning the boundless 'limits of attainment or knowledge in a subject'. Hillway (1964)<sup>2</sup> identifies three types of research in the main: (1) fact-finding, (2) critical interpretation, and (3) complete research. The primary function of any research

exercise is to help identify facts, i.e., things that are known to exist or to be true and form a part of verified information. Fact-finding aims at helping lay a strong foundation for further work, and is in evidence in the writing of biographies or of bibliographies. Evaluative biographies of writers are complete and reliable when they include the contributions of these writers to literary studies. Similarly, annotated bibliographies are comprehensive and trustworthy only when they contain explanatory notes meant to guide future researchers on what to read and why.

The essence of a critical interpretation lies in analysis and classification of perceptive readings on a work/s and a logically argued stand taken on their relative strengths and weaknesses of these perceptions, besides the assessment the researcher in question has to offer on this work/s. Critical interpretation is characterised by three features in the main with regard to the arguments: (a) agreement on the known facts and principles governing the area of enquiry; (b) clear, reasonable and logical arguments leading to verifiable conclusions marked for being honest and meticulous for a reader to accept; and (c) rational estimation on the part of the researcher supported by accepted facts and principles.

Complete research, a term Hillway himself used perhaps for want of a better option, combines in itself both fact-finding and reasoning. Neither fact-finding nor critical interpretation in itself leads to the solution of any problem. One needs complete research consisting of (i) a problem to be solved; (ii) a body of strong evidence composed of irrefutable facts and expert opinions; (iii) analysis of that body of evidence vis-à-vis the problem; (iv) that body of evidence organized logically to find a solution/set of solutions to the problem in hand; and (v) a definite conclusion or a set of conclusions drawn for solving the problem.

Criticism is understood in literary studies as the act of investigating, surveying or reviewing literary, artistic,



etc works for making a detailed critical examination of elements or structure of creative works. Research, when used in literary studies, means a systematic investigation and study of materials, sources, etc in order to establish facts, analysis and interpretation of literary texts to arrive at conclusions. The term scholarship is considered to be academic achievement of a high level attained through persistent and conscientious effort. It has a distinctive place in literary studies wherein it is treated as 'a highly specialized and difficult task' entailing extensive investigation into historical facts, correction of erroneous facts, editing of texts, textual analysis and criticism.

This paper proposes to examine the nature and scope of literary research by arguing that literary criticism, literary research, and literary scholarship belong to a distinct class of words grouped under 'academic' or 'scholarly' in an attempt to show how these are closely interrelated and interdependent. However, tentative these proposals may come to be considered, our objective is to set a debate on the nature and scope of literary research in motion.

### **Literary Research**

Early works on literary research, for instance, Altick's *The Scholar Adventurers* (1950)<sup>3</sup>, Sanders in *An Introduction to Research in English Literary History* (1951)<sup>4</sup>, Altick's *The Art of Literary Research* (1963)<sup>5</sup>, and Bateson's *The Scholar-Critic: An Introduction to Literary Research* (1972)<sup>6</sup>, are original and scholarly contributions on the subject. A student getting initiated into literary research would experience a deep sense of disappointment on discovering that these few gems seek to define *literary research* implicitly rather than explicitly since he/she is just a beginner. He/she would find a precise definition of the term eluding him/her without realising that it lies there and needs to be uncovered.

He/she would be at a loss to understand Altick's use of 'literary researcher' or 'literary scholar' being engaged

in a serious exercise but would fail to grasp the essence of the definition of literary research or literary scholarship embedded in these words. The confusion becomes greater when he/she has to understand the implication of 'Literary research is frequently dull and laborious beyond description...' (Altick 1950, p.3) since he/she would find the focus only on the experience of doing literary research. Or, the import of '...literary research' needs to be 'learned by doing, not by reading or listening' and that all that any learned and good 'teacher and scholar' can do is to suggest 'methods of procedure and criticizing results achieved' (Sanders 1951, p.277) which he/she finds throws light on the manner in which a researcher must learn the art literary research. Or, the core of 'Literary research ... is devoted ... to the enlightenment of criticism...' (Altick 1963, p.6) that lays stress merely on a part of an activity called literary research.

Or, the message contained in 'the central activity' involved in 'literary research' presupposes 'interpretation' and this necessitates at the most the description of 'a series or sequence of psychological experiences' involving the author, the work, and the reader (Bateson, 1972, pp.101-102) which, to him/her, points out to 'interpretation' as the key element in the process of literary research. The point we are trying hard to make is that a 'definition' as a freshly-inducted researcher hopes to find in it is missing. All that these books seem to him/her to give him a definition that he/she must uncover to understand the implication of what he/she seeks to do as a researcher investigating into literary art.

Far from trying to be critical of the massive effort these scholars put in to help us make sense of things, we have cited from their works, to applaud them. For, they were writing in times when, although scholarship was valued, scholars had to go through a rigor of the kind unknown today, fighting hard against circumstances in a valiant attempt to uncover the truth and to delineate for us the contours of their respective discipline or an



area within it. We need to appreciate the fact that these pioneers in the field did not have access to the variety of material that a student or scholar engaged in literary research has today. Be that as it may, thanks to their ground-breaking work, we know where to begin and how. We know the extent to which we can shed more light on the discipline or the area in the discipline concerned.

Literary criticism, literary research, and literary scholarship belong to a distinct class of words grouped under 'academic' or 'scholarly' and are closely interrelated and interdependent. Support for this is available in two of the works of Richard D Altick and F W Bateson. Bateson rejects as a mistake the notion that 'literary criticism' and 'literary scholarship' are antithetical and seeks to drive home the fact that they are 'complementary, indispensable, and honourable aspects of a single discipline.'

### Meaning and Origins

Literary research is a phrasal formation composed of two terms 'literary' and 'research' wherein 'literary' is used as a 'qualifier' for 'research'. It is an established research type that came into existence when literary studies grew in volume. Gumbrecht (1998) attributes this growth in the 'academic discipline of literary studies' to its intense 'fascination' with its 'own history' in the decade of 1980s and 1990s. The growing wave of publications from Europe and North America 'has opened up one of the liveliest new fields of research for scholars specializing in the different national traditions of literature.'<sup>7</sup>

A close reading of the first three pages of Altick's scholarly introduction to *The Scholar Adventurers* ('The Unsung Scholar') shows that the definition of 'literary research' lies obscure under the discussion on the literary researcher and the scholarship.<sup>8</sup> The key to discovering it is in replacing the terms 'literary researcher' with 'literary research'. The results, as we discovered for ourselves, are wonderful, and we take liberty to present these here. Lest we be accused of any act of plagiarism,

we need to emphasise that while retaining the portions as they stand in the book, we have edited and reworded it, with profound apologies to Altick's noble soul, what he had written 62 years ago.

Literary research is on the surface of it attractive, interesting and vividly striking among all the tasks of modern scholarship. It deals with human material and is primarily concerned with man as the creator of literary art. It is distinct from the social sciences and psychology, even if it seems to demonstrate an overlap of interest with them. It uses history to understand fully the various intellectual, social, and artistic milieus that provide the raw materials of experience, and explore the so-called baffling catalytic process called the imagination used to create a literary work. It could use psychological techniques to probe into the private temperament, the motivations, and the prejudices of a poet, no matter how long ago he/she may have lived. It could use both history and psychology to explore the inner soul of a man as well as the contemporary circumstance which combine to make a literary work what it is. Thus, it tends to become a historical account of man in his imaginative-intellectual capacity.

It may need to deal with the puzzling contradictions, concealments, and inexplicable silences in literary history of a particular period or work. It aims at seeking to repair, if not undo, the damage done due to falsifications, distortions, or destruction of the record located in literary history or biography. It requires a sharp sense of discovery and perseverance, on the part of the researcher who may have to factor in and contend with accidents of fate, human error, or even possible destruction of literary works or historical records of a given period. It may need to address and solve the intricate mystique using a whole range of methods available. That is how it may be both monotonous and challenging at the same time.

The primary focus of literary studies and literary research in their earlier manifestations was for the most



part on the study of language, especially in its historical and comparative aspects under a broad category called philology, which continues to be taught and researched on even today in some of the finest universities in the United States of America. This fascination with those aspects began to give literary research a distinct shape and identity as a serious type of research. There were forays made into biography and editing due to this preoccupation with linguistic and literary history.

A student enrolling for literary research was expected to have a good grounding in the European as well as world classics besides a few disciplines within social sciences such as philosophy, logic and rhetoric, anthropology, aesthetics, political history in addition to literary history, sociology, psychology, economics and so on, following the Western model of liberal arts.

Literary research has always been qualitative in nature until recently and, with the inauguration of the literary studies<sup>9</sup> in the Digital Humanities as it were, it has only now partially moved into the realm of quantitative research. It is qualitative because it involves the exploration of 'qualities' or features that define an approach used, a literary author or authors studied, literary texts explored, literary sources identified and classified, historical facts and fictional accounts ascertained and distinguished, literary genre/s explored, and so on.

Qualitative research of this kind relies heavily on the library as a major resource and, thus, it is often considered to be devoid of any value. This may also be attributed to a post-positivistic research paradigm it adopts or because it is considered to be quite subjective sharply in contrast with scientific research that is objective in nature. This subjective element is inevitable and quite often even unavoidable largely due to the fact that literary research explores the psyche, emotions, attitudes, dispositions etc which symbolize a character, work, writer etc. and define behaviour patterns, style etc.

Blaikie (1993) takes the post-positivistic research

paradigm<sup>10</sup> to be interchangeable with an interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm. An interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm lays emphasis on the twin acts of interpretation, wherein a researcher seeks to discover and bring out the meaning of a given creative work; and construction, i.e., explanation and interpreted rearrangement of what is so discovered and interpreted to arrive at the meaning of the subject under study.

The interpretivist methodology, which is built around a belief that 'there are multiple realities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003),<sup>11</sup> seeks to arrive at the meaning of the subject under study by uncovering and comprehending 'these meanings and the contextual factors that influence, determine and affect the interpretations' reached by any individual researcher, by relying primarily on their 'individual experience, memories and expectations'.

The researcher draws upon his/her 'academic experience' within the constraints imposed by his/her limited perception of what is 'known' (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006).<sup>12</sup> He/she obviously uses 'inductive' reasoning, which is based on the logic that a given 'premise provides reason/s to sustain the probable truth of the conclusion' and the conclusion is not likely to false if the premise is true. Research of this kind does not take recourse to any manipulation of the setting. The design of the research gradually shapes in due course as the researcher moves along. Literary research is thus primarily concerned with interpretation and construction, and is aimed at constructing and reconstructing meaning.

Altick (1975: 6) seeks to define the term 'literary research' in *The Art of Literary Research* calling it devotion 'to the enlightenment of criticism' by seeking 'to illuminate the work of art as it really is' as well as the work 'was to its first audience', seeing 'the writer as he (or she) really was, his cultural heritage and the people for whom he wrote as they really were.' He calls this 'its major *raison d'être*'. Students being initiated into literary research would face difficulties in processing and understanding



the import in the first sentence in the definition quoted in the full.

They need to this in the light of the fact that *literary criticism*, *literary research*, and *literary scholarship* are words reflecting the 'academic' or the 'scholarly' and are, thus, quite easily suggestive of being a reference to someone like a teacher or scholar in a university.<sup>13</sup> It makes sense to remember, however, that training in criticism precedes training in research and not the other way round. This is the trajectory that helps shape someone as a scholar. The product of what gets uncovered in the process may or may not be of any practical relevance to non-literary readership, except helping them understand a text/s in new light.

Altick (1950) hints at this trajectory in his first major contribution on literary research, *The Scholar Adventurers*.<sup>14</sup> Drawing upon the wealth of his experience as a teacher, researcher and scholar, he traces the gradual emergence of 'a first-rate scholar' from 'a third-rate writer'. A young student who takes to reading good books for sheer pleasure during his/her years in senior schools, and institutions for tertiary education, usually writes and tries to get what he/she writes published in school or college magazines and 'even in other commercial publications' without realizing how these publications are nothing more than juvenile reporting yielding no intellectual and monetary reward.

The growing need for a steady gainful income makes him/her postpone the 'fine frenzy of the spirit' and consider taking up a teaching position in an institution of higher learning. However, this necessitates a doctoral degree and he/she feels motivated to enrol for a doctoral degree in a graduate school. The graduate school is where he/she begins to appreciate the meaning of scholarship, experience it first-hand from listening to scholars, get associated with 'practising scholars', and find adequate encouragement 'to take a trial flight' as it were. The stressful experiences of having reached dead ends, and of having to put his/her work in a logically presentable

form as a part of doctoral work, have a sobering effect on him/her, and freshly-developed charm of 'historical inquiry' gets instilled in him/her. Thus, the thirst for scholarship gradually becomes a habit.

Bateson agrees with Elton's remark that despite the academic brilliance of the tutor, the researcher hardly has any option except to think of various literary 'schools' and 'the real discipline in the craft of research' is a later development once he 'unlearns graduate method'.<sup>15</sup> He rejects the notion of literary research being 'the peculiar prerogative of the young men or women reading for a research degree' (p.1). He notes that the seeds of the thought of undertaking literary research are sown in the minds of prospective researchers during their undergraduate years when they develop some interest in the study of literature. It should be possible for us to extend this logically to the sprouting of these seeds in postgraduate years, with this shoot becoming a plant and the young plant beginning to flower after years of labour. Fruition takes place during the doctoral studies if only if degree one refuses to give up. It is here that Bateson (1972) resonates the view that Altick (1950) offers.

Returning to the first proposition in Altick's definition of literary research, we need to understand his use of the term *enlightenment* in order to understand this devotion of literary research, even if it were to be partial, to the enlightenment of criticism. Kant (1784) takes 'enlightenment' to mean 'man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity' or 'the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another' which he finds 'self-incurred' not in the 'lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another'. Kant argues that there is need for one to 'dare to discern', and have the courage to use one's own understanding.<sup>16</sup> Foucault perceives enlightenment as 'a process that releases us from the status of 'immaturity' or a state of mind 'that makes us accept someone else's authority to lead us in areas where the use of reason is called for.'<sup>17</sup>



Altick's use of that phrase, then, resonates the sense in which Kant and Foucault take 'enlightenment': a person's gradual maturity or a state of mind strong enough to help raise him/her from a state of dependence on others to being entirely self-dependent and self-reliant using reason instead of taking shelter behind any authority imposed externally. In a strictly technical sense, the term *criticism*, when used in literary studies and research, means the analysis and evaluation of a literary or artistic work using methods 'supported by literary theories'.

Considered in the context of the discussion above, Altick's argument seems to be that the enabling function of 'literary research' is to aid literary researchers to analyze and evaluate a literary or artistic work putting to good use methods which are supported by literary theories. For, in overcoming his/her self-induced immaturity, and use of resoluteness and courage, he/she can dare to discriminate the chaff from the grain, relying entirely on reason rather than taking recourse to using 'someone else's authority' in bringing to light what has hitherto remained unknown with regard to a given literary work or works.

Literary research, notes Altick, 'seeks to illuminate the work of art' under consideration not only 'as it really is' but also 'as it was to its first audience'. Moreover, 'it tries to see the writer as he really was, his cultural heritage and the people for whom he wrote as they really were.' All this requires a good understanding not only of the history of a people, a nation but also an understanding of literary history. Altick argues that 'Literary history constitutes one of the strands of which the history of civilization itself is woven', thereby triggering in us the thought that this seems to be a shoot from the same seedling that gave us the terms 'historical perspective' and 'historical sense' which figure in Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) or the concept of 'maturity' in his work, *What is a Classic?* (1944). Interestingly, Collingwood observes that 'the value of

history ... is that teaches us what man has done and thus what man is.<sup>18</sup>

A good command of literary history including history of literary criticism endows a literary researcher with the necessary background knowledge to take to research with a sense of confidence. We believe this to be the reason for the UGC NET and UGC NET/JRF or the state versions SET/SLET, as they are variously called, set a high benchmark for the examinees. They expect to identify scholars who, on passing the UGC NET Examination can enter the teaching profession at the tertiary level, and those with UGC NET/JRF can take up research with a scholarship which gives them a steady income to fulfil their needs and buy books.

Literary research helps bring to light fresh facts on the literary texts. It requires maturity of mind rather than irresponsible handling. 'Maturity of mind', argues Eliot, 'needs history, and the consciousness of history' which comes from an appreciation of 'other history' along with one's own and the ability to 'see' where we stand vis-à-vis the others in history. It is also an understanding of how this 'other' has 'influenced and entered into our own'.<sup>19</sup> Literary research is thus the summation of the scholar's reading, experience and reflection, which leads to the eventual replacement of 'old facts' with new ones, and this is the trajectory that the growth of knowledge takes. Thus, it seeks 'to interpret the significance of this material in terms of literary art' by thoroughly and faithfully recreating mentally 'the social, intellectual, and literary conditions of a past age, and make himself, as well, an intimate spectator of the inner life of a great artist'. It has to grapple with dates, authenticity of the texts, various versions and editions of texts etc.

Literary research is not wholly dependent on what have become classics because even some of the oldest keep themselves updated about and take interest in trends in contemporary literature. Literary research and scholarship are not academe-specific domains because



these extend to librarians and others especially in the field of bibliography. Some of these researchers have discovered errors and frauds. Besides librarians, there are researchers like the scholar-mathematician John Livingston Lowes who took to literary research and wrote a book on Coleridge titled *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination*. The importance of this work lies in the fact that Lowes offers an exhaustive treatment of primary and secondary sources on Coleridge for the purpose of interpretation. Apparently, his broad aim was to characterise and highlight 'the imaginative process as a heightening of normal powers' and one of the objectives was to demonstrate 'the consciously achieved artistic unity of *The Ancient Mariner* in contrast with the directionless melody of *Kubla Khan*'.<sup>20</sup>

Seeking to put literary research on par with research in the natural sciences may be absurd, but the need is that 'a deep concern for exactness, for objectivity, for thoroughness, and for getting every detail just right' must go into its shaping. This requires an understanding of the use of various tools of research as well as the extensive and precise knowledge of the numerous bibliographical tools available. This adds to the pleasure of continuation so much so that research becomes a consuming passion. A clear understanding of 'the pastness of the past and its present', the historical sense<sup>21</sup>, is always of great help. A combination of 'lively imagination focused in the art of literature, and a scientific devotion to truth' in its smallest transform a literary researcher into a literary scholar, and a high degree of ingenuity, patience, logic, and sheer imaginative talent is required, especially in the process of assembling, analysing, synthesising, and interpreting materials.

Literary research involves training the mind to re-create, in as minute and faithful detail as possible, the social, intellectual, and literary conditions of a past age, and make himself, as well, an intimate spectator of the inner life of a great artist. This is historical 'detective'

work, rooted in scientific command of numberless small facts but raised to the plane of the creative imagination, and it explains why literary scholarship has a peculiar fascination to perpetually inquisitive minds. Technical bibliography is a field of literary study which seldom touches the interests of the general reader, or, for that matter, those of many specialized literary researchers.

In his magnum opus titled *The Art of Literary Research*, Altick chooses to call literary research a 'vocation'. Vocation is a term taken to mean a regular occupation, especially one that a person is particularly suited or qualified for, and in one sense it specifically stresses dedication. For, it involves a long-term commitment to something that is not necessarily equated with the earning of a livelihood. The epigraph to the chapter is a quote taken from Howard Mumford Jones from *Sewanee Review* (Vol.39, 1931, p.76), which sets the tone for the vocation of a literary researcher. Jones argues that the business of literary researcher is to 'find out in a humble spirit of inquiry what literary masterpieces really say.' This 'humble spirit of inquiry' leads to 'the discovery of truth'. The task involves fact-finding and fact-gathering which only adds to criticism. It also involves an 'understanding specific pieces of literature and the interaction of many works that constitutes what is called literary history.' Both literary critics and scholars study 'the literary text' and their work enriches that already lies within the public domain.

Winchester (1899) gives a broad definition of criticism as 'the intelligent appreciation of any work of art' and as a fair 'estimate of its value and rank'<sup>22</sup> and by the same token we can define literary criticism as the 'intelligent appreciation' of a literary work, which involves what is called 'taste' entailing the combining of both intellect and emotions in this critical exercise. Thus, it is a logically argued assessment of literary works. It is distinct from aesthetics, the philosophy of artistic value, and yet some amount of estimation is likely and acceptable. A critical



exercise allows a critic to assess authors and their works to place authors within literary history.

A literary researcher compelled by the situation in hand to uncover facts, detect and correct errors, edit texts and secondary sources on them in the manner of a detective is actually seen engaged in performing the functions of a literary critic. This is the point of convergence of literary research with literary criticism. A literary work needs to be interpreted for its non-literary readers. Interpretation also involves meaning and value, and a literary critic takes a hard look at a text or texts to evaluate it and makes a logical choice after assessing alternative interpretations to give his/her readers what he/she thinks is possible and feasible. Although value judgements are possible in the processes, these tend to get minimised due to the use of reasoned argumentation necessitated as a part of this literary exercise.

A literary critic, like a literary researcher needs to demonstrate literary scholarship. A scholar is normally taken to be a learned person, an academic, with a specified academic ability, and scholarship is taken to mean academic achievement of a very high order. Altick's brilliant description of how a third-rate writer gets shaped into a first-rate scholar gives us a definitive trajectory emerging from this process - reading of good books; the chain of need for a steady of income and this requiring a teaching position requiring a doctoral degree; enrolment for doctoral research; the privilege of rubbing shoulders with scholars; the sweet-and-sour of the research and of writing of a logically argued doctoral work etc - help develop a charm for inquiry in the researcher and a thirst for scholarship gets implanted.

A literary scholar seeks to examine and ascertain the facts governing the creation of a literary text, the way the literary circles responded to it, and the kind of sway it had and has. He/she needs training of the kind historians have in uncovering all these facts and it is here that literary scholarship, literary criticism and literary research converge.

Law (1949) responds to the question he poses in a scholarly paper titled "Is English Literary Scholarship Advancing?" by arguing that he uses the term 'literary scholarship' in the paper to mean 'mature scholarship' trained to attack problems of literature and language' using 'scientific methods'. He observes that he includes 'the science of linguistics' as 'an essential part of the training of the English or American literary scholar' within the ambit of the term because 'it provides a valuable tool' to a literary scholar.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, we move on to the last part of this paper with our comments on the approaches to literary research. The variety seen in critical practice in literary studies owes itself primarily to the approach used, for any given approach requires a particular method or a set of methods. An approach is characterized by a set of theoretical assumptions which constitute the nature of critical practice undertaken, and a method makes available to a critical practitioner a comprehensive set of terms that could be used to fulfil the objectives of the critical enterprise using in the light of the approach used.

Wilbur Scott's renowned work on *Five Approaches to Literary Criticism*,<sup>24</sup> which was widely used on literature courses in the 70s and 80s of the last millennium, identified these five approaches as moral, psychological, sociological, formalistic, and archetypal. Some others were added to this list, for example auto-/biographical, feminist, reader-response, deconstructive etc. The methods of literary research discussed in recent books include archival methods, auto/biography as a research method, oral history as a research method, visual methodologies, discourse analysis, ethnographic methods, textual analysis, interview method, and creative writing as research method.<sup>25</sup>

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## Subverting the Stereotypes Femininity in Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi*

Deen Dayal\*

Since ages, women in India have been looked down upon and considered as inferior human beings. Women experience a continuous trauma under male subjugation. Mahasweta Devi is one of those rare writers who always aspires to find and to explore something challenging and new. Whether she writes a short story, a novel, a play, or a political article she manages to convey the extraordinary relish that she has for her medium. In her fiction, gender exploitation cuts across class barriers, embracing girls from classes who are victims of a male predatory socio-economic order, as well as housewives of middle class while scripting the story of the exploitation and oppression that these characters suffer. She never forgets to underscore their attempts at resistance- something violent, something quite, sometimes even crafty in their wily efforts to overcome their powerful enemies. She describes the relentless struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor, the powerful and powerless, at the various levels of the society by developing a unique style that combines stinging wit with a note of pathos. In most of her stories, she depicts the tribals, or Naxalite revolutionaries or marginalized women, who dominate her world of fiction. In an interview she says, "What I am writing, most of my books, it is about exploitation the underclass is exploited, men women together, of course, women get worst part of it" (Dickman 33).

In the story 'Draupadi' Mahasweta Devi depicts the intersection of gendered, caste, and feudal modes of power. The story is set against the backdrop of the Naxalite revolt, a major peasant rebellion began in the late 1960s in the Naxalbari region of the Indian State of West Bengal.

The rebellious peasants: lower-caste cultivators are against the upper-caste feudal exploitation continued from several generations in the form of low wages, heavy interest rates charged by the land-lords from the poor peasants of the low caste and sexual exploitation of the tribal women. Mahasweta Devi handles such kind of serious and bold issues. In 'Draupadi' she depicts the predicament of a tribal woman caught between the pulls of subsistence living and the appropriate logic of feudalistic-modernist patriarchal state and its allied system. Including Draupadi, in her other stories, she gives voice to tribals: Santhals, Lodhas, Shabars and Mundas, and the junction of folk and the modern, the main stream and the margin, colonialism and post-colonialism. As a creative writer, Mahasweta Devi has fought with her utmost for the rights of tribals. Her fiction is neither fantasy, nor a pastoral romance. It is firmly rooted in earth, in ground reality, in the solidity of facts; her fiction begins with a fact-profile of either an area or a character or local practice, before it snowballs into a gripping story. Draupadi is an analysed story having structural and thematic traits. In the story, the main protagonist Dopdi Mejhan, a naxalite informer and activist, is a Santhal. Special force of Indian Army in cahoots with the uppercaste landlords engages in combat against revolutionaries to suppress the rebellion. The story 'Draupadi' is written in Bengali, but later translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak into English. Dopdi is the tribal version of her name from Draupadi, the character. She along with her husband Dulna, rebels against the oppressive state-feudal nexus. When the whole Birbhum reels under famine, Surja Sahu arranges with the help of Biddi Babu two tubewells and three wells dug within the compound of his two houses and thus the feudal kingpin of the area has 'unlimited' water resource. He and his ilk refuse to let the tribals share their unlimited water resources. It instigates the ire of the suffering tribals and leads them to join the Naxalites group, headed by Arijit. One night Surja Sahu's house is surrounded. Being humiliated, Surja Sahu brings out his gun to threaten the attackers. He also sends a telegram



message to call the special army. In the confrontation, Surja Sahu and his son are put to death. Seeing no rail route to the area, the special army marches in the area on foot. There is terror in the whole area at the army flag march, but Dopdi is not scared at all. She thinks more tactful ways to save her comrades from any grasp of the army. In the aftermath of this killing and consequent upon the brutal and indiscriminate manhunt launched by the state through "Operation Bakuli". Dopdi and Dulna are forced to flee and to live a life of fugitives. For their safety they keep walking to Jharkhani forests, villages and fields, bushes and rocks-public works, and department markets. Dopdi lives in the Jharkhani forest with a group of Naxalite rebels regarded as the "young gentlemen". Dopdi is not only marked as socio-semiotic deviation, but is also as most notorious female, perhaps she dares to challenges, and teasingly eludes the dominant patriarchal order. Dopdi feels no ashamed walking in jungles with other comrades. She keeps with her the leaves of Tobacco and lime stone powder as a medicine for scorpion bite. She is faithful to her comrades. She swears by her and her husband not to disclose any secret of hide-outs to the companions.

Dopdi emerges as an agent or a powerful tool for empowerment of the women when they are clearly "protected" by the men of the tribe "stood guard over their women's blood". When Dopdi thinks of the past she "felt proud of her forefathers. They stood guard over their women's blood in black armour" (Devi 193). Dopdi Mejhen, aged 27 years woman does not adhere to traditional code and conduct as of Jaya in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*. Jaya's predicament is born of her split psyche. She is unable to free herself from the traditional code of conduct. The counsels of her aunt and advice of Vanita Mami keep ringing in her ears, "Remember Jaya, a husband is like a sheltering tree, keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies" (Deshpande 32). Mahasweta's Dopdi from the beginning is a woman of strong mind and will. She is involved in a social movement- the Naxalite

movement in India. According to the traditional scheme, she should become 'the silenced victim' like Jaya, but emerges as unorthodox for a woman of Sanhtal tribe. In spite of being illiterate, she knows well when to be silenced. When she is captured in 'operation Jarkhani' initially under the leadership of Arjan Singh and then under Senanayak, and is questioned. She keeps mum as she reminds the voice of male authority, which still dictates. She should respond to the police questioning, "Dopdi will bite off her tongue. That boy did it (192). She remains faithful to the 'patriarch code of her tribe handed down to her by her forefather. She does not want to utter a single word before police as it can jeopardize the life of her comrades. She maintains the moral code of her conduct instilled in her through her tribal upbringing. Favouring Dulna's capturing and aftermath of his death, saying, "Dulna died, but, let me tell you, he did not lose anyone's life. Because this was not our heads to begin with" (194). By stating so, she gives other comrades the message that one should be faithful to one's duty and action.

Even the death of her husband does not make her nervous and unfaithful to her fellow beings. She is not afraid and nor lags behind the mission to which she devotes herself heartedly. She does not console at the death of her husband in the time when her capture is likely to reveal the identity of her comrades. Senanayak being a man "a specialist in combat and extreme left politics" uses Dulna's dead body as a bait to get her, but in vain. She is not like Deshpande's Jaya to lose her courage only by thinking of his death. As in *That Long Silence*, Jaya utters, "The thought of living without him had twisted my insides, his death had seemed to me the final catastrophe" (Deshpande 96-97). By adopting a mode of passive resistance, she maintains the instructions imbibed through repeated listening in spite of her repeated rape. When Senanayak feels himself failed in 'questioning session' with Dopdi and leaves her saying, "Make her. Do the needful" (195). The obtuse command "makes her. Do the needful" is of course, the brutal sexual torture



of Dopdi- a violence made by Senanayak himself. Multiple raped Dopdi issues a brazen challenge to the state agents whose masculinity resides in the state power. Dopdi looks like a victim, but acts like an agent- violation from victimhood by insistently standing naked by her violators, Dopdi manages to wield her wounded body as a weapon to terrify them. Dopdi's naked body is made allegorically representative of the rebel community, but also of female rebels who are susceptible to this form of disciplinary violence. As a rebel she refuses discipline and says, "I will not wear my clothes" (196), as a woman she refuses shame "there is not a man here that I should be ashamed" (196). Dopdi is too determined to drink any water inspite of unbearable thirst. She pours the water on the ground offered by the guard. She is too bold. She tears the peace of her cloth with her teeth and behaves madly. By showing it, Mahashweta Devi has depicted the condition of the woman after being raped. The commotion is as if the alarm sounds in the prison. Even Senanayak, a specialist in war is surprised and is even frightened seeing Dopdi's power of being ashamed in her head high and her representation as if she were going to attack her. Dopdi is not afraid at all and says to Senanayak that the object of his search is before him. She makes no call for her safety like mythological Draupadi in the Mahabharata, who in her helplessness pleads to Lord Krishna to protect her from being ignominiously disrobed in public, and thus she is saved by Krishna by extending the never-ending length of Saree, but Mahasweta's Dopdi can neither hope for nor aspire to being thus rescued. Dopdi's utterance while powerfully unmaning her assailants leaves an effect of properly masculine presence. Mahasweta's Draupadi is bound in strict code and conduct of tribes. To her, lives of her comrades have more value than that of her own. So she chooses to be 'the silenced victim' and seeks no intervention either of human or divine. She chooses to remain naked. It is her boldness and a sign of pure blooded Santal that she neither washes her blood stained body nor covers herself with clothes

when in the morning she is called to Senanayak's tent for further questioning. Here on Dopdi's otherness and actions present the greatest challenge to the patriarchal notions of manhood. With her head high in the light of the day, she moves to Senanayak naked. She resists all attempts made by Senanayak to get her clothes again. In a 'terrifying and sky-splitting' voice she challenges the manhood of Senanayak saying, "What is the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? I will not let you put my clothes on me, what more you can do?" (196). Her words full of contempt for a person who has forgotten his manhood made Senanayak's head down and terrified, and stood up before her. In her boldness and in contemplation, she "pushes Senanayak with her two managed breasts and for the first time Senanayak is afraid of standing before an unarmed target, terrified afraid" (196). Rather than save her modesty through the implicit intervention of a benign and divine comrade, the story insists that this is the place where male leadership stops. On the level of the plot, Senanayak, an army officer captures and degrades Dopdi. In practice, the instrument and investigation are complicit with such captures and such degradation. Senanayak as a pluralist aesthetic is represented in the story as an enemy having mixed emotions: sorrow (theory) and joy (practice). Unlike Draupadi of the *Mahabharata*, Dopdi of *Mahasweta* does not demand to escape her fate through divine intervention, but she survives the ordeal triumphantly and is thereby empowered to become goddess. This is also the defeat of enemy by breeding so much boldness in a woman that terrified even the most skilful Senanayak. It is none but any divine power which creates in her such boldness, but saving Draupadi of the *Mahabharata* by Lord Krishna lengthening 'infinitely clothed' and could not by publicly stripped, is other forms of divine power. Thus, *Mahasweta's* protagonist- Dopdi subverts the stereotypes femininity. Senanayak has already judged the boldness and capability of Dopdi when he hears, "She destroys



Dukhiram, the soldiers' jungle scout and the man she holds responsible for Dulna's death" (190). In the beginning of the combat, two 'opposite official' reports prove that Draupadi is really a challenge to the stereotype femininity. "In the first phase of the confrontation the fugitives, ignorant of the forest's topography, are caught easily" (190). All this changed in the second phase as the report arrives, "They do not allow themselves to be captured in combat... Now it seems that they have found a trustworthy courier. Ten to one it is Dopdi" (190). Mahasweta Devi has made important contributions to literary and cultural studies in the country. She takes worldwide issues. Her empirical research into oral history as it lives in the cultures and memories of the tribal communities is a first of its kind. Her power haunting takes on exploitation and struggle have been seen as rich sites of feminist discourse by leading scholars. Her innovative use of language has expanded the conventional border of Bengali literary expression. To create a dramatic climax, Mahasweta uses the disrobing of garments. The main character 'Dopdi' is presented in the beginning of the story as a symbol of strong mind and wit. Her reaction is bold even when she is caught by the authorities. There is no hesitant behaviour even after being repeatedly raped. Her reaction is extremely loud and desperate.

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## Popular Novel Comes of Age in India

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The first decade of this century was a fruitful one in so far as the genre of Indian English fiction on the whole is concerned, but it was particularly fruitful in the case of popular novel. It is not that such a variety of novel was totally non-existent in the twentieth century, but if the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, way back in 1981, is taken to be the starting point of a revolution in Indian English fiction of the serious variety, then Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone* (2004) can rightly be credited with having opened the floodgates of popular fiction in our country. Since his novel appeared on the stands, some 400 novels, a large number of them debut novels penned by young professionals, have been published, all of which go to prove that the popular novel is now firmly entrenched in India. My paper studies the unprecedented growth that has taken place in this genre, its various divisions, themes, styles etc. and its importance for the overall literary scenario in the country.

A popular novel is defined as one that has a wide readership belonging to middle or "low-brow" category. In other words, such a novel "may not possess much literary merit" (Cuddon 685). It can be described as light fiction because of its simple theme and treatment, which do not tax the cerebral resources of the reader. It deals with subjects related to contemporary life but romance, fantasy and sex add to its appeal. The genre of popular novel, variously called kitsch, pulp, fun-read, leisure books, light read, metro read, and quick-read is well-established now. It might not be out of place to say that everyone has, at one point of time or another, read popular works of, say, Barbara Cartland, Agatha Christie, Erle Stanley Gardner, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Daniel Steel,



Jeffrey Archer, Sidney Sheldon, J.K. Rowling et al and might remember characters like Sherlock Holmes, Perry Mason, Harry Potter et al for the rest of one's life.

There are several theories about trivial literature and yet no single theory seems capable of explaining its essence. After the demise of the grand narratives which formed the bedrock of high modernism, all that was left were language games and the readers were content with the contingent and contemporary rather than with the wild goose chase after the eternal and the universal. The popular novel is eminently suited to this mindset. Some scholars believe that popular novel promotes status quoism with regard to distribution of power, while some others believe popular literature to be the site for negotiation and contestation in a society always on the move. Popular fiction, being the beloved child of postmodernism, may not brook a poetics, for it would already and always be deconstructed.

Popularity, per se, is strongly linked to geographical territory. What is popular at one place may not be popular at another place. This means the socio-cultural conditions prevailing at a particular place play their part in shaping the choice of subject matter and style that shall click with readers in a big way. Popular literature, therefore, has a local flavour, a regional touch or an ethnic outlook. However, it should not be interpreted in a strict or narrow sense. For the young professionals, the world is a globalized village so that a London street may be as acceptable to him as a Mumbai *galli*.

The commonest observation about popular fiction is that it is formulaic and stereotypical, and it uses artifacts that have often been used. It may also be called formulaic in the sense that the prospective reader approaches it with a certain measure of foreknowledge of what exactly he is to find in it. In this, it can be contrasted with serious or literary fiction which may not conform to this pattern. There is an element of thematic or stylistic mystique built around a canonical work and a reader may prefer to go by a reviewer's recommendation in choosing a work to

read, for it cannot be predicted like popular fiction. A writer may dabble in the writing of popular fiction even though s/he has been known for writing serious fiction. Salman Rushdie wrote *Kohinoor* to humour his child and Anita Desai did similarly in case of *Diamond Dust and Other Stories*. Khushwant Singh has also lent his pen to this genre even though his novel *Burial at Sea* sits ill at ease with his *Train to Pakistan*.

So far as the subject matter or theme is concerned, separating serious fiction from the popular poses problem at times because any theme taken up in serious fiction can also be taken up in popular fiction. The subject matter of popular fiction is of contemporary interest. Entertainment is the chief motive for which people turn to popular fiction. It should not be taken to mean that serious fiction is tasteless and boring. For sure, one can come across very engrossing serious fiction as also very boring popular fiction. For the layman, visual media is the most preferred means of entertainment. If the society is hooked on the stuff shown on the idiot box like family intrigues, myths and light spiritualism, then these are also dealt with in popular novel. The ingredients of the popular fiction in India also have an affinity with the Bollywood movies. Both excite the common reader/viewer and keep him engrossed so that at the end of it, he feels it was a good 'timepass'.

There is little scope in popular literature to seriously discuss issues - social, political, economic or cultural. The conclusions arrived at in popular fiction are supported by facile logic as resorted to by a man in the street. Thus, in Bhagat's *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, the writer paints the picture of gory communal clashes and comments that there is no effective reconciliatory mechanism in case of communal riots (71), without any serious analysis of the problem or of the mechanisms available and their inadequacy etc.

In India, popular novel targets young readers, mostly students and professionals, for it is their lot who read



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and understand English. It targets the young readers with little time but with plenty of penchant for reading. There are many divisions made like Chick-lit, lad-lit, Tech-lit, Campus-lit, Career-lit etc. Major themes in this fast-emerging genre are campus and office comedies, professional life, live-in and extra-marital relationships, and practically anything that could be of interest to youth. Then there are the all time favourites like crime fiction, thrillers, adolescent fiction, fantasy, erotica etc.

Most readers of popular works do not look for literary merit and merely take to it as a means of entertainment. In most of the popular novels, action becomes most important. Characterization, setting and literary language are of secondary importance. Mostly, it is the chatty style of college-goers that appeals to young readers. Take an example from Varsha Dixit's *Right Fit Wrong Shoe*: "Irritating life out of him was as natural to her as salt to a Bloody Mary or *kanda* to *paav bhaji*." The use of quotes from Hindi movies has been an old practice as one would mark in Shobha De's non-fictional work *Spouse*: Chapter One: "Touch and Go / Aa gale lag jaa." Similarly, the use of SMS lingo is widely done in popular fiction. As a product of postmodern times, popular fiction shares the irreverence towards icons and distrust of fetishes. Aravind Adiga in his *The White Tiger* mocks the deities as 'arses' (187).

Style-wise, Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* has been dubbed 'SMS speak' novel for its excessive use of slang-ridden teen-talk. A look at the titles would show that Arunabha Sengupta's *Big Apple 2 Bite* (2007) uses SMS lingo in the title, while Soma Das's *Sumthing of a mocktale* (2007) and Smita Jain's *Kkrishna's Konfessions* (2008) blatantly defy the lexical code. It seems as if like the irreverence towards the great figures of past, linguistic iconoclasm is also on the rise.

A popular novel may not have any serious message to convey, but entertain it must or it will lose the market. Wit and humour are essential ingredients of such novels.

The pace of the story must come up to the expectations of the reader. It cannot linger on too long in order, say, to dwell on psychological fine points. Jhumpa Lahiri's works, viewed from this angle, cannot be subsumed under the rubric of popular fiction.

When I talk of the coming of age of popular novel in India, what I mean is that the ratio of the popular novel vis-à-vis the serious novel has gone up in the current century and that it has also attained a measure of legitimacy and is here to stay. M.K. Naik had commented about Shobha De's 'pulp writing': "Sagas of bed-hopping, chronicles of high society and low ethicality, drawing room manners and barn-door morals...would perhaps be an apt description of them." (Naik 115). Time has put the stamp of respectability on popular fiction for the time being.

Chetan Bhagat, as an Indian English novelist, has achieved the distinction of having sold maximum copies - more than 2,50,000 of each of the two novels - *Five Point Someone* (2004) and *One Night @ The Call Centre* (2005). The figure is higher than that of any other novel falling in the category of Indian English Novel. This, however, is not the sole novel having performed the feat. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* too, has sold similar number of copies. (Das) The winning of the Man Booker award did help Adiga, but we are told that Tarun Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins* sold some two lac copies. Even debut novels like Karan Bajaj's *Johnny Gone Down* sold 40000 copies (Bansal) - something unimaginable until a decade ago.

Elizabeth Lowell, a prolific American popular fiction writer, suggests that the writer of popular fiction is guided by the proclivities of the readers who pay money to buy books. Even as the popular writers have their fan clubs, the publishers too carry on large-scale surveys to find out what actually can sell in the market. Hefty advances are given to promising or proven writers, hype created, books launched with much fanfare and awards manipulated to prop a work of an author. More than



the contents, packaging is what matters most in the marketing of popular fiction: a striking title, glossy cover and eye-catching illustration may appeal to a common reader. Look at some of the titles: *You've got to be kidding, I am Broke....! Love Me, Of course I love you...till I find someone better, If God went to B School, would Love follow Him there?* There is a mass market now for such books and given the volume of sales, the price is quite affordable, since there exists a symbiotic relationship between the price and the sales of a book.

In India, more than the reader or the writer, it is the publisher who decides what the reader is to get, as the chief editor of Random House is quoted as having said, "A large number of our best sellers have probably been commissioned" (Sudarshan). Apart from the hype and hoopla built around a popular work, the proscription of a book could also boost its sales as happened with Taslima Nasreen's *Lajja*, which, otherwise might not have appealed to public at large, devoid as it is of literary graces.

As explained above, popular novels thrive on the themes relevant to the times. In this respect, Chetan Bhagat's acumen in choosing suitable themes has to be recognized. His *Five Point Someone* (2004) belongs to the category of Campus Novel whose early practitioners include Prema Nandkumar, Rita Joshi et al. His second novel *One Night @ The Call Centre* (2005) deals with the contemporary life of the youth working at call centres. His third novel *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008) cashes in on the craze for cricket in India. Bhagat's *Two states: The story of My Marriage* (2009), focusses on the problems of inter-racial marriage, while *Revolution 2020* contrasts an idealist youth with a go-getter type dazzled by the riches.

Bhagat's success has motivated a number of student writers like Anirban Bose, Farhad Zama et al, for whom the campus is the only source of exciting experience which they can conveniently take up in their debut novels. Once they have launched themselves with some success, the second work comes close on the heels, otherwise they

give up. In Suman Hossain's *A Guy Thing*, references to SMS-ing, Orkut-ing, mobile-dating and online-chatting present the reality of life of young students. Hostel life, romance and studies weave the warp and woof of the novel.

Equally interesting is the workplace of the young professionals these days. Abhijit Bhaduri, Anish Trivedi, Ajay Mohan Jain have tried their hands at this type of novel. Sujita Nair, a former army officer-turned-writer has come out with her debut novel *She's a Jolly Good Fellow* (2010) which is a story of two women army officers who take on adversities, learning their lessons the hard way. Similarly, Bhavna Chauhan's *Where Girls Dare* (2010) which is about girl cadets at Chennai's Officers' Training Academy. There can be no two opinions about the fact that her description of life in the army should be authentic.

Romancing is the staple of youth, whether studying in college or working in a business organization. While Jaishree Misra's *Secrets and Lies* (2009) falls in the Chick-lit category, her other novels *Secrets and Sins* (2010), and *A Scandalous Secret* (2011) are powerful tales of passion. Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor* (2008) is high on romance between an advertising executive and a cricket player. The story-line includes female bonding and booze parties that should remind one of the trail-blazer of yore - Shobha De. *Right Fit Wrong Shoe* (2009) by Varsha Dixit is a racy thriller of contemporary liberated lifestyle. Advaita Kala and Mayank Anand have also taken up this theme. Any number of novelists from Vikram Seth to Anita Jain have based their stories on the unique problem of finding a suitable match for the marriageable boy or girl.

Thrillers have always appealed to a large readership. Mukul Deva's spy thrillers, viz., *Lashkar: Into the Heart of Terror*, *Salim Must Die*, *Blowback* etc. are quite riveting. Manu Joseph's *Serious Men*, the winner of The Hindu Best Fiction Award 2010 is a science fiction thriller. Similarly, Kalpish Ratna, Arvin Chawla have come up with their debut novels in this field. Detective novels have been



written by Madhulika Liddle, Saurabh Katyal, J. Dey et al. Crime and murder mysteries based on real life incidents like Siddharth Shanghvi's *The Last Flamingoes of Bombay* based on the infamous Jessica Lal murder case of Delhi and Farukh Dhondy's novel *The Snake* based on the life of the international criminal Charles Sobhraj attract many readers. Novels dealing with the underworld have been written by established writers like Vikram Chandra as also by newcomers like Mathew Vincent Menacherry.

Popular fiction reflects popular culture, which has been put at par with the elitist culture of yore by the postmodernist theoreticians. The leftist viewpoint as articulated by Stuart Hall is that culture is not the result of selected actions of some individuals but the outcome of cumulative actions of all and sundry. This was responsible for changing the perception of culture and negating the distinction between high culture and low culture. Going by the sales volume, one may mistakenly conclude that "In the world of Indian English publishing, kitsch has begun to dominate the mainstream" (Sudarshan). It is true that at present all types of novels are being published but this will not remain so for ever. As a publisher comments, "There will be two types of mass market fiction: books that are good and books that don't last" (Bansal). Even Stuart Hall alongwith Paddy Whannel, expressed the view in their joint work *The Popular Arts*, in favour of the categories of good and bad even in popular arts (Procter 23). As such, it would be in the interest of budding writers to focus on quality in popular literature, even though not aspiring to copy the canonical authors.

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## ***Kanyadaan: A Study of Change and Modernity***

M. S. Wankhede\*

Modern Indian drama has been remarkably contributed by Mohan Rakesh (Hindi), Badal Sirkar (Bengali), Vijay Tendulkar (Marathi), and Girish Karnad (Kannad). Indian drama is "an expression of our national genius" (Reddy, 2006:7) which has a "long history of 2000 years in a unique phenomenon in the literary world" (Ibid.). Indian Drama has a "unique record which can be viewed as an experience of life beyond personal" (Aurobindo, 1972:302) but it is a fact that Indian English Drama "has not achieved the position that Indian fiction or poetry in English enjoys in the realm of Commonwealth literature" (Khatri, 2007:1). It is obvious that Indian English Drama has not yet achieved that mark achieved by other genres though the "Big Three"- Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Harindranath Chattopadhyay made glorious contribution to the field. The Post-Independence Indian English Drama is concerned with the plays of Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma and Gurcharan. In fact, Indian English Drama is a collective attempt of all the regional writers from various Indian languages who produced their works in their respective languages or sometimes translated them into English.

'*Kanyadaan*' is the first English translation of a major award-winning Marathi play in which Tendulkar has narrated the conflict between the caste Hindu and Dalit, which has been prevalent in the Indian society exposing upper caste Maharashtrian hypocrisy. The plot also highlights the complexities of solving sociological problems through a progressive framework. By criticizing the politicians for their failure in removing the evil of class-distinction Tendulkar has proved their selfish motif for

political power. The evil of class-distinction are revealed in the play as existing in the society. This enquiry has raised certain questions in the mind of the readers. Whatever the criticism may be, Tendulkar takes no side. And this is the test of a genius creative writer. The title 'Kanyadaan' deals with the theme of marriage - such a marriage that has been banned by tradition of the caste Hindu - the marriage between a Brahmin girl and a Dalit boy. This is a change in the attitude of young generations presenting an example of thing beyond the barriers of caste and modes of distinction and taking the things in the view of humanity. The play has relevance to the modernity but its end marks a question about the future of Jyoti's marriage and also the question of understanding the emotionalism of Arun.

Vijay Tendulkar often portrays socio-political problems in his plays. His *Kanyadaan*, in addition to other plays such as *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Sakahram Binder*, *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *The Vultures*, has created a tempest among the readers and audiences of Tendulkar. In *Kanyadaan*, Vijay Tendulkar has narrated the conflict between the caste Hindu and Dalit in the Indian society. This is the play that has brought its author laurels, in the form of Saraswati Award, and the hurling of slipper at him at a show of the play as well. The play shows modernity and creates agonies, anxieties and tensions among the middle class or the "unwrinkled Tinopal world" (17) and also among Dalit communities. The playwright also explores in it the human psyche that is the product of outdated traditions and customs of the culture that raises a storm in the society. In a sense, in the play, we find, on one hand, conflict between individual and society and, on the other hand, confrontation among them, too. In addition, the issues related to love and sex and frustration, human nature and complexities, love of humanity and commitment to human values, transformation in human attitude, matrimonial relationship, realism and real life experiences, moral questioning leading to thought-



provoking, traditional and contradictory views, and modernity and social change are other themes. The play also deals with the problems of domestic violence and domestic abuse. The focus of the paper is on change and modernity. There we find the humanist standpoint of a socialist ideology and the victimization of the domestic violence. In both the cases it is the tragedy of Nath, the father of Jyoti, the female protagonist of the play, who is a victim of the domestic violence. Certain social and moral questions of the modernity are raised in this play, which are deeply thought-provoking and difficult to answer.

*Kanyadaan* is a family drama with a strong social undercurrent. It is divided into two Acts further subdivided into two and three scenes respectively. The Act First, Scene I, begins with family matter, where we meet all the four members of Nath family. There are just seven characters in all of which two (Hammeer Rao Kamble and Vamanseth Nevrgaonkar) are silent listeners in their maiden entry (Act II, Scene II). As late as Act I, Scene II, we find the entry of the scavenger boy, Arun who has just been in the house to have his introduction to the family members of Jyoti, who has determined to marry this young and talented poet-lover.

The family tension begins in the Act I, Scene I, when Jyoti conveys to the family members her decision of marrying a Dalit boy. This Scene also throws light on Nath's awareness of the members of Dalit community, who "don't know anything" (9) and it is "A typical picture of those people" (9), suggests Nath. Nath supports the decision of his daughter while her mother and brother oppose it. Seva says:

[To Jyoti] "My anxiety is not over his being a dalit. (But perhaps this is the only reason for opposition of the marriage of Jyoti with a dalit boy, as this happens in the social hierarchy of Indian society.) You know very well that Nath and I have been fighting untouchability tooth and nail.... But your life has been patterned in a certain manner. You have been

brought up in a specific culture. To erase or to change all this overnight is just not possible. He is different in every way. You may not be able to handle it" (13).

Here Jyoti's mother differentiates between the culture of her daughter and her would-be-son-in-law. This represents the conservative mind-set of the caste Hindus. The two binary oppositions are found here: father, including Jyoti and Arun, represents modernity while mother (a social worker) and brother represent traditionality.

In the Second Scene of the Act I, we are introduced to the talented lover-poet, Arun Athavale and we also get acquainted with the mind-set of this fellow. As soon as Jyoti closes the door, Arun is somewhat hesitant and uncomfortable in the big houses of city people as, he thinks, "These large buildings are just like crocodiles and sharks, whenever they want, they can gulp you down" (16). The views of Jyoti and Arun are also contradictory: Jyoti "feels safer indoors" (16) whereas Arun feels "safe on the street" (16). The scene also throws light on the typical and pitiable conditions of untouchables of India, who "used to roam, barefoot, miles and miles, in the heat, in the rain, day and night ... till the rags on their butt fell apart ... used to wander shouting 'Johar, Maayi-baap! Sir-Madam, sweeper!' and their calls polluted the Brahmins' ears" (17). The world of Dalits is the world of labour and hard work for just making both ends meet relying on the pity of the higher caste people. Untouchables, as usual in real life, have to "eat stinking bread with spoilt dal" (17) and use "slum's village toilet" (17). Arun says, the life of Dalits "is hell, and I mean hell. A hell named life" (18). Life experiences make Arun feel angst against hierarchical Indian society. So he reacts to the advice of Seva for some place to live in and some money to spend after marriage that "We shall be brewing illicit liquor" (21) as "There's good money in brewing illicit liquor" (21). The life-experience of Arun narrates the fact that untouchables have been leading miserable life since time immemorable.



Though the tension in the family increases, yet Nath is firm to become the instrument of the social change to bring about in the society as he wishes to break "the caste barrier in the real sense" (23). Nath has the full understanding of dalit life as they have been brought up in the midst of poverty and hatred affecting their psychological make-up. He tries to convince Seva and Jayaprakash by suggesting them to understand Arun's psychological mind-set, although it is very difficult. Nath wants to play a role of a catalyst in the transformation of social change like many old social reformers who married widows for the social cause. But Seva does not want her daughter's life to be used for this difficult experiment. Jyoti sticks to her decision but her mother opposes it. In support of his daughter's decision, Nath makes a long speech:

I am on Jyoti's side. It is perfectly natural that the boy should have enough rough edges; they are the product of the circumstances he has endured. In fact, it would be surprising if these peculiarities didn't exist.... He may not be a gentleman, but neither is he a scoundrel. As a human being he has potential. He has intelligence, drive and creativity. He has come so far despite his circumstances: this is not an easy matter. It is the result of his effort and dedication. You cannot imagine at what these people have made the little progress that they have. He is like unrefined gold, he needs to be melted and moulded.... Remember, it is we who are responsible for the age old sufferings of these people. We have betrayed them for generations. We should feel guilty about this (30-31).

Nath inspires and supports his daughter's decision which may both be wise and foolish.

In Act II, Scene I, the tension of the Nath family grows higher. Some months after the marriage of Jyoti with Arun takes place, the total family life changes. Questions and counter-questions, attacks and counter-attacks are passed between Nath on one hand and Seva and Jayaprakash on the other. Suddenly, in response to the suggestion of her father accommodating Arun in his own

house for some time, Jyoti declares: "he will not enter this house. Because I have left him ... I am not going back to him again... never" (39). Shockingly, Nath finds all his ideals coming to naught, loses his control and appeals to his wife Seva with passion:

Seva, let not this wonderful experiment fail! This dream which is struggling to turn real, let not crumble into dust before our eyes! We will have to do something. We must save this marriage. Not necessarily for our Jyoti's sake ... This is not just a question of our daughter's life, Seva, this has ... a far wider significance ... this experiment is a very precious experiment (41).

Meanwhile, Arun comes to his father-in-law's house seeking apologies for his misbehaviour and brutality against his wife, Jyoti, who in return changes her decision and gets ready to go with him.

The II Scene of the II Act opens with all praises for Arun's autobiography. Nath is very much overwhelmed by this autobiography:

I have not come across anything like this in years! Such a powerful autobiography. Hats off to Arun Rao! It moves you to the core without ever becoming sentimental. And how precise! If you overlook one or two episodes, there is no verbosity anywhere. And the language! Oh, we have forgotten to speak our own language. But this is our true, living language, utterly free from the impact of English. Belongs one hundred percent to our own soil" (46).

The praising words for Arun stop as soon as Seva informs Nath that Arun "beats her and even kicks her" (47) at such a time when Jyoti is pregnant for six months, in addition to abuse. This makes the atmosphere grave and tense. Nath pathetically asserts: "Such heinous behaviour by someone who wrote this beautiful autobiography? Here, in these pages he describes the humiliations he has undergone with extraordinary sensitivity... and the same man kicks his pregnant wife on her belly?" (47) The salt is added to the burning wound by Seva: "... he wants to remain a burden on Jyoti. It is also obvious that he will never feel grateful



for her support.... I have my doubts as to whether these dalits understand what gratitude means" (47). And she adds that by remaining idler, Arun goes on heaping abuses on his wife and tortures her to take a revenge of his ancestors' sufferings at the hands of the high caste people. She opines that "In this way he is returning all the kicks aimed at generations of his ancestors by men of high caste. It appears that this is the monumental mission he has set out to fulfill" (49). In this tense situation Nath receives a telephone call that demands his consent to preside over the public discussion on the autobiography of Arun but he refuses it. Seva tells Nath that had she been asked to preside over the discussion, she would have accepted and addressed the gathering by saying that,

... in this excellent book, whatever the author has said about injustice and exploitation is hypocrisy of the first order. Because this man himself exploits my daughter. Like a shameless parasite, he lives on my daughter's blood, and on the top of that he gets drunk and bashes her up. Constantly he taunts her about her caste and about her parents, heaping foul abuse on them for being highborn (49).

Then Seva narrates the abuses that she came to know from the neighbourhood that Arun calls her "a procuress who supplies girls from the Seva Dal to the socialist leaders" (49) and also tells Nath that Arun calls him (Nath) "eunuch" (50) and also he is not Jyoti's real father. Nath becomes grave and Jayaprakash sets on the mission now pointing out how "Jews have become the murderers of Palestinian women and children" (51) as a revenge of inhuman treatment given to them by Hitler's Nazi troops in order to prove that how Arun is taking the revenge on them for the inhuman treatments given to the dalits for generations by the high caste men: "those who were being massacred are now indulging in massacres" (51) as a matter of defence strategy and perhaps they get peculiar enjoyment out of it. He adds:

Perhaps those who are hunted derive great pleasure in hunting others when they get an opportunity to do so. The oppressed are overjoyed when they get a chance to oppress others ... the moment one gets the chance one becomes a greater tyrant ... one persecutes others with a vengeance, because one exults in doing that (51).

But Nath, who is well-schooled and well-disciplined and still believes in his own secular, democratic and liberal ideals, is not ready "to arrive at perverse conclusion on the basis of a single example" (51). One thing in case of this well-trained MLA is beyond imagination of understanding. He does not allow his son to disrespect any one in any circumstances, shows his attitudes and towards untouchables, believes in secular attitudes and liberalism but gets annoyed by the presence of Arun and forgets his secular ideal and thinks of pollution by Arun's visit:

Seva, he ... his visit has polluted this drawing room, this house, and this day .... It stinks. Seva - you know - you see - I feel like taking a bath, like cleaning myself! Clean everything! This furniture, this floor ... all this ... he has made them filthy. Dirty, polluted! Why did I have to come into contact with a man like this? A man like this ... why? (57)

This seems very odd on the part of the playwright, who has presented a very ideal character of Nath, who believes in the caste factor and pollution by touch of some people and getting clean the things by bathing and sprinkling *pancahmrut* or *gomutra*. This is really traditional attitude of high caste people who make a show of being secular and democratic.

The last scene of the Act II of this play is the gravest and the most controversial. It suggests the compromising tendency of Nath. While presiding over the public discussion on Arun's autobiography, he has praises for Arun. He spoke so because he says, "I did it for the sake of my brave and innocent daughter" (61). Tendulkar has not blamed the whole Dalit community for the misbehaviour of Arun and therefore "it (the play) cannot



be termed as anti-Dalit..." (Prasad, 2008: xiii). Moreover Nath, though angry at Arun, praises Dalits:

Not all dalits can be like that. They know what suffering is. They have paid a high price to be counted as human beings. They understand their own sufferings; therefore they will know the sufferings of others (60).

Even Jyoti seems to have angst now against the casteist tradition in India and so very proudly she says, "I belong to someone who makes your clean and pure soul impure by his touch" (66) and points out that her father has only hatred for Arun whom he praised publicly. She shows complete understanding of the circumstances and of humanity, and telling her father, comments: "I had to meet a man named Arun Athavale. Arun gave me what you withheld from me. I must acknowledge my debt to him" (67). In the end Jyoti rejects all help from her father's family and exiles herself, saying harshly:

I have my husband. I am not widow. Even if I become one I shan't knock at your door. I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devlalikar now; I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don't touch me. Fly from my shadow, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values (70).

Thus, in short, the play revolves around Jyoti born in a Brahmin family that is politically strong and bears progressive views, marries a Dalit boy/scavenger/untouchable, Arun, because she sees angst in his poetry and his forthcoming autobiography. There is a promise in her eyes to liberate him from his devilish tendencies that he inculcated from his bitter life experiences since his childhood. She intends and strives to be an instrument of change that leads to modernity. After her marriage with Arun, "What follows is sequence of violence, misery, and disillusionment" (Dharan, 1999:88). Jyoti realizes that the devil and the poet-lover are one and the same person. She now gets used to the vices - drinking and wife-beating - that are a part of him and they cannot be separated, nor can he be cleansed of those vices as they are the result of the sufferings of Arun's ancestors through

the ages under the hegemony of the caste Hindus. Therefore, there is a strange malice in him for the caste Hindus. In the end of the play Nath is powerless and helpless. He is in the dilemma and speaks in complete intellectual confusion: "applause spewing from his mouth and poison dripping from his eyes" ([www.stabroeknews.com](http://www.stabroeknews.com)). He does all this only for making the vain efforts to save his daughter from the torture of his son-in-law. In the end it is Jyoti who reminds her father how his great ideals and his hope in human innocence are faulty, and how she has become a victim of his faith in pursuing that promise. The character of Arun is portrayed beast-like that brings shivers down many a spine.

*Kanyadaan* presents a case of spousal abuse and interrogates many of the issues of social atrocities against women. The rift between Arun and Jyoti is not simply the rift between two persons - in thinking and behaving - but it is the rift between the different cultures and the social hierarchical order in India. It also seems that "Tendulkar's world is one where sex and violence have an upperhand" (Surendran, 2000:85). All these issues are contemporary. 'Tendulkar explores the texture of modernity and social change in India through the forces of this marriage (the marriage of Jyoti with Arun) unleashes' (The Hindu). Dr Ambedkar, an apostle of change and modernity, asserts that this change called democracy that gives liberty "is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experiences" (1979: 57). This change leading to modernity is what Narain says, "We are dealing with the phenomenon of 'Social Change' not as 'process', a 'development' or a 'progress', but as an 'objective' or a 'goal' in its own right. We are not dealing with goals of social change but we consider social change itself as a 'goal'" (1994: 78). *Kanyadaan*, thus, presents real life experiences in the Indian society.



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## The Poet as a Peace-Maker: Thich Nhat Hanh

Shrikant Singh

The present paper is a humble attempt to analyse some of the poems of Thich Nhat Hanh. Composed in English these poems were published in 1993 in USA and were mostly written in the backdrop of American-Vietnam wars. This study is significant for the fact that these poems throw very subtle and altogether new light on the futility of wars. These poems vociferously expose the hollowness of the reasons for which most wars are fought. The poet wonders why human beings do not understand the little logic that variation in backgrounds and conditions, in which we grow, are bound to cause variations in our perspectives. Enkindled by the light of the Buddha, the poet has become his true voice today in Europe and particularly in America where he is the second most popular Buddhist master after Dalai Lama. He is the best known and the most respected Zen Masters in the world today. Zen is a part of Mahayan Buddhism derived directly from Sanskrit word. It came to be called Ch'an (meditation) in China and Zen in Japan. It concentrates, beyond scriptural knowledge on the ability of human mind. Therefore, a Zen Buddhist, points directly to our mind and examines one's own nature to attain Buddhahood. Born in 1926 in Vietnam he engaged his life in the service of war victims after the outbreak of Vietnam War in 1954. Now he lives in plumb village in France and regularly visits USA where he is active in a variety of organizations including parallax press and the order of *Interbeing*, about which we will discuss later. The press and the order are the leading advocates of *engaged Buddhism*, a term coined by him. (A B C L 10, 20003: 52). Engaged Buddhism refers to Buddhists who are seeking, ways to apply the insights



from meditation and *dharma* teachings to situations of social, political, environmental and economic suffering and injustice. It has emerged as a very popular form of Buddhism both in the east and the west (wikipedia). He is academically very active and has composed hundreds of poems, novels, plays, large part of them in English and some of which have proved to be the bestsellers. He is the founder of Vanhanh University and has taught at Columbia and Sorbonne. I feel obliged to him for the fact that he knows so much about rich ancient Indian culture, especially the Buddhist Culture, which he utilizes in his creative writings for the benefit of the world. He was able to convince the policy makers in the USA and thereby to the whole world that violence is not a solution to any problem, let alone war.

The people of Vietnam were engaged in relentless warfare. Therefore through his poems he tried to raise their conscience:

Here is my breast! Aim your gun at it, brother shoot!  
I offer my body, the body my mother bore and nurtured.  
The body that will be shot at belongs to  
Our mother, mine as well as of you brother.

(*Collected Poems*: 6)

The poet wonders how people kill one another when there is not even an apparent logic for killing. He clarifies that our bodies that are being shot at, are the common property of our mothers who rear and nurture them. He is aware how the winds from afar coming from China and Russia on the one hand and the USA on the other, of Communism and Capitalism respectively, swept Vietnam across creating a deep chasm between the people. The poet did not take sides with any of the ideology. His poems reflect his anguish and suffering for the loss of innocent lives. He knows, being a true follower of the Buddha, that violence and bloodshed is not a solution to any problem and that it involves too much loss in terms of lives as well as materials and that victory, if any, at this cost, becomes self-defeating. The concluding

line of the poem leaves a question: "Who will be left to celebrate a victory made of blood and fire?" The poet's quest continues. He is shocked with the killing of the innocent children. He does not see any logic, not to talk of justification, behind killing them and therefore, in his poem *Those That have not Exploded*, the poet asks why they,

"Wish to kill  
those boys with still innocent brows,  
those girls with ink-stained hands."?

(Collected Poems: 22)

The poet realizes killing someone for having different perspective on some issue amounts to a denial of the very nature of existence. The poet knows well that no two individuals, not even kins think in a similar pattern. But what is most disturbing to the poet is the of killing of innocent children who have no idea even for what are they being killed. The violence and hatred will breed further violence and hatred is a common teaching for a Buddhist. The first verse of the *Dhammapada*, popularly known as the Buddhist Bible says: -

For hatred can never put an end to hatred;  
Love alone can. This is an (unalterable)  
Law. People forget that their lives will  
end soon. For those who remember,  
quarrels come to an end. (1996: 78)

The poet has also experienced in his meditation the Buddhist law of impermanence which says that there is nothing in this world which is permanent and unchanging. Therefore, he is sure, after a deep darkness of night, there will be daybreak of light in Vietnam too. For illustration of this law of nature, he takes precedence of the coming of the Buddha himself. In his poem *Night of Prayer* the poet vividly describes the phenomenon:

That night in Tushita Heaven  
The devas looked down,  
Saw Earth, my homeland, brighter than a star,  
while galaxies inclined, worshipping  
Till East turned rose,



And the Lumbini gardens becomes soft cradle  
welcoming Buddha, newly born. (*Collected Poems*: 16)

The poet is very optimistic of the fact that since  
darkness of ignorance in Vietnam was similar to one of  
the middle land when the Buddha was born, his country  
too will have some star of light born. The poet with the  
use of simple words and their proper fitting and  
punctuation very powerfully dramatizes the whole scene:

Tonight, tonight

On Earth, my homeland,

Men look-up

Their tear-blind eye turn toward Tushita Heaven.

(*Collected Poems*: 16)

The poet knows that change is the law of nature and  
that the war will come to an end some day. But he would  
not like people to wait. He knows lots of initiatives are  
required. The first step he suggests to his followers and  
supports of peace in his poem *Those That Have Not Exploded*  
is to:

"Come, hear me,

Let us take those grenades

out of our hearts,

our motherland,

humankind." (*Collected Poems*: 23)

The poet's command in these five lines is friendly  
where instruction moves from individual to universal.  
The poet knows his proposition is very difficult to carry  
on. He makes a very strong appeal for a firm stand but  
keeps his tone imperative to keep his followers along the  
difficult path: *Let us stand/Let us stand/Side by side.* (*Collected*  
*Poems*: 23) These two lines are made of just two sentences,  
the first one 'let us stand' is repeated to make it poignant  
because it is not a simple resolution. One has to remain  
non-violent in the face of violence and therefore the  
fornearance expected is great. The second clause of the  
second line clarifies that in all cases one has to stand  
firm against hatred, war and violence. The poet knows  
the difficulty lying ahead and the kind of resolution he  
is seeking from his followers. Therefore, he wants words  
from his volunteering group:

Promise me,  
 Promise me this day,  
 Promise me now,  
 Even as they  
 Strike you down with a mountain of hatred and  
 violence;  
 Remember; brother,  
 remember; man is not our enemy,  
 The Only thing worthy of you is compassion.

(Collected Poems: 23)

The poet insists on the word promise, so he uses it four times in three lines. The poet feels the pledge is urgent too. Therefore, his emphasis shifts from 'me' in the first line to 'this day' in the second and to 'now' in the third. He again wants his followers to note carefully what he is going to say. So, he repeats the word 'remember' and which also gives the subsequent line 'man is not our enemy' an impetus. The last line lays maximum stress upon the word 'compassion' which the poet feels is the only worthy thing expected from a man. Thich Nhat Hanh explains:

"Compassion means acting with courage and deep love...we have to remain strong...helping...by our firm, clear and compassionate action for peace the kind of peace in which both sides win because it is based on mutual understanding". (Thich Nhat Hanh, *Yes Magazine*, Spring 2005).

The important deduction of the poem that "man is not our enemy" finds poet's own explanation:

"Our enemy is our anger, hatred, greed, fanaticism and discrimination against people. If you die because of violence, you must meditate on compassion in order to forgive those who kill you". (*All Is Change* 288).

The poet explains one more practical reason why we should not indulge in hatred. He says, "hatred will never let you face/ the beast in man." The beast in man can be tamed or hatred curbed, cured, with love alone. Therefore, the poet suggests his followers to practice *metta*, a meditative state of loving kindness in which one concentrates on extending unlimited universal love and goodwill to all living beings without discrimination, "Just



as mother loves her only child". (1978:75) In such a state of mind, as is clear from the poem *Contemplation*,

"Compassion springs from the heart,  
as pure, refreshing water,  
healing the wounds of life." (C.P. 46)

In the title poem of the collection called *Please Call Me By My True Names*, the poet explains a new philosophy which he himself has propounded and calls it **interbeing**". This philosophy posits that everything in the world is inter-connected. "Interbeing means to be in touch with oneself. In modern times, we want to forget about ourselves, so we invite something else to enter us, opening ourselves to T.V., to colonise us. 'In touch' means in touch with oneself in order to find out the source of wisdom, understanding and compassion. But with what should we be in touch with? We should be in touch with understanding and compassion, tradition of the Buddha and the bodhisattva. This is possible only when we are in touch with our true selves. When in meditation we are in touch with our true mind, the source of understanding and compassion will spring out. Then we will be able to see the many in one and the one containing many. I am, therefore, you are. You are, therefore, I am, that is the meaning of interbeing. Therefore, we 'inter-are'." (Being Peace, 87) when we delve deep into this philosophy, we come to realize that even the idea of time is unreal. This Buddhist idea of time also echoes in the poetry of T.S. Eliot who also was influenced by Buddhism. In his poem called *Burnt Norton*, Eliot says:

Time past and time future  
What may have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.

(Four Quartets: 14)

The same idea of time finds further corroboration in German novelist Hermann Hess's *Siddhartha* wherein the chief protagonist Siddhartha says:

"Never is man wholly a saint or a sinner. This only seems so because we suffer the illusion that time is something real, Govinda, I have realized this repeatedly. If time is not

real, then the dividing line that seems to lie between this world and eternity is also not real." (1991:112)

Life is a continuum. What we see as the present is a continuous becoming. It is a moving light where all things are just barely stepping into *visibility of beings*. Everything, everyone, in every second is always just arriving. That is why the poet says:

"Do't say I will depart tomorrow

even today I am still arriving.

Look deeply: every second I am arriving

to be a bud on a Spring branch,

to be a tiny bird, with still-fragile wings,

learning to sing in my new nest."

(Collected Poems: 72)

There is another great discovery made by the poet when we observe deeply the present moment, the illusion of boundaries and separate beings dismantles itself. The notion of identity expands. It is not just that we watch the spring branch but in our arriving we are equally the spring bud, the young bird, the caterpillar in the flower, the jewel waiting in the stone. It is what we really come to perceive. What otherwise appears to be a great paradox becomes now simple to understand as to how "the rhythm of our heart is the birth and death of all that is alive." Therefore, in the following line the poet unfolds the great truth:

"I am a frog swimming happily  
in the clear water of a pond.

And I am the grass-snake

that silently feeds itself on the frog."

(Collected Poems: 72)

In the same poem in an another stanza, the poet tries to illustrate the philosophy of interbeing with a concrete example:

I am the twelve-year old girl,

refugee on a small boat,

who throws herself into the ocean

after being raped by a sea pirate.

And I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable  
of seeing and loving.



The last two lines explain the difference between the rapist and the girl raped. Since the consciousness that flows through them is the same, life and death being the rhythm of their lives, it is because of different conditioning of their minds that one is innocent and the other evil. Only difference is that the consciousness of the latter is less evolved.

In fact, the poems selected for the present study reveal how the poet along with his vlunteers, in the face of the Vietnam War, endures suffering and teaches his followers and supports a way out of it. These poems are in a way, his journey from war to peace and from hatred to love, understanding and compassion. With his teaching of *interbeing* he makes them understand that all things and all beings are interconnected, how we are one in many and many contained in one. Therefore, all wars fought with the supposition that we are different and so are our interest is a result of our ignorance of the true nature of existence. Every ripple positive and negative affects us, we are inter-connected. Unlike many other poets Thich Nhat Hanh's understanding like that of the Buddha, is verified by his meditative experience. The poet, like, Wordsworth selects ordinary language and simple words but with their proper usage and punctuation gives the poems an extraordinary effect.

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## Translation Used as a Resource for Filling and Bridging Cultural Gaps in Indian Writing in English

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### Introduction

Non-native writers, writing in English or an alien language, have to face the problem of communicating their native cultural experience through a medium that is not rooted in their native soil. Since these writers have to express the local, regional and the national socio-cultural experience in a foreign tongue like English, the question arises whether they will successfully be able to present an authentic picture of the beliefs, customs, traditions, experience and surroundings through a foreign language bound and generated from a different socio-cultural setting or if they are able to present a realistic picture of the native socio-cultural environment and ethos what strategies they will adopt to provide a native colouring to their experience in a foreign tongue like English. Indian writers writing in English have to portray characters, depict the local folks and their lives and to express the conversations that take place between them through dialogues realistically by providing a local flavour to their medium of communication which is English in their case. Raja Rao pertinently discusses this problem in the Foreword to *Kanthapura*:

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own, the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up - like Sanskrit or Persian was before but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively

bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as a part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it. (Raja Rao 1971: 5-6)

As is evident from the above Foreword to *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao expresses his concern about writing in an alien language which according to him is not the language of our emotional make-up and recommends the evolution of a dialect which should be distinctively Indian. Raja Rao was well aware of the need to evolve a dialectal variety of English that will be able to express Indian sensibility by using deviant lexical and linguistic resources as Irish and Americans did in the case of expressing Irish and American native experience and ethos in their writings. Nigerian writer, Achebe, too, faces this predicament and favours a new variety of English to express African sensibility. He writes:

I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience..... But it will have to be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings. (Achebe 1965:62)

Indian writers writing in English who hail from different cultures have to face this problem of expressing their native experience via English a language bred and brought up in a different socio-cultural environment and hence differs fundamentally from the native Indian tongues. This implies need of creating space for a deviant variety of English by penetration of distinctive Indian words, phrases, idioms and style in order to create a dialectal variety to suit the distinctive Indian socio-cultural ethos and environment. Therefore, Indian English writers use different strategies of translation as a resource for filling and bridging cultural gaps so that their writings will be able to record and portray their native socio-



cultural ethos authentically and realistically through a language that is rooted in a different culture and hence is inadequate to express and communicate the native Indian experience of Indian writers writing in English. The present paper aims to explore the use of different translation strategies by Indian writers of English to bridge and fill the cultural gaps created out of the use of an alien medium which is evolved from a different socio-cultural environment and therefore not regarded as a suitable medium of expression by creative writers like Raja Rao and Achebe for expressing their native experience.

### **Translation and Indian Writings in English**

Earlier theories of translation influenced by Linguistics advocated translation practices as substitution of lexical items from SLT into TLT. J.C. Catford (1965) defines the process of translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)." (Catford 1965:20) However, this concept of translation as finding literal equivalents at the paradigmatic level was improved upon when a text was seen as a cohesive unit in which syntagmatic relations between words assume significance as it is the relationship between words that gives meaning to a text. However, the above mentioned concepts of translation were merely linguistic and left out the cultural and the pragmatic aspects which provide a holistic view of translation as a "cross cultural event" (Hornby 1998:98) rather than translation of mere words or sentences. According to Hornby:

This concept of translation as "action across cultures" differs fundamentally, both from the linguistically oriented approach based on equivalence or static transcoding, and from the traditional view of translation focussed retrospectively on the primacy of the "sacred" source text. It is prospectively oriented on the dynamic process of creating a target text as an integral part of a target culture

world, a text that must shift in value and significance as that world itself changes and develops. (Hornby 1998:103)

While examining Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* from the problematic of Translation, Hornby finds English as India's official language and regards expressions in English as natural due to "the cultural ties existing between the English language and Indian society" (Hornby 1998:100). The evolution of Indian English makes it possible to provide a local flavour to the socio-cultural elements. Hornby writes, "Especially prominent are elements of Indian English in passages of dialogue, while special touches of local colour such as modes of address indicate that even this is an illusion, that in fact, the characters are communicating in their own native Indian language." (Hornby 1998:100-101)

Kachru(1965) cites examples from the Indian English Literature and finds Indian English a deviant variety from its core British counterpart. He regards deviation in Indian English "an outcome of the Indianization of English which has, gradually made IE culture-bound to socio-cultural setting of India." (Kachru1965:410) Parasher (1990) supports this view of Kachru and regards Indian English a product of a long association of English with native Indian languages and the Indian socio-cultural context in which English is used in India. Discussing the evolution of Indian English, he writes:

Although English (like the language of the Aryans) was an alien language in India, it has blended itself with the cultural and social complex of the subcontinent over the years. Thus it has become Indianized through a long process of acculturation." (Parasher 1990:50)

English has been indianized in India due to its uses in Indian socio-cultural traditions and its contact with Indian language. The Indian writers of English who use the medium of English to express native Indian experience and culture many times find themselves in a situation where they are unable to express authentically themselves through this alien medium. Sharad Rajimwale, while reflecting on the problem of authenticity of portrayal of



Indian experience with reference to partition novels written in English, discusses the issue and writes:

There are two major factors in the whole issue which also point to the level of success of partition novels in Indian English: (i) the individual's involvement with the social realities which determines the 'authenticity' of portrayal; and (ii) the language one uses for portraying those realities with which he can easily identify as a cultural being and find it natural to lend power to his feelings." (Rajimwale 2009:200-201)

To overcome the problem of expressing themselves authentically, Indian writers use a deviant variety of Indian English. It has been unanimously accepted by the scholars that Indian English cannot be treated as a different language but only a variant that emerged out of various functional needs like expression of Indian experience and social environment as endeavoured by Indian writers writing in English. According to Kachru, translation may help us in the 'transfer of Indianisms in IE' which 'may involve *translation* of an Indian item' (Kachru 1983:133). Referring to the impact of translation on the indianization of English, Kachru writes:

It should be made clearer here that while transferring items from L1's to Indian English, an Indian writer of English is not necessarily thinking in terms of parallel or semi-equivalent units in IE. A creative writer may mainly be interested in 'building up' a native contextual unit in L2, and, for that, translation from L1 may be used as a language device." (Kachru 1983: 134)

### Different Translation Strategies Used by the Indian English Writers

Indian English writers have to respond to the distinctive socio-cultural needs of the Indian community. There are many areas where Standard English fails to adequately fulfill the communicative needs of the local folks and their culture. In order to equip English to competently express the Indian belief system, values, relationships, ethics and social and cultural lives of the folks, Indian writers in English use borrowings and

translation as a resource to bridge the gaps that exist due to the absence of appropriate lexical items in the vocabulary of Standard English. Indian English writers use different strategies of translation to provide a distinctive Indianness to their delineations and to save it from artificiality and inappropriacy. The next part of the paper examines some of these strategies which have been used by writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Khushwant Singh, Manju Kapur and Kiran Desai to authentically construct the Indian background in their novels through inventing and innovatively using different strategies of Translation.

Indian writers of English transliterate not only words and idioms but even whole sentences. Transliterations of many Indian slogans, exclamations, proverbs etc, which distinctively express Indian cultural system can be seen in the works of M.R. Anand, Khushwant Singh, Raja Rao and Kiran Desai etc. Since these cultural expressions do not have any substitutions in the target language culture, nor the target language has appropriate verbal replacements due to the polar differences between native Indian culture and the English culture, these writers freely engage themselves in transliterating Indian cultural expressions in English so as to render authenticity to their writings. According to Z.N. Patil:

Literal translations of Hindi and Punjabi idioms are the most notable experimental aspect of these novelists. It is often said that these translations of swear words produce crude and ludicrous effect. The gravitational pull of the mother tongue works wonders. The main purpose of the use of translation is to give the English language an Indian domicile.....Most importantly, the abusive expressions and swear words make the dialogues scintillating and lively and the characters true to their soil." (Patil 2008:67-68)

The following are some of the examples culled from the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and Kiran Desai:  
 "Aree Wah, wah, kiya kehne hain tere, meri piari jan!" (*The Private Life of an Indian Prince*, 135)  
 "Kala admi zamin par hagne wala." (*Untouchable*, 21-22)



"Hai, Hai humara kya hoga, hai, hai humara kya hoga."  
(*The Inheritance of Loss*, 72)

"Angrez ki tarah, Angrez jaisa." (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 105)

"Salaam Huzoor Chimta Sahib", said Hari, .....

'Tum Harry', said Jimmi Thomas.....

'Han, Huzoor, mai-bap', said Hari joining his hands." (*Coolie*, 198)

" 'Gandhi Mahatma ki jai' - 'Vande Mataram!' " (*Kanthapura*, 132)

Use of hybrid language is a very significant sociolinguistic trait used by the Indian writers writing in English to fill the cultural gaps and to realistically portray the native environment in English. Indian writers in English freely blend Hindi or regional vocabulary into English to create compound words, idioms and expressions. In a hybrid coinage generally two or more than two different words of two culturally different codes are mixed together to form a hybrid compound expression. In Indian writings in English, hybridization is used as a sociolinguistic device to produce a mixture of codes where loan translations of words of Hindi and other vernaculars are yoked into words of English. Generally, many native Indian words which do not have appropriate cultural substitutes in English due to cultural dichotomy between the two languages are transfused with words and grammatical items of English to maintain local flavor in the portrayal of indigenous themes and characters. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand borrow many lexical items from Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi and mix them with the lexical items of English and provide a realistic picture of cultural, traditional, experiential and environmental milieu of India. 'double-roti', (*Coolie*, 32), 'madarihood' (*Private Life of an Indian Prince*, 179), 'Sadhuhood' (*Untouchable*, 80), 'chaprasihood' (*Untouchable*, 80), 'dharmic culture' (*Untouchable*, 154) are the hybrid combinations in which transliteration of a loan native Indian word is fused into words of English. The transliteration of words e.g. 'roti' in 'double-roti', 'madari' in 'madarihood', 'sadhu' in 'sadhuhood', 'dharmic' in

'dharmic culture' are borrowed from Hindi and fused with an English word or a suffix. The native culture specific words from Hindi and regional languages are retained in Indian writings in English and used to create hybrid compounds. Such hybrid expressions contribute to Indian English idiom and style which function to indianize English to convincingly express the Indian cultural milieu. Rao and Nikam while talking about untranslatability draws our attention towards this predicament:

Words, expressions or interjections that are exclusive to a culture, a religion or jargon cannot always be translated in a satisfactory way because the same thing does not exist in the other language's culture. In many cases such words with no perfect equivalent are the words that end up being borrowed by the other language, sometimes with a possible spelling adaptation to ease pronunciation in the other language. (2011:79)

Most of the Indian writers writing in English are bilinguals and multi-linguals. These writers use cultural and experiential specificities of their native Indian traditions by freely using transliterations of lexical items from their mother tongues to express native Indian socio-cultural items found in Indian kinship terms, food items, dresses, rituals and places etc. According to Sarangi, "In India, the Indian English writers have gone back to their roots and yet, they have not totally rejected the language of the colonizer: they opt for *hybridization* of the adopted language. The indigenous words and expressions have been freely accommodated in the writings of Indian writers in English." (Sarangi 2005:119) Mixing of words, phrases and expressions of one language into another language is a frequently occurring phenomenon in the speeches of bilinguals and multi-linguals. Writers like Manju Kapur, Amitav Gosh and Arundati Roy use code-mixing as device to create Indian English idiom in order to express their themes authentically and realistically. Code-mixing takes place when speakers move from the use of one language to another in the course of a single sentence. For example,



speakers of Hindi while using Hindi when use words and expressions of English or some other language; they use code-mixed sentences. Code mixing is a mixing of vocabulary and grammatical features of two languages within a sentence. These vocabulary and grammatical features which are mixed up in another code are already visible. Code mixing is a characteristic phenomenon found in the fictions of Manju Kapur. Many Hindi and Punjabi words related to native Indian food items, places, professions, relationships, dresses, and rituals etc. which do not have literal equivalents in English due to its alien cultural background are freely code-mixed into English in her novels. The code-mixed idiom with abundance of Hindi and Punjabi lexical items makes her language familiar for the Indian readership as it sees its own life and culture through these code-mixed expressions. Here are a few examples of code-mixing found in the novels of Indian writers that contribute to Indianness in their styles:

"She was so keen to study, bap re." (*Difficult Daughters*, 5)

"You've destroyed our family, you *badmash*, you *randi*." (*Difficult Daughters*, 221)

"Do not the *dharma sastras* themselves call the foreigners *melechas*, Untouchables?" (*Kanthapura*, 131)

"We all cry out 'Narayana! Narayana!'" (*Kanthapura*, 181)

"I don't know what the *kaljug* is coming to!" (*Untouchable*, 55)

" 'What to do, Chachi?', These college really make you work."

'Hai re, beti! What is the need to do a job? A woman's *shaan* is in her home." (*Difficult Daughters*, 16)

"Yes, Chacha - this is *Kalyug*, the dark age." (*Train to Pakistan*, 96)

"There is a lot of *zulum* in Pakistan." (*Train to Pakistan*, 143)

"Babuji, my *kismet* has waked up at last." (*Train to Pakistan*, 125)

"Anything can happen. All these *yatras* have *goondas* attached to them." (*A Married Woman*, 249)

Indian writers in English use alien medium of communication, but their writings have been issued forth from a distinctive native Indian environment. However, there are many domains particularly cultural, experiential, emotional and intellectual aspects of Indian life where English fails to adequately express itself as it finds lacking in vocabulary and idiom that will satisfactorily be able to express the peculiarities of Indian cultural milieu. Language and literature are deeply rooted in culture and are culture specific. They belong to a particular society that has its own world view which is diametrically opposite from the world view of the other societies. The cultural specific world view of Indian society contributed to the distinctiveness of Indian English which is related to the common core British English but at the same time is also deviant from the norm due to the new demands it has to fulfill in order to perform the new communicative needs. It has therefore to employ borrowing, transliteration, hybridization, code-mixing and translation to equip itself to perform the new communicative needs of the natives. Many Indian writers in their writings use Indian socio-cultural environment in their writings use translation of Hindi expressions as a strategy to bridge the cultural gaps by indianizing English. Indian writers have used translation of words, phrases and even whole sentences to authentically express the socio-cultural ethos of Indian life and culture. The following are some of the examples in which Hindi expressions are translated into English to create Indian environment.

"So you are a traitor to your salt-givers! (Kanthapura: 25)

"You are my mother-father." (*Private Life of an Indian Prince*, 38)

"Your shoe on my head." (*Untouchable*, 92) "Why do you eat my head?" (*Untouchable*, 36)

"Hakimji, I shall be your slave all my life." (*Untouchable*, 91)

"Is this your father's house that you come and rest here?" (*Untouchable*, 80)



"As long as he is there no one can harm a single hair of my head." (*Train to Pakistan*, 123)

These are some of the examples of translations of Hindi expressions so commonly used by the Indian speakers.

### **Conclusion**

Indian writers in English use an alien medium to describe Indian scenes, characters and themes. Due to cultural differences and alienations between native Indian environment and English an alien medium representative of a different culture, many cultural gaps exist at the paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels. These cultural gaps at the paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels do not find authentic fillers in English due its association with a different culture. Due to exclusive nature of these cultural traces, Indian writers in English use translation as a means to fill them and to negotiate between the two opposite cultures - Indian and the British. According to Bahera:

Though multiculturalism conceives cultures as autonomous, it opens up a space for constant "negotiation" between them and even facilitates the process of hybridization. Between cultural forms there is the clearing in which interpenetration takes place. Translation operates in this clearing, in the "in-between" space, as an aid to and product of this negotiation process. (Bahera 2010:121)

Therefore, retention, hybridization, adaptation, transliteration and translation of native lexical items, words, phrases and sometimes even whole sentences have been extensively used by Indian writers to lend a native colouring to their descriptions. As is evident from the examples used for illustration in the fore-mentioned descriptions, Indian writers who use English as a medium to communicate Indian sensibility in many situations find themselves inadequate to authentically communicate the native experience. In such a problematic situation translation is used as a resource by the Indian writers to fill the cultural gaps arising due to polar differences

between Indian and Western cultures. Translation contributes to Indianization of English and in evolving Indian variant of English capable of filling these cultural gaps arising due to the use of an alien medium. It has been successfully used as a strategy by the Indian English writers to express native Indian experience and socio-cultural milieu realistically and authentically.

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## Identity Crisis in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*

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*Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) is a collection of short stories by Jhumpa Lahiri. The book is divided into two parts. In part I there are five short independent stories while in part II there are three interrelated but nevertheless complete stories on their own. These stories, as they reflect the author's immigrant experience, are essentially autobiographical. A Bengali girl married to an American, she feels the consequences of interracial marriages and the chasm between the parents and the first generation Indian Americans. The question of being caught between two worlds, two cultures and belonging to neither is the predicament of the second generation diasporas leading to a strong sense of loss of identity. Those born and brought up in the U.S.A. lead a lifestyle that grants a lot of freedom against conservative rituals and home conventions. But they cannot escape from their Indian roots. In fact, most of the stories are full of underlying angst.

As there is not enough space to deal with all the eight stories in this paper, I take up only the title story. In this story, a second generation diaspora, Ruma is married to an American called Adam. After the death of her mother, her father, a retired official, spends his time travelling all over Europe. Her father had always loved gardening and so he took care of Ruma's garden. After it, he forms a special bond with his grandson by Ruma, a three year old Akash who is "the sort of American child she was always careful not to be, the sort that horrified and intimidated her mother" (UE 23).

The title is significant with the garden metaphor. The metaphor of gardening and using the soil to suit one's



purpose equals the building of a new life in a strange "unaccustomed" land. Without any notice to Ruma, her father was making love with another widowed diaspora called Mrs. Bagchi whom he met in one of his travels.

In this story "Unaccustomed Earth", the protagonist and other characters are all suffering from a sense of loss due to a strong identity crisis. All of them are seen subconsciously in search for self-affirmation and realization. In this story, Ruma, Ruma's father and Akash are seen to be afflicted with identity crisis. Caught between two worlds but not fitting, she suffers silently. She is totally alienated from her father, husband and son.

In this story we see Ruma alienated from her own father, son and herself. It may be due to her own alienated relationship with her parents over the years that she seems not to be comfortable with self and her Bengali roots. "Bengali had never been a language in which she felt like a child." (12). When Ruma speaks Bengali, her mother tongue, she feels like a lost child even though she is an adult, a married woman with a young son and another baby on the way. Ruma's relationship with her mother was often volatile while her relationship with her father was cordial.

The feeling of inadequacy underlies common features of diaspora. Those who are unable to adapt or be at peace with the environment around them, become alienated and estranged from others and themselves. Ruma is unhappy to know that her husband Adam is losing patience with her. There is always the feeling of nostalgia in a diaspora. "There were times when Ruma felt closer to her mother in death than she had in life." (27) The past is made more glorious with memory romanticizing it. In traditional Indian families a common practice is the movement of the children with their parents. Though filial devotion is very important in Indian societies, Ruma, being a diaspora, raised in America where people are more independent, she "feared that her father would become a responsibility, an added demand, continuously present in a way she was no longer used to." (7). In the

later part of the story Ruma realizes that she needed her father more than ever before.

Being alienated, Ruma is unable to reach out to anyone even to those women nearby the public pool where Akashi took, takes weekly swimming lessons. She is also alienated from her own home city Seattle and its surroundings. She tried to reach out to her father but failed. When Ruma finds the postcard filled with a range of emotions and which was the same postcard her father had been searching for, she realizes that her father had fallen in love not with his grandson but with a new woman, Mrs. Bagchi. Ruma put a stamp in the postcard for the mailman to take it away later in the day. This last action saves Ruma from a lost soul not connecting with anyone, to become a mature woman, ready to become happy and independent.

Ruma's father, who has lived a lifetime without falling in love with anyone, develops a particular fondness for his grandson during his visit. He kept a formal relationship with his wife and children. To him, family seems to be more of a social obligation and duty than anything else. After the death of his wife because of heart attack while undergoing anaesthesia for routine gallstone surgery, he retired from the pharmaceutical company and spends his time travelling and touring Europe. His craving for solitude and wandering implies in him a feeling of instability and rootlessness bringing in identity crisis. Somdatta Mandal explains such situations as: "Living in exile usually leads to severe identity confusions." (Mandal 41).

The reason why Ruma's father sends postcards from his travels with brief cryptic lines and with one sided communication as he never stays in a place long enough for Ruma to reply back, is his belonginglessness and rootlessness, the overall basis of identity crisis. Actually, he was now free from family responsibility and burden. For the same reason he refused Ruma's offer to move in with them. Ruma's offer to him to stay was not what he wanted. "He did not like to be part of a family, part of the mess, the feuds, the demands, the energy of it"



(UE 53). He did not like to be a shadow by living in the margins of his daughter's life as he felt that, "Life grew and grew until a certain point. The point he had reached now." (53).

In fact, Ruma's father did not expect her to do so as she was not born up that way. He thought that she was after all, a child of America. Migrating abroad he abandoned his parents and left his siblings to care for them instead of himself. He feels himself guilty of and realises that, "He has forsaken them" (51). So, he expects the same treatment from his children also. But his contentment is revealed while the author describes the scene when he looked out of the plane window on his flight to Seattle, "The sight filled him with peace; this was his life now, the ability to do as he pleased, the responsibility of his family absent just as all else was absent from the unmolested vision of the clouds" (8)

In one of his travels he met Mrs. Bagchi, a diaspora like himself, travelling alone and living in Long Island. Widowed at a young age, she moved to America, at the age of twenty two, to escape from her parents trying to marry her off again. To this independence of hers, Ruma's father was attracted to her. As the only two Bengalis they naturally struck a conversation and became inseparable. The rest of the tour group mistook them as husband and wife. Since Mrs. Bagchi was tied down by another man she was adamant on not marrying. And this makes her more appealing to Ruma's father. Unlike his late wife, she was independent, wore western clothing and was not so gregarious like Ruma's mother. Ultimately he was relieved by convincing himself of the situation which the author explains as:

In a way he was glad that Mrs. Bagchi's heart still belonged to another man as, "It was not passion that was driving him, at seventy, to be involved, however discreetly, however occasionally, with another woman. Instead it was the consequence of being married all those years, the habit of companionship (30).

Ruma's father wants to be free from the constraints

of family. But he cannot easily snap off filial bonds and paternal instincts. At the same time, he also wants to be with Mrs. Bagchi for emotional stability. However, taking pains he is always careful not to include Mrs. Bagchi in his pictures and videos as he is wary that it might upset his daughter. The circumstances under which he unexpectedly ends up falling in love with his three year old Akash is described by the author:

Oddly enough, it was his grandson, who was only half Bengali to begin with, who did not even have a Bengali surname with whom he felt a direct biological connection, a sense of himself reconstituted in another (54).

Though tempted to accept Ruma's offer to move in with them as he thinks about Akash, he is suspicious and critical of this newly formed bond between his grandson and himself as he feels it will not last. Predictably, he thinks that Akash will soon turn into a teenager, an alien, one day shutting his door on his parents Ruma and Adam. "It was inevitable" (54). But by now three year old Akash is blissfully unaware of the identity crisis that he is soon to encounter. From the background profile we have got, we can certainly predict the same predicament that Akash is soon to face. But with an affirmative vision, we can hope that Akash will be able to embrace one culture more freely, if not the other since he is the son of interracial parents of which the father is an American.

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## A Critical Appraisal of Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*

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Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music* is an unmusical masterpiece of fictional literary world, dealing with the metro-centric problems associated with multiple perspectives. As a man of cosmopolitan attitude, Seth focuses his attention on the issues of global migration, multi-cultural commitment and wandering mind. Vikram Seth crosses the boundaries of nationalism through the characterization of a magical portrait gallery which he displays while penning down *An Equal Music*. By doing so he proves his metal as a true champion of humanity, who spares no stone unturned by investing love loaded with music. About the source of *An Equal Music*, Seth narrated to Ashok Malik:

"Well, I was walking across Hyde Park in Kensington Garden with a friend. It was a sort of grey, rainy day and I visualized in my mind's eye someone who was looking at the waters of the Serpentine very intensely. I could tell he was European or American. And I was just talking to myself, 'I've got a feeling that this person who I am visualizing has something to do with not a short story, probably a novel I'm going to write,' I turned to my friend and said, 'I have this picture of man but I have no idea about him. So do you?' My friend who's a musician said, 'Well, he's a musician.' 'Supposing he is a musician, what instrument does the play?' Because my friend's a violinist, he said, 'How about the violin?' I said, 'I'm not very fond of the violin. I prefer the cello.' But it got me thinking..."<sup>1</sup>

*An Equal Music* is a beautiful blending of human passionate love with musical atmosphere, fully charged with the fire of emotion. Seth's interest in music is spontaneous as he has admitted that music to him is dearer even than prose: "When I realized that I would be writing about it, I was gripped with anxiety. Only slowly did I reconcile myself to the thought of it."<sup>2</sup>

Vikram Seth has set the novel in the Western World with all the characters of the European origin. *An Equal Music* deals with the love story of Michael Holden, an emotional volatile musician who has fallen passionately in love with Julia. Both of them are students of Carl Keil, a music-teacher of extra-ordinary insight. The thirty seven years violinist knows that love is like quicksilver in the world. He earns his income by teaching violin to rather uninterested students with a bitter realization:

Leave music to those who can afford indulgence. In twenty years no butcher's son will be violinist, no, nor daughter neither. Virginie will not practice, yet demands these lessons. I have worse students-more cavalier, that is, but none so frustrating.<sup>6</sup>

Michael is aware of his meaningless relation with Virginie. Being sixteen years younger than him, their affair does not last for a long time. Actually, it was their lust and laziness that brought them closer. The talented lady Virginie was used by Michael. She was a full time student with ex-boyfriends and a number of relatives. She was engaged in many activities of life whereas Michael was completely dependent only on music. Their affair grew with the passage of time.

Virginie half-rises from her pillow. Her painter-black eyes are smoldering and, with her black hair falling over her shoulders and down to her breasts, she looks delicious. I take her in my arms. (19)

Many years ago, Michael was in love with Julia McNicholl. Once Michael had a dispute with his teacher over the style of his playing piano. At that moment, Julia supported her teacher, and this forced him to abandon his studies. In course of time, Michael realized his mistake which he committed by misunderstanding Julia's accusation. He finds himself alone in the crowded world. After a long gap of time, he happens to meet Julia but now she is a married woman with seven year old son. Michael and Julia begin to meet secretly, putting aside the moral code Christianity.

*An Equal Music* is a tale of love with wild romantic



melancholy. Michael is always haunted by the memories of Julia who has already been married to an American banker, James Hansen. Michael's sudden meeting with Julia brings enough changes in their life due to their love for music. This musical love story has artistically been interwoven by the novelist.

Michael's father was running a butcher's shop in a small street in Rochdale. To pursue studies was not the part of his family. His father does not like the idea that Michael should offer music as his career. Carl Kail, a perfectionist in the field of music had suggested Michael to pursue his career in music, realizing his rich potential and uncompromising nature. For Michael, Julia is the finest creation of nature; music is the finest creation of man. When Michael is being considered for the Maggiore, Helen enquires of Julia. He negates the query saying that they are not in touch with each other. Then Helen expresses pity: "I do feel it's a pity when one loses touch with friends," (30)

Michael is lost in the world of Julia's love. He did every possible effort to contact her, but of no use. Once Julia is spotted by Michael in the bus, he starts shouting, Julia, Julia. He requests her to look at him but she is engrossed in reading a book. She seems to be smiling but not at Michael but at something in the book. Michael gesticulates and tries to convey the message to the man who is just sitting behind her. He taps Julia on her shoulder pointing towards Michael. We can look into the following fines:

"Julia looks at me, her eyes opening wide in what? Astonishment? dismay? recognition? I must look wild-my face red-my eyes filled with tears-my fists still clenched -I am a decade older-the lights will change any second. I rummage around in my satchel for a pen and piece of paper, write down my telephone number in large digits, and hold it against the glass. She looks at it, then back at me, her eyes full of perplexity. Simultaneously, both buses begin to move. My eyes follow her. Her eyes follow me." (41-42)

He sees Julia after a gap of ten years but he is restless to meet her. His endeavour to follow her goes in vain because when he reaches and catches up the bus, Julia is not there. Her absence from the bus throws him in the mire of frustration and disappointment. His motionless condition draws the attention of the assembled people. He weeps bitterly under the statue of Eros. Now he is haunted by the fleeting moment of Julia's presence in the bus: "The two layers of glass between us, like a prison visit by a loved one after many years." (44)

Michael keeps on contemplating over his love for Julia without coming to any conclusion. His attempt to forget his sweet-heart Julia makes him absolutely restless to the core of his psyche. He defines love from his own angle as love is not finding someone to live with; it is finding someone you cannot live without. Erica Cowan, an agent, wonders to see Michael's so much interest in Julia after so many years. Finally, it is reported that Julia's father is no more and her mother has left for Austria without leaving any address. Therefore, Julia is unknown to her neighbours. Julia's absence becomes unbearable for Michael because he passionately longs for her. He cannot bear to be in the company of others, but when he is alone, he is sick with the memories of her. He recalls their first meeting in the second part of the novel:

"It was a cold night, with bits of snow and slush on the ground, and Vienna was at its greyest and grimmest. We walked to the restaurant. I slipped, and she stopped me from falling. I kissed her instinctively- amazed at myself even as I did it- and she was too surprised to object... From the moment of our first meeting I could think of nothing but her. I don't know what she saw in me other than my almost desperate longing for her, but within a week of our meeting we were lovers." (80)

Michael and Julia belong to two different backgrounds as far as their social status is concerned. Julia's father is a professor of History at Oxford. Though she is younger than Michael yet many ways she seems older and more mature than Michael. His interest in music sharpens when



he comes in contact with Julia, for she teaches him to minutely observe the musical vibration. There are a lot of differences between Michael and Julia yet they are drawn to each other. Julia hails from a highly educated family whereas Michael belongs to butcher family and he is self educated. At the end of the part two of the novel, an unexpected meeting of these two is marvelously narrated:

"It was you on the bus, I knew I couldn't be wrong."

"Yes"

"Why did you wait so long to get in touch with me? Why didn't you look for me in the phone book?"

There is a pause. (93)

Michael observes that Julia's hand is without ring and she seems to be older with the same beauty as she was. His suffering doubles when he learns that Julia has been married to an American banker and they have a seven year old son. Still she accepts at last her obsession for him because he has been a huge part of her life. Michael and Julia meet secretly and the novelist has realistically depicted the meeting of the passionate lovers:

"Then, gently, lightly, I kiss the side of her neck. She breathes slowly, but says nothing."

"Well" I ask,

She smiles, a little sadly.

"Making music and making love-it's a bit too easy an equation." (136)

In part four of the novel, Virginia's restlessness explodes when Michael avoids her continuously for two weeks. Having learnt about Michael's infidelity, she gets wildly excited. She is determined to know whom Michael is sleeping with: "Don't lie to me again. I know it, Are you sleeping with someone?" "Yes" (165) Michael admits his love for Julia, Virginia curses him sharply: "I hope she makes you miserable. So that you can't sleep or anything." Michael is of the opinion that his affair with Virginia was a temporary arrangement. (165)

It is very difficult to separate love from music in *An Equal Music* because it is the music that has electrified

their love for each other. Under the mounting pressure of sensuality, they move from normality to abnormality by violating the Christian code of morality in their extra-marital relationship. It is the musical vibration of violin that enables them to perceive the milieu of their living. The newly reunited lovers borrow a lovely simple wooden floored flat in at Sant' Elena. And this staying together in an apartment, gives Michael a chance to revitalize his love for her:

"She is the woman I love, and we are in Venice, so I presume this is a joy. It is. We catch a late boat back to the apartment, and fall asleep almost chastely in each other's arms." (264)

Having noticed a sheet of paper sticking out from a book, Michael becomes abnormal. He cannot tolerate Julia's deep love for her husband. In a frenzy of hate and disgust, he beats her. Out of jealousy in love, Michael behaves madly. Here the words of Shoba De are worth quoting:

And in 'An Equal Music' he has a fine story to tell. Forget the narrative skill. Forget the germ like structure. Forget the polished prose. And fluid flow. Seth has a great story to share with his readers. And the doomed nature of it, is established in the very first Paragraph where he describes the narrator's reaction to the traffic which slashes through Hyde Park. It comes to his ears as white noise.<sup>3</sup>

The novel is a marvellous work of Vikram Seth. The critics praise the novel for its delicate poetic touches, beautiful use of phrases, its prose, efficient use of words and formidable research. Gita Hariharan praises the novel in the way: "The novel is an indication of immense confidence that Seth has in himself as a writer. Relying greatly on his personal knowledge of civilized Europe, he has written an English novel."<sup>4</sup> Vikram Seth rightly concludes the novel:

"Music, such music, is a sufficient gift why ask for happiness, why hope not to grieve? It's enough, it is to be blessed enough, to live from day to day and to hear such music not too much or the soul could not sustain it- from line to line." (381)



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## Interpretation of *Savitri* by Toru Dutt & Sri Aurobindo: A Study of Indian Literary Vision

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The contributions of Toru Dutt and Sri Aurobindo, the two imperishable monuments of Indo-Anglian poetry, can hardly be over-emphasised. While the former died at the young age of twenty-one, yet re-orienting herself to Indian thought and culture, and in the process creating a slim body of work, both prose and poetry, that gave definitive direction to Indian writing in English; the latter, is a towering figure in the realm of the spiritual and the poetic world. Sri Aurobindo's creative works are monumental in their output as well as in their attempt to synthesize spiritual experiences in poetic formulation. Sri Aurobindo's speculations on the future of man and his world are based on his own yogic realizations. His aesthetic imagination is supported by his synthetic vision, viewing life in totality, and his theory of poetry is a search for this synthesis. The purpose of poetry, to him, is not the selection of the best words, nor is it emotions recollected in tranquility, nor a spontaneous overflow of feelings. It is not even the criticism of life, or an expression of personality, or a jumble of rule-governed words of a form-conscious artist. To him, poetry is the sacred fire, which burns the dross and the evil of man and purifies him of baser instincts. Through poetry, he wished to achieve something akin to the 'Vedic Mantra'. The purpose of Mantra is to concentrate upon the Divine and thus achieve a union with the Almighty. Mantra has heart-transforming, spirit-captivating, and soul-elevating quality. A Mantra has the melody, sweetness, and rhythm of music, enchantment of the Ethereal, and a capacity to



contain the infinite within the expressions of words. The poet is thus, no mere juggler of words, but is a seer, a seeker after the truth- a 'Rishi'. In him lies the power of seeing and incorporating the ideals of 'Satyam Shivam Sundaram'. Sri Aurobindo himself explains, 'The true creator [of poetry], the true hearer is the soul. The more rapidly and transparently the rest do their work of transmission ... who are prepared to receive it.'

Poetry being the 'Mantra of the Real,' requires the union of three elements: (i) the highest intensity of rhythmic movement, (ii) the highest intensity of style-of verbal form and thought substance, and (iii) the highest intensity of the soul's vision of the Truth. As regards its rhythmic movements, it is not merely metrical rhythm, nor a set harmony or a set melody, however satisfying to the outer ear and the aesthetic sense, into which most poets fall, but a kind of deeper and more subtle music, a rhythmical soul movement entering into the material form and often overlooking it, and trying to bring out an echo of hidden harmonies. Its style should present things living to the imaginative vision, spiritual sense, soul-feeling, and soul-sight. The words of poetry should not be only revealing and effective, but also illumined and illuminating. They should have both thought and sound values. Above all, the poet should be the seer, hearer, and realizer of the vision of the Real, the Eternal, the True, the Beautiful, the Delightful, and the Divine. Thus, poetry is essentially a soul act; the true creator of poetry is the soul. It begins in the Absolute and ends in the Absolute. Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics has therefore been characterized as 'meta-aesthetics' or 'meta-poetics'. However, for poetry to be high, real, and mantric, it is not necessary that the vision it embodies is mystical or divine. It may be a vision of a force or action, or of sensible beauty, or of truth of thought, or of emotions of pleasure or pain of this life or of life beyond; but it is necessary that it is the soul that sees, and the senses, the heart, and thought offer least obstruction to soul's

revelation. To Sri Aurobindo, the ultimate aim of poetry is to take us to the level of supermind. Regarding this transformation of mind into supermind, he says: "The gulf between mind and supermind has to be bridged, the closed passages opened and roads of ascent and descent created where there is now a void and a silence.....conscious into our entire being and nature."<sup>2</sup>

Such then, is the expanse of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. Toru Dutt, on the other hand, was a fragile little child whose fate has been to remain the 'inheritor of unfulfilled renown.' Prof. Iyengar says: "Beauty and tragedy and fatality criss-crossed in the life of Toru Dutt, and it is difficult, so it is with Toru Dutt."<sup>3</sup> The beautiful descriptive phrase "This Fragile exotic blossom of song,"<sup>4</sup> which Sir Edmund Gosse uses for Toru is one that is involuntarily called to mind after reading her letters, and words of prose and poetry. She remains, throughout, a woman-child - pure, sweet, modest, and essentially loveable. Toru moved among people to whom the beauty of a homely life was apparent, and in a setting where even the barrier of faith could not spoil tender affection between Toru and her grandmother. It was, however, the love and affection she bore for her father that remained supreme. Her father's thoughtful, unwearying care is referred to again and again in her letters. His eyes seem to have followed her live-long day. It is he who orders wraps for her at the slightest cold breeze, and tells her when it is time for the busy pen to rest awhile, and she laughingly protests that he had better keep her in a glass case. In fact, Toru's father did much more than looking after her physical well-being; it was from him that Toru learnt to put steps upon the road to literary horizon. The Dutt family of Rambagan, which pulsated with an atmosphere of learning and rich literary culture in those days, nurtured innate poetic gifts of Toru. Publication of *The Dutt Family Album* in 1870, an anthology of poems by her father Govin, uncles - Hur and Greece, and cousin Omesh, which was a landmark in the cultural history of



the Dutt's, must have provided the young genius necessary impetus to launch on an adventure of the literary kind of her own. An encouraging assistance was always at hand in the form of her father, who remained her unfailing companion till the last day of her life.

It was her mother, however, who exercised a benign influence on her in the early stage of her life and implanted a deep and abiding respect for the Hindu scriptures and ancient lores of India. It may be mentioned here that when Govin and his brothers along with their family members were baptized in 1862, the Dutt wives were at first vehemently opposed to conversion, "but Kshetramoni later became a most ardent Christian, and as a family, Govin Chunder, his wife and children practised the deepest faith in Christianity."<sup>5</sup> Toru was thus indoctrinated in both Hinduism and Christianity, and though after conversion, Toru remained a staunch Christian to the end of her days, she had a secular education which did not let her look askance at the ancient ways which she plunged into the treasurers of European literature. This intermingling of culture and ethos is evident in all her works, whether be it the translation of French poetry or interpretation of the ancient ballads of Hindustan.

The most ambitious work of both Toru Dutt and Sri Aurobindo is *Savitri*. While Toru's *Savitri* is an epic in miniature, divided into 5 parts and running into over 80 stanzas, Sri Aurobindo's work titled *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, published in two volumes, is in three parts, divided into 12 books containing 49 Cantos, and making up a total of about 24,000 lines. In the *Mahabharata*, the story of Savitri covers 7 Cantos in the 'Vana Parva'. To better understand the nuances of the legend as dealt by Toru Dutt and Sri Aurobindo, it would be of most certain help to have an acquaintance with the legend as it originally appears in the *Mahabharata*. Aswapathy, the King of Madras, was childless. He did 'Tapa', observed fasts, and offered a hundred thousand sacrifices. Pleased with his penance, Goddess Savitri granted him the boon

of a daughter. The child was named Savitri after the Goddess of whose boon she was born. Virtuous and beautiful, she had all the attributes of a goddess and it was thus that when she came of the age, no prince was bold enough to seek her hand in marriage. King Aswapathy was greatly troubled by this and asked his daughter to choose a husband for herself. Dutifully, she went on the errand along with an old minister; after two years, her paths crossed with that of Satyavan, son of King Dayumatsen, who was living in a hermitage in the forest, because his enemy had taken possession of his kingdom. Satyavan had the qualities to be the perfect husband of such a virtuous one as Savitri and hence her parents approved of her choice. However, Narad Muni, the omniscient sage, did not acquiesce to her inclination as he had the foreknowledge of Satyavan's death after one year. Even in face of such a prophecy, Savitri persisted, saying that a maiden may choose her husband only once. With a heavy heart, her parents consented.

After marriage, the couple went to live in the hermitage, where Savitri led an austere life performing household duties and underwent penance, fasts, and vigils, as enjoined in scriptures, befitting a dutiful wife. On the fateful morning, Satyavan desired to go to the forest to collect wood and provisions for the hermitage; Savitri too insisted on accompanying him. In the forest, Satyavan, while chopping wood complained of severe headache; Savitri rested Satyavan's head on her lap. Soon Yama, The God of Death, appeared and took possession of Satyavan's soul. Savitri followed Yama carrying Satyavan's soul tied to the end of his noose. Yama, tried to persuade Savitri to retrace her steps and perform Satyavan's funeral rites. To this, Savitri replied that wifely duty bids her to be always with her husband wherever he goes or is carried. She further replied that since she had already walked seven paces with him, she could claim the privilege of friendly talk with him. She then said that of the four stages (ashrams) of human life - Brahmacharya, Grihastha,



Vanprastha, and Sanyasa, she and Satyavan, had been leading the second when Satyavan was struck dead. Savitri pleaded that Yama, who is also the God of Dhrama.i.e. Righteousness should permit them to fulfil obligations of all four stages of life.

Yama, pleased with Savitri's sweet, persuasive talk asked her to seek a boon except that of Satyavan's life. Savitri requested Yama to restore the power of sight of her father-in-law, which was readily granted. However, Savitri continued to follow Yama cajoling and pleading, so he blessed her with a second and then a third boon. For fulfilment of the second boon, Savitri desired that her father-in-law may regain his kingdom, and next she wished that her father, King Aswapathy, may have a hundred sons. Lord Yama granted both her wishes and asked her to return. Savitri again replied that her place was with her husband wherever he happened to be. Her talk was so persuasive and so full of righteous flavour that Lord Yama gave her the invocation of the fourth boon. Savitri now begged that a hundred sons may be born of her and Satyavan. Yama consented and entreated her to return, but Savitri followed him still, holding her conversation more sweetly and wisely than before. Greatly pleased, Lord Yama bestowed on Savitri the final boon; she reminded the God of Death that unless Satyavan's life was restored, the earlier boon was incapable of fructification. Yama realized the truth and released Satyavan's soul from the clutches of his noose, blessed Savitri heartily, and disappeared in a flame.

Savitri hurried back where lifeless body of Satyavan lay, lifted his head and placed it on her bosom. As Satyavan came back to life, she looked at him with lingering affection. The couple then slowly made their way towards the hermitage. On the way, Savitri saw the remains of a burnt tree, whose cinders were still flickering, as it was dark and difficult to trace back their path to hermitage, Savitri lighted some faggots, and since Satyavan was still weary from his deathly encounter, she

suggested that they should spend their night in the forest till dawn. Satyavan, however, assured her that he was strong enough to walk the way, besides his parents would be anxious on account of their long absence. Thinking of the plight of his parents, Satyavan wept bitterly. On reaching the hermitage, they found that Yama's first boon had already come to be fulfilled with the restoration of Dayumatsen's sight. To explain the miracle and the cause of their long absence, Savitri disclosed the truth - Narad Muni's prophecy, her vows and penance, her accompanying Satyavan to the forest, Satyavan's deathly swoon, Yama's appearance and her duel of wits with him and Yama's grant of five boons. Next morning, even as the hermits were talking to Dayumatsen about the divinity of Savitri, there came some people with the news that the usurper had been jailed by faithful ministers, his troops had dispersed, and the people eagerly awaited the return of their beloved king. Thus Yama's second boon too came to be fulfilled. Dayumatsen, his queen, his son and daughter-in-law, marched towards the kingdom in a chariot. Other boons of Yama too came to be fulfilled in due course of time. King Aswapathy became the father of a hundred sons and so did Savitri and Satyavan.

#### **Toru Dutt's Treatment of the Theme of Savitri**

Toru Dutt has handled the theme with exclusion, consideration, and abridgement. The method of narration is dramatic, its action being presented mainly through dialogue. We know the characters directly as they speak for themselves. The poem narrates the vicissitudes of Princess Savitri and her luck in facing the God of Death, from whom she wrests her husband's life. The ballad is divided into five parts. The first part deals with Savitri's parentage, descriptions of her grace and beauty, her falling in love with Satyavan, and reluctant approval of her marriage to Satyavan by her parents and Narad Muni. The second part contains Savitri's marriage, her going to the hermitage where Satyavan lived with his old



parents, her constant devotions to gods and goddesses by keeping fasts and offering prayers, arrival of the day when Satyavan was to die according to Narad Muni's prophecy, and Satyavan's departure for forest along with Savitri. In the third section, the court of Yama is shown. When his messengers are unable to bring the soul of Satyavan, Yama himself decides to go for it. In the fourth section, arrival of Yama at the scene where Satyavan is lying, supported by Savitri is depicted, as also Yama's possession of Satyavan's soul, Savitri's persistent following of Yama and her philosophical discussion with him, and his grant of three boons to Savitri - including the life of Satyavan. In the fifth section, we see Satyavan regaining his consciousness, his pleasant talk with his wife, their return to hermitage, and their blissful domestic life.

It may be noted that Toru Dutt sticks by and large to the original. However, she abridges the original story to give it a dramatic appeal, and herein lies her maturity as a poetess. Toru does not make any mention of the birth of Savitri with which the story begins in the *Mahabharata*. The poem begins with Savitri's dawning youth and her falling in love with Satyavan whom she saw in a hermitage. In the original story, Savitri, on her return to the palace, speaks her mind to her father in presence of Narad Muni. Toru makes Savitri confide her feelings to her mother; she thus preserves feminine modesty and bashfulness of her heroine. Toru also curtails description of marriage preparations. In the *Mahabharata*, the wedding takes place in the hermitage, in Toru's poem, the wedding is performed at the king's palace, and Savitri and Satyavan go to hermitage in a procession. Peaceful domesticity that followed the marriage, Savitri's prayers and penances for the sake of Satyavan, and her accompanying of Satyavan to the forest are close to the original. In order to make the flow of the narrative smooth, Toru improves upon the description of Yama. In both - the original and Toru's poem, *Savitri* remains steadfast.

and persuasive to the last. In the *Mahabharata*, Yama grants Savitri five boons; Toru condenses them into three.

Toru Dutt's *Savitri* is a exposition of mysticism and fatalism - the two major components of Indian philosophy. Conception of Fate and the philosophy of *Karma* are poetically expounded in it. The doctrine of Fate implies that happiness or sorrow in a person's life is predestined. Man is a mere puppet in the hands of Fate. Narad Muni and King Aswapathy disapprove of Savitri's marriage because Satyavan is fated to die a year later. Savitri says that fate is inescapable:

If Fate so rules, that I should feel

The miseries of a widow's life, .....

Death comes to all or soon or late;

And peace is a but a wandering fire.<sup>6</sup>

There is force and conviction in her argument. If she is fated to be a widow, she will be so whether she marries Satyavan or not. On the fateful day, when Satyavan desires to go to forest in the twilight hour, Savitri, who has been keeping fasts and vigils for her husband's long life, grows apprehensive and muses on the supremacy of fate.

We are her playthings; with her breath  
She blows us where she lists in space.

(P.12)

The conception of Fate as expounded in *Savitri* is in accordance with ancient Indian philosophy. Also, the mystical tone in *Savitri* is Vedantic in substance. Savitri follows Yama when he was moving towards his dark realms carrying the soul of Satyavan. The God of Death asks her to go back and perform her husband's funeral rites. To this, Savitri reminded him of her matrimonial vow of ever being the companion to her husband come whatever. However, she is well aware of the transient nature of the mortal world. She says

And that at last the time must come,

When eye shall speak no more to eye

And love cry, - Lo, this is my sum. (P.19)

The philosophy of *Karma* is also well exemplified in



the poem. One cannot escape the result of one's actions. Joys and sorrows of our lives are the result of our good or bad actions-- whether of this life or the previous one. If we wish to be truly happy, we should not be duped by distractions of worldly pleasures, and perform our duties with diligence. Savitri succinctly illustrates the importance of righteousness and dutifulness:

Duty should be its dearest friend

If higher life it would attain.

Savitri herself leads a life of virtue and dutifulness. She is in fact, the incarnation of love. *Savitri* has an optimistic outlook. The philosophy it embodies is one that ennobles and spurs us on to lead a spiritual life. In the poem, Toru Dutt has presented a mystical conception of death. Death is not an evil to be detested, but a blessing to be welcomed. Whereas people only discern wrath and relentless persecution, Savitri sees much love and grace in the eyes of Yama. People abhor death because they are blind to the bliss of union with the Ultimate Reality which only death can deliver. Savitri says:

"To see thy shadow on their path,

But hail thee s sick souls the light". (P.21)

Death confers deliverance from pains and sufferings, and hardships and failures of life. It grants us immortality. It is only after death that soul attains perfect peace and the ethereal existence of unbound soul brings it in close communion with the Almighty. To Savitri, the company of Yama - the God of Death, is good. It dispels darkness and weariness of soul. A virtuous life is one that is spent in service of others and in company of those who are virtuous:

They multiply and widely spread,

And honour follows on their trace.(P.23)

Toru's conception of the God of Death is of a merciful one. He grants Savitri three boons including the restoration of Satyavan's life. Death is the bestower of bliss and perfection. In *Savitri*, Toru effectively conveys the mystical philosophy of the Vedanta. Material pleasures

are the play of 'Maya,' which vanish into nothingness. Man can conquer even death by the virtue of righteous conduct.

The ballad is greatly merited because of its successful re-creation of the immortal character of Savitri. In Savitri, Toru has created a luminous amalgam of virtues striding over petty world of death and evil, brightening the path of mortal existence with perennial grandeur of soul. She rises over gloom and remains invincible, attaining Herculean stature. The story of Savitri captivates the mind and heart of the reader as he anticipates with breathless anxiety the final victory of love over the forces of death.

### Sri Aurobindo's Treatment of the Theme of Savitri

The simple narrative of Savitri and Satyavan in the *Mahabharata* has been transformed by the genius of Sri Aurobindo into a deeply symbolic poem of cosmic significance. Thus, Savitri is not merely an accomplished princess, but is an embodiment of Divine Grace. She is the incarnation of 'Usha,' the Mother of Eternal Light - the World Mother. In her, the Divine and the Human are entwined in ineffable embrace. In the appearance of Savitri, Divine Grace has descended on the world to work out the salvation of man. She symbolizes the light of Truth and spiritual illumination interlocked in a struggle with the forces of darkness as symbolized by Yama. The victory is of course, of light over darkness, but it is not a victory easily won, but it is such that is wrested after a prolonged battle - a battle that is the driving force for evolution of mind into supermind. Even in the midst of human predicament, the divine status of Savitri is hinted at:

Here was no fabric of terrestrial make  
Fit for a day's use by busy careless Powers.<sup>7</sup>

The dawn, with which Canto-I of the epic begins, is symbolic of the emergence of light on the physical plane as well as on the spiritual plane. Similarly, night is the



representation of both, darkness enveloping the external world as well as ignorance and chaos pervading the spiritual realm.

Aswapathy, Savitri's father, is in Sri Aurobindo's version, no mere childless king desiring an increase of his kin; he is the human soul in its aspiration for the truth of himself, and of God. Austerities undertaken by Aswapathy have for their aim not his own salvation alone but to break the endless cycle of unfulfilled desires and frustrations into which the humankind is quagmired. He performs 'Tapas' because unless the Divine Mother incarnates herself down on the earth, it would not be possible to create the Kingdom of Truth. The Divine Mother in her infinite grace gives Aswapathy the boon that a manifestation of her grace would be born on earth. Savitri is the fructification of Aswapathy's intense aspiration for Divine help in bringing perfection unto this imperfection riddled world. Aswapathy's gains are the gains of the human race in its struggle for the attainment of Truth. Sri Aurobindo has transformed Aswapathy's Yoga into the climb of the human soul from the Inconscient to the Superconscient. Aswapathy's Yoga comprising three books, spreads over 370 pages, covers almost half the work. However, the main lines of its thought are lucid enough and the sum and substance of it may be stated in the poet's own words: "Finally, he aspires no longer for himself but for all, for a universal realization and new creation. That is described in the book of the Divine Mother."<sup>8</sup>

The episode of Narad's declaration of Satyavan's fate has been raised to the heights of spiritualism. Cosmic intentions and destiny of man are brought into play. Savitri is the Divine cast in the human mould, and she too knows her place in the cosmic battle between Light and Darkness. When Narad Muni tries to dissuade Savitri, she utters her unalterable will:

Beyond my body in another's being:  
I have found the deep unchanging soul of love.<sup>9</sup>

Subtlety and cunningness displayed by Yama during his argument with Savitri is symbolic of deceit and trickery of ignorance. Satyavan is Truth and Truth cannot die. He rises from the kingdom of Death into the world of Eternal Light where ignorance, which is death, has no place. After being in the kingdom of Light, Savitri and Satyavan descend to the earthly sphere to accomplish the work destined for them - the evolution of a new humanity. Satyavan is Truth and Savitri is Beauty, Love, and Power - power of devotion and steadfastness. When the two are allied, it can dare anything and overcome any obstacle.

Sri Aurobindo has thus transformed the story of Savitri into a poetic expression of his vision of the Divine and a gist of his 'Yogic Sadhana' or 'Integral Yoga.' He has endeavoured to synthesize three trends of ancient philosophy of the Vedanta - 'Dvaita,' 'Advaita.' And 'Vishisthadvaita.' Hence the term 'Integral Vedanta' or 'Integral Yoga.' According to his philosophy, Brahman is Omnipresent. Everything has its origin in Brahman and everything returns to him. There is no life or death, only transformation of soul. The aim of human race is 'Divine Life' and the way to it is through self-knowledge and spiritual self-perfection. Divine Consciousness, according to Sri Aurobindo, lies dormant in every human being, it can be and must be awakened. This awakening of Divine Consciousness is what constitutes self-knowledge. If all people reach that stage, they will know God and merge with Brahman and Divine Life will befall them. Toru Dutt, on the other hand, has largely retained the flavour of the original. In the *Mahabharata*, the legend of Savitri is a symbol of victory of love over death. In Toru's poem, symbolism of the *Mahabharata* is accentuated by imparting the story with elements of mysticism. Significance of virtuous life, supremacy of fate and the theory of Karma, are expressed in a lucid language of sententious style and poetical graces. *Savitri* is Toru's finest contribution to Indo-Anglian poetry in her short life span and she has created a body of poetry posterity will not willingly let die.



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## Antifeminism in Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*

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A Feminist Dictionary defines antifeminism as "[t]he conviction that women are not entitled to the same moral and legal rights as men, or to the same social status and opportunities." All antifeminist thinkers hold in common the thesis that there are innate and unalterable psychological differences between women and men, differences which make it in the interests of both sexes for women to play a subordinate, private role, destined for wife-and-motherhood. . . . [It involves] the idea that women ought to sacrifice the development of their own personalities for the sake of men and children" (54). Further, the Oxford English Dictionary describes an antifeminist person as hostile to sexual equality and to the advocacy of women's rights.

According to Hope Phyllis Weissman an "antifeminist writing is not simply a satirical caricature of women but any presentation of a woman's nature intended to conform her to male expectations of what she is or ought to be not her own . . . Indeed, the most insidious of antifeminist images are those which celebrate with a precision often subtle rather than apparent, the forms a woman's goodness is to take" (94). Valerie Sanders opines that antifeminism has often been an undercurrent in British and American thought, and may often appear the 'normal' or 'natural' way of thinking. In her view antifeminism is "a conviction that women were designed (whether by 'God' or 'Nature') to be first and foremost wives and mothers, and that their social and political subordination is the proper corollary of that position" (5). However, the term 'antifeminism' has its roots in 'misogyny' which is the earliest form of hatred of women and their subordination. Antifeminism



is traced to earliest form of Christianity: "Building upon Paul's basic assumption that women were 'daughters of Eve,' weak and pliable and dangerous to men's souls . . . early Church fathers . . . built their theology around a gendered universe in which the feminine was secondary, weak, earthly, and removed from the primary, strong, heavenly masculine power of the Deity" ([http://faculty.goucher.edu/eng211/a\\_glossary\\_of\\_terms.htm](http://faculty.goucher.edu/eng211/a_glossary_of_terms.htm)). According to *A Feminist Dictionary*, "antifeminism is an ideological defense of [misogyny]" (275). Similarly, Andrea Dworkin opines that antifeminism is the direct expression of misogyny: "Feminism is hated because women are hated. Anti-feminism is a direct expression of misogyny; it is the political defense of women hating" ([http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/andrea\\_dworkin.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/andrea_dworkin.html)). It shall therefore, be in the fitness of things to deliberate on the definition of misogyny and its various traits.

*A Feminist Dictionary* describes misogyny as "[w]oman-hating. '[It includes] the beliefs that women are stupid, petty, manipulative, dishonest, silly, gossipy, irrational, incompetent, un-dependable, narcissistic, castrating, dirty, over-emotional, unable to make altruistic or moral judgements, over-sexed, under-sexed. . . . Such beliefs culminate in attitudes that demean our bodies, our abilities, our characters, and our efforts, and imply that we must be controlled, dominated, subdued, abused and used not only for male benefit but for our own'" (275). This paper is an attempt to present Shaw's *Arms and the Man* as an antifeminist play on the basis of above mentioned traits of misogyny and antifeminism.

## II

In *Arms and the Man*, Bernard Shaw's antifeminist attitude is imbued in the various binaries projected against liberation of female characters, for example, man/woman, home/world, outer/inner and public/private spheres that he projects in the play. He propagates that men work

abroad and women within the four-walls of the house. While male characters like Major Petkoff, Sergius, Bluntschli and Nicola take up work outside their houses, cities and countries female characters like Catherine Petkoff, Raina and Louka do not even think of crossing the threshold of their houses. Shaw assigns gendered roles to his characters. He associates men to the world of bravery, war, realism and women to the world of passivity, idealism and love towards men. In his world men order and women obey. Thus, Shaw depicts male characters manipulating female characters throughout the play.

Shaw's antifeminist attitude finds a projection in the portrayal of Raina's character. He depicts that women are not able to think beyond their utmost faith in male supremacy; therefore, they submit themselves to men. At the very outset of the play, Raina and her mother, Catherine Petkoff, are shown waiting for Raina's "future husband", Sergius, whom Raina calls her hero. Catherine's emphasis on the phrase 'future husband' for Sergius reveals that girls are taught in the formative years of their lives to be submissive to men in their marriage.

Raina believes in and has full faith in masculine power. Therefore, she decides to marry Sergius and views herself as a weaker sex. Her weakness envisions in her statement to her mother: "Oh, what faithless little creatures girls are! When I buckled on Sergius's sword he looked so noble . . ." (3:127 emphasis added). Further, Raina's romantic attitude towards life makes her subordinate to men folk. She says to Sergius, "You have been out in the world, on the field of battle, able to prove yourself there worthy of any woman in the world; whilst I have had to sit at home inactive—dreaming—useless—doing nothing that could give me the right to call myself worthy of any man" (3:155 emphasis added). In Raina's statement, the binaries of realism/fantasy, strong/weak, male/female and outer/inner are manifest. By discriminating between genders, Shaw propagates that women's work is not as



important as men's. Like a typical male chauvinist, he undermines women's domestic labour. This view of Bernard Shaw is just an extension of Victorian ideal — husbands have to go out to earn while women are supposed to remain at home. G. K. Chesterton opines that women should not have their own ideals. He writes, "There is no sort of doubt that [Raina] in *Arms and the Man* is improved by losing her ideals" (170). The above view of Chesterton is unacceptable because every human being is entitled to have his or her own ideals. If men have their ideals, women also deserve to have theirs.

Shaw depicts women as liars. For example, Raina Petkoff hides Bluntschli in the balcony of her house: "I'll help you. Hide yourself, oh, hide yourself, quick, behind the curtain" (3:129). She tells that there is no stranger in her house when she is enquired by the army officers. She does not disclose anyone about Bluntschli till he is safe and sound from risks to his life. Similarly, both Raina and her mother invent a fictitious story of the chocolate cream soldier. Further, her mother, Catherine Petkoff also supports Raina's task of hiding Bluntschli and telling a lie to the army officers. But their falsehood is discovered by Sergius: "The young lady was enchanted by his persuasive commercial traveller's manners. She very modestly entertained him for an hour or so and then called in her mother lest her conduct should appear unmaidenly" (3:143). On the one hand, both the female characters tell a lie because they want to save the life of a fugitive, on the other, they are criticized by Sergius. Later on, in the play, Raina regrets her falsehood when she tries to deflect her falsehood to Bluntschli: "You were not surprised to hear me lie. To you it was something I probably did every day-every hour! That is how men think of women" (3:163). It is clear from the above speech that even if a woman tells a lie to save the life of a man, she is considered as a liar and her conduct is questioned by the male authority.

Shaw caricatures womankind by portraying Raina as

an object of romance for man's desire. He expresses his antifeminist notion by portraying that women are born for the entertainment of men. In his opinion, Raina wants to be cuddled. Her beauty and physical charms are the property of man's desires as Raina herself expresses the romance when she says, "Well, it came into my head just as he was holding me in his arms and looking into my eyes . . ." (3:127). Raina readily accepts her subservient position in marriage. She likes to be sold to the highest bidder because she is not offered any other choice. Bluntschli is the man to whom she likes to devote herself at the end of the play. She gives herself to the chocolate cream soldier who threatens her with the butt of his revolver when he enters her balcony. Further, Raina's submissiveness reflects in her speech to Bluntschli:

BLUNTSCHLI. That's just what I say. [He catches her by the shoulders and turns her face-to-face with him]. Now tell us whom you did give them to.

RAINA. [succumbing with a shy smile] To my chocolate cream soldier. (3:195-96)

In Shaw's opinion women are men-chasers. He shows that Raina and Louka are vying for the attention of men. Both unmarried female characters viz. Raina and Louka are caught in the trap of marriage at the end of the play. Raina Petkoff succumbs to Bluntschli and Louka to Sergius. On the contrary, the feminist critic Simone de Beauvoir denigrates the institution of marriage. She conflates marriage and prostitution together: "For both the sexual act is a service; the one is hired for life by one man; the other has several clients who pay her by the price" (569). Thus, Raina and Louka are subjugated to men in marriage for their entire lives.

David Satran describes Raina as an immature person as she has romantic illusions about life. Satran makes discrimination between the world of realism and the world of romanticism. He relates man to the realistic world and woman to the romantic world. He writes, "Shaw has the solid chocolate stand for a soldier's pragmatism and good



sense, while chocolate cream represents a young woman's immaturity and romantic illusions" (14). Further, David Satran defends Bluntschli's realism and masculinity. He holds, "In Bluntschli, Shaw has figuratively and literally seized on chocolate as a means through which to distinguish realistic from romanticized notion of soldiers and masculinity" (15-16). David Satran's opinion reveals Bluntschli's masculinity.

Louis Crompton holds: "In [Raina's] character we see Shaw's theory of the seriocomic concretely realized" (17). Margery Morgan opines that Raina Petkoff's relationship with Bluntschli makes her a mature woman. Morgan sees Raina's maturity in her marriage with Bluntschli. Morgan holds, "[Raina] is in an obvious sense the most childish character in the play, but this does not prevent her from being Bluntschli's aptest pupil and making the transition from nursery to marriage, ignorance to wisdom, spoiled infancy to maturity, with painless ease" (52). Morgan's views are unacceptable because he does not consider subordination of Raina Petkoff by arguing in favour of antifeminist practices like childishness of Raina and her marriage to Bluntschli.

Shaw depicts that women are passive because they do not have courage to react against difficult situations except by being emotional and seeing the glory of the world. In his opinion, it is a man who acts. Shaw's antifeminism finds reflection in his portrayal of Raina Petkoff. She views herself as "only prosaic little coward". She does not have faith in her own strength. She worships man and believes in his superiority. She says to her mother, "Yes: I was only a prosaic little coward. Oh, to think that it is all true! that Sergius is just as splendid and noble as he looks! that the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance! What happiness! what unspeakable fulfilment!" (3:127-28). Further, she is not only an object of love but also hatred for Sergius who wants to use her merely for the gratification of his sexual desire. He

does not care a bit for the dignity of women. By developing illicit relations with the maidservant Louka he deceives Raina. He subdues both Raina and Louka. Thus, he takes advantage of these two women characters in the play.

Shaw depicts Sergius as "the apostle of the higher love" (3:156). Sergius flirts with women and deceives them. He uses Raina and Louka to fulfil his physical and sexual needs. When Louka protests against the conduct of Raina, Sergius not only decries her but he also calls her "devil". In his opinion Louka is "an abominable little clod of common clay, with the soul of a servant" (3:159). In Charles Berst's opinions, Louka marries Sergius and transforms her status. Berst states, "Obviously, biological drives are more real than 'higher love', and this fact encourages Louka's hope of climbing above her class to marry Sergius. In his abandoning higher love and in her marrying for social advancement, there is a sexual and economic honesty which is in accord with the play's dénouement" (35). Charles Berst's description of Louka is simply unacceptable. A mere transfer of Louka from the one class to another does not make her an emancipated woman. Marxist feminists believe that women of the upper class are also treated as slaves by their male counterparts. One of the Marxist feminists, Olive Schreiner writes, "The inevitable and invincible desire of all highly developed human natures, to blend with their highest intellectual interests and sympathies, could find no satisfaction or response in the relationship between the immured, comparatively ignorant and helpless females of the upper class" (28). Louka's higher social advancement is, therefore, a fraud with her liberty. Sexual and economic honesty between the relationship of Sergius and Louka is just a sham for their liberty. Again, their relationship is not based on the biological drive as Berst states. Both of them are depicted to accept their "higher love". Further, Charles Berst correctly holds, "Sergius is subject to lust on the one hand, Raina to her maternal-womanly instinct on the other" (32); it reveals Shaw's antifeminism. Thus, Shaw



reveals that women are destined to endure sexual exploitation at the hands of men. He reduces women's existence to satisfy men's lust and he views her not more than a mothering machine.

Sergius' relationship with Louka reveals his masculinity hence; his attitude towards her is antifeminist. He dominates her. He forces her to be subservient to him. When Louka tries to revolt against him, he treats her with contempt. He tells her that she is subservient to him because she belongs to him: "Louka! [she stops near the door]. Remember: you belong to me" (3:182). This statement of Sergius reminds one of the Biblical stories of creation where woman is described man's inseparable part: "Then the Lord God made woman from the rib, he had taken out of the man" (Gen. 2:22). Sergius does not regard Louka as a separate entity. He warns her again when she says that it is an insult to her. He says to Louka, "Whether that is an insult I neither know nor care: take it as you please. . . . If I choose to love, I dare marry you, in spite of all Bulgaria. If these hands even touch you again, they shall touch my affianced bride" (3:182). Sergius praises her if she obeys him. He condemns her if she protests against his opinions. His antifeminist outlook manifests in his speech when he says, "[again putting his arm round her] You are a provoking little witch, Louka. If you were in love with me, would you spy out of windows on me?" (3:157). Thus, Madonna/Whore binary reflects in Sergius' attitude towards Louka. He views her not only as an inspiration of love but also as a witch. Melanie Francis describes Louka as a seductress. She deplores Louka and defends Sergius. She writes, "With blatant honesty, Louka seduces Sergius, the pretentious officer of high rank and nobility" (112). Thus, Louka is depicted as a manipulative chaser who seeks an upward social mobility.

Sergius' attitude towards Louka is also imbued with misogyny. He treats her with contempt. He views her as "a provoking little witch" (3:157), "devil" (3:158) and

"an abominable little clod of common clay, with the soul of a servant" (3:159). Similarly, he treats Raina with contempt. On the one hand, he wants to use her for the sake of his sexual needs, on the other, he considers her as a dangerous creature. He views her as a "viper" (3:186) and "a tiger cat" (3:187). These phrases reveal Sergius' antifeminist attitude about Raina and Louka.

Shaw's depiction of Raina Petkoff as an emotional girl is another example of misogyny. He reveals that Raina succumbs very easily to Sergius. She is very emotional to know Sergius' bravery on the battlefield. She accepts him as "hero", "king" and "lord" (3:155). She reveals her utmost belief in him: "I trust you. I love you. You will never disappoint me Sergius" (156). Further, Shaw propagates that women are irrational creatures. Consequently, sometimes they fight between themselves for men's attention to them, particularly, when they are vying for men's attention to fall in love with them. Such a conflict between Raina and Louka can be seen in the play:

LOUKA. My love was at stake. I am not ashamed.

RAINA. [contemptuously] Your love! Your curiosity, you mean.

LOUKA. [facing her retorting her contempt with interest] My love, stronger than anything you can feel, even for your chocolate cream soldier. (3:188)

The image of women who revolted against male domination for their freedom was emerging as New Women in the 1890s. 'A New Woman' is one who has freedom to make a decision about her marriage, economic independence, education, professional career and voting rights. Bernard Shaw as a socialist too participated in the intellectual debates about women's issues in several of his plays. In *Arms and the Man*, Shaw depicts Raina as a New Woman as is clear from the independent decision she takes to give slyly a shelter to an unknown man in her bedroom against the norms of the Victorian society. But, she cannot be considered a New Woman because this action of hers is not a revolt against male domination.



Katharyan Stober rightly concludes that she cannot be regarded a New Woman on this basis: "Indeed, Raina's version of this New Woman is independent when she admits Bluntschli into her bedroom; she is independent when she conceals him and forces him to submit to her authority; however, she reverses this dynamic by submitting to Bluntschli in the end. Raina's Eve complex facilitates her admission and concealment of a stranger and promotes falseness, but ultimately forces her to submit to Bluntschli's foreign (as well as masculine) authority" (Stober 97).

Shaw's presentation of Louka as a smoking maid-servant in the Petkoff family manifests his antifeminist approach towards women. In the stage direction, Shaw caricatures Louka when he describes her, "She impatiently throws away the end of her cigaret, and stamps on it" (3:146). On this basis, she is likely to be confused and treated as a New Woman. *A Feminist Dictionary* criticizes women's smoking. According to it, smoking is "an activity dangerous to health and to femininity" (425). One of the critics of Shaw, Margery Morgan considers Louka as "the predatory woman" (52). Morgan's statement about the dramatist's ideology of womanhood uncovers Louka as a dangerous woman. Shaw's depiction of Louka is, therefore, antifeminist in nature.

Antifeminist Shavian mothers are projected against the freedom of their daughters. Shaw's antifeminist attitude towards mother-daughter relationship shows that he does not want emancipation of women. In *Arms and the Man*, Catherine Petkoff does not protest against the patriarchal structure of the society. She inspires Raina to succumb herself to a man to secure her life. She says to Raina, "And you! you kept Sergius waiting a year before you would be betrothed to him. Oh, if you have a drop of Bulgarian blood in your veins, you will worship him when he comes back" (3: 126-27). Further, she is presented as a typical bourgeois woman who believes in her domestic roles. She is very careful about the

arrangements in her household. She says to Raina, "[businesslike, her housekeeping instincts aroused] I must see that everything is made safe downstairs" (3:128). In spite of this, Catherine's emotional attraction towards men shows her utmost belief in masculinity. She praises Sergius' masculine behaviour and his bravery at the battlefield. Her belief in Sergius' power and glory emerges when Raina says to her, "I sometimes wish you could marry him instead of me. You would just suit him. You would pet him, and spoil him, and mother him to perfection" (3:161). Catherine submits herself to her husband, Major Petkoff. She renders her wifely duties to him very honestly. She mends his coat. She obeys every command of her husband. She is never tired of teaching domestic duties of life to her daughter. She finds happiness in getting her daughter married to some man rather than making her independent. She does all that a male dominated society expects her to do.

Shaw's antifeminist outlook is revealed in his treatment of Louka as a sexual object. For example, Nicola's relationship with Louka reveals that she is made merely for amorous desires of man. Nicola's attitude towards her represents the antifeminist notion of womanhood. He reduces women's existence to that of sex objects. He denigrates Louka by dominating her. He wants to rule over her by making her his wife. He thinks that it is a man who provides woman for her clothing, cosmetics and not the least her livelihood. He sees his happiness in Louka's physical and sexual charm. It is obvious from his speech when he says to Louka, "Who was it made you give up wearing a couple of pounds of false black hair on your head and reddening your lips and cheeks like any other Bulgarian girl! I did. Who taught you to trim your nails, and keep your hands clean, and be dainty about yourself, like a fine Russian lady? Me: do you hear that? me! (3:178). On the other hand one of the critics of Shaw, Gareth Griffith opines: "The would-be shopkeeper, Nicola, from *Arms and the Man* knows exactly



how to manipulate his servant's soul to his best advantage; so skilful is he that Bluntschli declares him to be the ablest man in Bulgaria" (81). The above statement of Griffith reveals that Shaw depicts Nicola as a male chauvinist and gives him full control over Louka. Thus, it is clear that Shaw believed in the subordination of women by loading them with cosmetics, furs and jewels.

Nicola dislikes Louka's mannerism. He checks her at every step. He wants her to be obedient. He tells her that if she wants to marry him, she will have to improve her manners. He says to her, "If you quarrel with the family, I never can marry you. It's the same as if you quarrelled with me!" (3: 145). Further, Nicola treats Louka as his subordinate. Bernard F. Dukore writes, "... for [Nicola] is her superior in the household . . . He is not tyrannical towards her but seems to be in a genuinely good humor . . ." ("The Ablest Man in Bulgaria" 75). Dukore's statement reveals Shaw's depiction of Nicola as superior to women. It also shows that Shaw made a distinction between superior and inferior as every male chauvinist does. He relegated Louka to an inferior status. Thus, antifeminist vision of Shaw defends submissiveness of women to men.

Shaw propagates that women are always in need of protection. He shows that it is a man who protects woman. Man protects her from the dangers because she is a weaker sex. In *Arms and the Man*, Nicola projects this belief of Shaw. He insists on protecting Louka by making her as his wife. He entices Louka with his twenty-five levas. He tells his master, Major Petkoff that he wants to protect Louka by marrying her. He says to him, "We give it out so, sir. But it was only to give Louka protection" (3:191). Nicola's speech reveals that he is inclined to make Louka subservient by making her economically dependent on him in the hope that Louka would take care of his household and he will look after his shop in Sofia.

Similarly, Louka suffers from the same inequality. She is a maid-servant, therefore, she does not like to marry

Nicola who is equal in her rank. She thinks that Nicola will not be able to fulfil her economic needs, therefore, she wants to marry Sergius who is much above her social and economic status and belongs to the noble family like Major Pekoff's. Melanie Francis is one of the scholars of Bernard Shaw who discusses Louka's status in the play. For example, she states: "*Arms and the Man* embodies a classic socialist manoeuvre: the established rules of conventional society have been turned upside down. Louka marries above and Raina below her station" (113). But Melanie does not take into account the post-marriage slavery of Raina and Louka. She thinks that freedom from class barriers will make Raina and Louka independent beings, but it remains unchanged in the bourgeois society, therefore, her arguments do not reflect equality between sexes.

The class transformation of Louka is not a solution of her slavery to a man. There is no doubt that Louka is given a choice to move from her lower strata to the upper class society by marrying Sergius but her subjugation to a male will remain as so as is the case with Catherine Petkoff. Catherine Petkoff belongs to the higher class society but she still remains subordinate to her husband. Catherine is economically dependent on Major Petkoff. Even she is not given permission to cross the threshold of her house and hang her washings where visitors can watch them. On the contrary, the playwright's ideology of women's freedom through equality among the classes is shattered in the context of bourgeois society where patriarchy plays a pivotal role in the family even after abolition of the gap among the classes. It is therefore, obvious that if Catherine Petkoff's status remains subservient to her husband, she will never get equal status with Sergius. Shaw's attitude towards abolition of gap among the classes remains rigid even in the beginning of the twentieth century as it was in the 1890s. In his letter to C C Fagg on 15 December 1910 Shaw wrote, "What we have to fight for, therefore, is not equality of income between individuals, for this is and always has



been the rule. What we have to break down is inequality between classes, for this, too, exists and always has existed in highly civilized societies" (*Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters* 2:956). By participating in the intellectual debates related to women's issues of the time, like a socialist, Shaw criticised capitalism. He advocated equality among the classes but he did not consider women a class while pondering over economic liberation. Therefore, his opinions about women's economic freedom reflect his antifeminism.

In the play, Major Petkoff is rude in his behaviour towards women characters. He hates his wife's habit of bathing every day. He does not like Catherine's manners of hanging her clothes to dry where visitors can see them. He ridicules Catherine because of her habit of hanging the clothes outside. He says to her, "Civilized people don't hang out their washing to dry where visitors can see it; so you'd better have all that [indicating the clothes on the bushes] put somewhere else" (3:149). Petkoff expects Catherine to remain herself within the four walls of the house. He is a typical bourgeois who controls women and keeps vigilant eyes on them.

The entire discussion about the play *Arms and the Man* reveals that women characters are confined within the threshold through the socio-cultural practices like domestication of women, marriage, economic dependence of women on men, discrimination between strong/weak and realism/romance binaries fabricated by men. Besides this, bourgeois ideology of woman's subordination plays a pivotal role where male characters dominate the female characters. On the contrary, the contemporary feminists of Shaw like Mona Caird, Emma Goldman and Winnifred Harper Cooley were criticising the socio-cultural practices which were projected against the freedom of women. These feminist scholars were actively participating in the intellectual debates on women's issues while Bernard Shaw's views about women's equal footing with men do not portray equality between the sexes. In his presentation

of women, Shaw relegates women to secondary status to men projecting his belief in the Victorian ideology of manhood and womanhood i. e. "Man for the field and woman for the hearth". Shaw's ideology of womanhood is projected against the freedom of the entire womankind, therefore, it is antifeminist.

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# Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Poetry of Future: A Study of Tomas Tranströmer's *Answers to Letters* and Some British Poems

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"It raises the thought which goes beyond the strict limits of the author's subject and suggests the whole question of the future of poetry in the age which is coming upon us, the higher functions open to it—as yet very imperfectly fulfilled, —and the part which English literature on the one side and the Indian mind and temperament on the other are likely to take in determining the new trend."<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's vision of the 'English literature on the one side and the Indian mind and temperament on the other' as the determining factors of the new trend of the future of poetry is unmistakably the key-point to look into the future of poetry as the evolution of consciousness upon which the future of poetry depends has reached its zenith in English literature and in Indian mind and temperament manifesting the spiritual<sup>2</sup> and finally the supramental<sup>3</sup> consciousnesses, —the evolution of consciousness which is irrefutably the 'central significant motive of the terrestrial existence'<sup>4</sup>. In fact, English literature, and the Indian Mind and temperament come to be the one integral factor for determining the trend of the future poetry. It is for the reason that on examination of Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri*, the supramental consciousness is found to have emerged in English poetry. Consequently, being the evolutionary culmination the supramental consciousness in it will shape the course of future poetry. On the higher spiritual planes of consciousness, Sri Aurobindo says, the future poetry, the 'Mantra' as he calls, exists, the potency of which he finds in the poetry of Wordsworth, Byron, Blake, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats. These poets manifest spiritual



consciousness on account of which they are, to him, 'six great voices' (91) of, what he calls, the 'new poetry'. (ibid) In his spiritual consciousness Wordsworth experiences the presence of the Divine Consciousness in Nature.

I felt the sentiment of Being spread  
O'er all, that moves, and all that seemeth still,  
O'er all, that lost beyond the reach of thought  
And human knowledge, to the human eye  
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;  
O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings,  
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides  
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,  
And mighty depth of waters.<sup>5</sup>

It is the Divine Presence that disturbs him 'with the joy of elevated thoughts'<sup>6</sup>. In such a spiritual consciousness Shelley discovers the existence of the One Transcendent Being, the creator, preserver and destroyer, —the Transcendent who manifests himself in the west wind on the physical plane. "Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;/ Destroyer and Preserver;..."<sup>7</sup>

In his spiritual consciousness, Keats too, discovers the truth of Immortality, the physical manifestation of which is the Nightingale. "Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!"<sup>8</sup> He further says, "The voice I hear this passing night was heard/ In ancient days by emperor and clown...". The spiritual consciousness makes Blake, too, experience the truth of the One Transcendent who is responsible for the birth of two opposite creatures, Tiger and Lamb, —the creatures which manifest the two opposite realities, or to say, the dualism of the three-dimensional world. "Did He who made the Lamb make thee?"<sup>9</sup>

In Coleridge, there is 'an occult eye of dream and vision opened to supraphysical world'<sup>10</sup>. His *Ancient Mariner* bears testimony to such a vision of the supraphysical world. It manifests the spiritual consciousness in him on account of which he could see the supraphysical plane of existence. Sri Aurobindo finds 'an unflinching divinity of power' (Ibid.) in Shakespeare

too. The spiritual consciousness continues to take hold of the beings of A.E. and Yeats further in the twentieth century as he discovers the consciousness of the 'truth-seer' in the former and the 'spiritual intonation' in the latter's poetry. Such a spiritual intonation manifests when Yeats visualises the intervention of the Divine in the second coming of Christ, or in, to use the Vedic term, the 'Avatar' of the Divine to avert the evolutionary crisis caused by the spiritual sterility in man. The spiritual sterility crops up when the 'ceremony of innocence is drowned'<sup>11</sup> as a result of which 'the centre cannot hold' and 'Things fall apart'. The spiritual luminaries of the world find innocence as the foundation of the spiritual evolution of man. One has to be innocent to evolve to the plane of spiritual consciousness. Yeats' supraphysical consciousness continues to manifest in his poems like *Sailing to Byzantium* in 'Once out of nature I shall never take/My bodily form from any natural thing'.<sup>12</sup> In these poetic lines he visualises the supraphysical planes of existence in Nature. They are at the back of man's physical birth. The supraphysical elements in Nature are yet to undergo divine transformation. He does not want to reincarnate with the same untransformed supraphysical elements at the base of his mundane existence after his physical death. The untransformed supraphysical elements will continue to cause spiritual sterility in his rebirth. Therefore, he wishes to take birth only after divine transformation of the supra-physical elements as a new higher creature. "But such a form as Gracian goldsmith's make/Of hammered gold..." (*Sailing to Byzantium*)

Sri Aurobindo finds 'gold' as the symbol of the Supramental. In the light of such a finding of Sri Aurobindo the poet appears to wish to reincarnate after the Nature undergoes supramental transformation, — the transformation of which Sri Aurobindo speaks in his *Savitri*, *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and other works. In his supra-mentally built mundane form the poet will be able to lead a divine life.



The Indian mind and temperament is found to be in possession of the spiritual consciousness since time immemorial, the manifestation of which one finds in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*. These poetic works are the Mantra since they are found to have been written from the summit of the spiritual consciousness. As the time moves on, the spiritual consciousness continues to manifest in the poetic works like *Ramayana* in Sanskrit and *Ramcharitmanas* in Hindi literatures and in the persons like Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavira etc. South India has witnessed a large number of spiritual personalities and produced spiritual poetry. In the present era, too, beside spiritual luminaries like Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda, we find Sri Aurobindo, a great poet, dramatist and short story writer to be the embodiment of the consciousness of the Divine plane when we look into his writings. To be more specific, his writings like *Savitri*, *The Life Divine* etc. reveal that he manifests the Supramental Consciousness, — the Supramental which, as we have noted earlier, being the integral consciousness, exists beyond the plane of dimensionality of the Existence. When we look into the evolutionary phenomenon, the phenomenon which determines the future of the terrestrial existence, the human mind is found to be the higher plane of consciousness than the consciousnesses which exist in the animals, the trees, the plants, and in the material objects, that is to say, in Matter on the lower rungs of evolution, and further the spiritual is found to be the higher plane of the mind-consciousness since it visualises the divine reality of the terrestrial existence. The supramental consciousness found in the epic *Savitri* and *The Life Divine* etc. transcends the spiritual mind-consciousness, one of the manifestations of which is the vivid and lucid description of the pre-creation state of existence in the opening canto of the epic, 'It was the hour before the Gods awake.'<sup>13</sup> And so on. Therefore, the Indian mind and its temperament manifesting the spiritual and the

supramental consciousnesses in its spiritual luminaries and literatures and further in English poetry is sure to determine the future of poetry.

Sri Aurobindo calls the future poetry 'Mantra' as we have noted earlier. He says that Mantra is the poetic expression of the deepest spiritual reality. To be more specific, he says that poetry written from some higher planes, of what he calls, the Intuitive Mind Consciousness and the Overmind Consciousness which are the two uppermost planes of the spiritual consciousness on the plane of Mind is Mantra, —the spiritual consciousness wherein, as we have noted, we have the knowledge and realization of the One Divine, One Cosmic Self. It is under this spiritual consciousness that we come to be conscious of the existence of the Divine Self in us. It is to be noted that Sri Aurobindo discovers four ascending planes of the spiritual consciousness existing above the plane of, what he calls the 'mental mind', or the 'intellectual mind', as we may call, —the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind and the Overmind as he terms. He finds the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Gita* to have been written from the plane of the Overmind Consciousness, the summit of the spiritual mind-consciousness. Beyond the spiritual mind-consciousness there exists what he calls the 'Supramental Consciousness' which is integral in nature. The Supramental Consciousness is the sovereign plane of the Divine Consciousness. Since the planes of Mantra, or to say, the higher planes of the Intuitive Mind Consciousness and the Overmind Consciousness are very close to the Supramental Consciousness which, as we have earlier noted, is the sovereign plane of the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Consciousness in the Mantra is active and works out its manifestations through the mental principle, —the principle of the divisive consciousness, or to say, the separative principle of the Essential Divine Consciousness as discovered by Sri Aurobindo—, as a result of which the Mantra leads the evolutionary phenomena to arrive at the supramental



plane. The separative principle of consciousness on the planes of Mantra is, in fact, creative in nature since separativity tends to lose its existence here. The consciousness here remains 'ever-ascending' to gain integrality for higher divine manifestations. Further, the Divine Consciousness gets the passage to descend on the lower evolutionary planes of consciousness when one concentrates from these lower evolutionary planes of consciousness on the poetic lines of the Mantric poetry. With the descent of the Divine Consciousness the lower evolutionary planes of consciousness undergo the process of transformation to evolve to the planes of the spiritual mind-consciousness. Thus, the Mantric poetry, or to say, the Mantra, being a result of the 'divine inspiration'<sup>14</sup> will play a decisive role in the evolution of poetry which we have on the planes of consciousness below the spiritual. Of such a decisive role of the Mantra to raise one to the higher plane Sri Aurobindo says:

There was an occult and spiritual knowledge in the sacred hymns and by this knowledge alone, it is said, one can know the truth and rise to a higher existence. This belief was not a later tradition but held, probably, by all and evidently by some of the greatest Rishis such as Dirghatamas and Vamadeva.<sup>15</sup> (*Hymns*)

Of the Mantra, Sri Aurobindo further says:

In ancient times the Vedas was revered as a sacred book of wisdom, a great mass of inspired poetry, the work of Rishis, seers and sages, who received in their illumined minds rather than mentally constructed a great universal, eternal and impersonal Truth which they embodied in Mantras, revealed verses of power, not of an ordinary but of a divine inspiration and source. The name given to these sages was Kavi, which afterwards came to mean any poet, but at the time had the sense of a seer of truth, — the Veda itself describes them as *kavyah satyasrutah*, "seers who are hearers of the Truth" and the Veda itself was called, *sruti*, a word which came to mean "revealed Scripture". The seers of the *Upanishad* had the same idea about the Veda and frequently appealed to its authority for the truths they themselves announced and these too afterwards came to

be regarded as Sruti, revealed Scripture, and were included in the sacred Canon."<sup>16</sup> (Hymns)

Thus, the Mantra comes to be the 'great universal, eternal and impersonal Truth' which descends from the plane of Eternity into the 'illuminated minds' which Sri Aurobindo, as noted earlier, finds to be the higher planes of the Intuitive Mind Consciousness and the Overmind Consciousness. To be more specific, the Mantra is the vision and expression of the Eternal Truth on these two uppermost planes of the spiritual consciousness on the plane of Mind. Such an expression is essentially poetic.

We have, therefore, the summit vision of the Mantra on the plane of Eternity, or to say, the plane of, what Sri Aurobindo terms as noted earlier, the Supramental Consciousness when we transcend the planes of the Intuitive Mind Consciousness and the Overmind Consciousness. On this account the Mantra in these spiritual planes of the Mind-Consciousness, the spiritual Mantra as we may call, is a reflection, or to say, a representation of the Mantra which exists on the plane of the transcendent Supramental Consciousness, the eternal consciousness or 'the supramental Mantra' as we may call. Since the spiritual mind-consciousness essentially remains under the separative principle of the Essential Divine Consciousness, the spiritual Mantra comes to be an eclipsed vision of the supramental, or to say, the transcendent Mantra. Einstein would have certainly affirmed the Mantra of the spiritual planes as 'projection' of the Mantra of the supramental plane in view of his discovery of the four-dimensional plane of Existence, and of a consequent new picture of the three-dimensional plane of world as 'projection' of this four-dimensional plane of Existence. Such a supramental or transcendent Mantra comes into the tangible experience of the Upanishad, too, as it asserts a speech behind human speech, being 'the expressive aspect of the Brahman-consciousness'<sup>17</sup>. Of this Sri Aurobindo says:

Human speech is only a secondary expression and at its highest a shadow of the divine Word, of the seed-sounds,



the satisfying rhythms, the revealing forms of sound that are the omniscient and omnipotent speech of the eternal Thinker, Harmonist, Creator. The highest inspired speech to which the human mind can attain, the word most unanalysably expressive of supreme truth, the most puissant syllable or *mantra* can only be its far-off representation." (128)

One is, therefore, required to evolve into the Supramental Consciousness which manifests categorically in *Savitri* to have the 'divine Word'. On the supramental plane one finds that " 'That' which is here shadowed, is there found." (118) The supramental poetry in *Savitri*, being the transcendent Mantra, is the future poetry into which the present poetry will evolve eventually.

In order to evolve to the planes of the spiritual mind-consciousness, and finally to the plane of the supramental Consciousness we are required to turn inward to discover our Divine Self which is our true self at the centre of our being. Such a turn is, in fact, the yogic turn which the present day poets have either irreversibly taken or are taking. This is what we find in the 2011 Nobel prize winner Tomas Transtromer in his poem *Answers to Letters* published on 25 October 2011. He says: ".....Or at least so far away from/Here that I can find myself."<sup>18</sup>

The poet appears to be aware of the existence of his true Self existing in his inmost being 'away' from his surface mortal selves, —the mortal selves which Sri Aurobindo identifies to be the body, the life, and the mind in the constitution of our being—, and wants to discover it. The true Self is at the centre of the mortal selves. In such an awareness of his true Self, he is aware of the Divine, for the true Self is the immortal self, being an individual poise of the Supreme Divine. Such a discovery of the Divine Self, or Soul, as we may call, comes to be an evolutionary breakthrough in the evolution of consciousness to its higher planes. The soul, or to say, the 'psychic being' as Sri Aurobindo terms, which, according to him, remains behind the mortal selves, or to say, the body, the life and the mind prior to the discovery, comes forward and takes their command to

govern them. Consequently upon their taking over, the consciousness of the psychic being descends into them. They undergo transformation and they become receptive to what comes down from the divine planes of Existence. This is the psychic transformation of the body, the life and the mind. Such a psychic transformation of the mortal selves lays down the foundation for the irreversible spiritual and supramental transformations of man. In one of his letters on yoga Sri Aurobindo says: "This psychic development and the psychic change of mind, vital and physical consciousness is of the utmost importance because it makes safe and easy the descent of the higher consciousness and the spiritual transformation without which the supramental must always remain far distant."

Consequent upon such a psychic transformation, or to use Sri Aurobindo's terminology, 'psychicisation', of the body, the life and the mind which are, according to him, the instrumental selves of the Soul, the Psychic Being, the descent of the Divine Consciousness takes place in one's being without obstruction. In their untransformed state the instrumental selves cause obstruction when the Divine Consciousness descends into one's being as they are under the gravitational pull of Matter operative at the base in the body. Such a pull puts up resistance to the Divine. In other words, one is free from the gravitational pull of Matter as a result of the psychicisation of the instrumental selves, the body, the life and the mind. In such a state of psychicisation the Divine Consciousness descends smoothly as a result of the receptivity of the instrumental selves to the Divine in one's being. Psychicisation enables the consciousness to be 'ever-ascending' on the planes of the spiritual consciousness to gain integrality on account of such a receptivity of the instrumental selves. The receptivity as a result of psychicisation protects one from the spiral movement of the evolutionary force. In such a spiral movement one suffers from fall from the higher planes of consciousness. In ordinary situation the evolutionary



force moves spirally because of one's subjection to the gravitational pull of Matter in the body at the base of the life and the mind in the absence of psychicisation. Further, the awareness of the existence of the Soul as his true self makes the poet Tomas Tranströmer aware of the supraphysical plane of existence and the spiritual Reality existing in the dimensionality of the universe and beyond the universe. He says: "...One day when I am dead/ And can at last concentrate."

In the above poetic lines, too, he appears to be conscious of the existence of his Divine Self which is beyond the mortal touch, and of the existence of the supraphysical planes as well, —the supraphysical planes where the Divine Self, or to say, the Soul dwells after the physical death of man. Such discoveries reveal to him further that answer to the 'unanswered letters' which 'pile high up' can be made only after his Divine Self visualises the truth on these supraphysical planes, —the truth which is Divine wherein the mystery of the mundane life comes to its end. That is why he says that when he is dead he will concentrate, and then he will be able to answer the 'unanswered letters' which seek for the revelation of the mystery of the mundane life. Further, since he says that he will concentrate when he is dead, it is also revealed here that his mortal selves are not evolved enough to be receptive to the consciousness of the Divine Self, or Soul, to get the answer, or to say, to end the mystery of this mundane life. The Divine Self alone matters in the discovery of the Supraterrestrial Reality. Having studied it in the light of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the supramental evolution of man and earth we find that it is imperative for us to evolve the consciousness of our mortal selves for the vision of the supraphysical planes of Existence and the Divine Truth therein, for which the psychic transformation as a result of the discovery of the Soul is essentially required. The inward turn which we witness in Tomas Tranströmer for the search of the real Self is found further in the poem

*Hacking into Forever* when the poet Iain Galbraith says:  
 "...In search of myself I enter the Eocene."<sup>19</sup>

The poet appears to be conscious of the truth that his mortal selves, —the body, the life, and the mind, as noted earlier—, are not real. He is conscious of the existence of a Transcendent Self which is his real Self. Such a real Self which we call soul is his immortal self which is the individual poise of the Supreme Divine in the constitution of our being as noted earlier. He finds the yogic evolution of consciousness imperative for a higher life on the earth. Therefore, he undertakes the journey, to use Sri Aurobindo's expression, 'the rhythmic voyage'<sup>20</sup> to search this immortal Self. It is the journey from the plane of Time wherein the materiality of the Existence is worked out to that of Timelessness where the Divine is visualised in its sovereign state. He is aware that such an immortal self of man is transcendent to the world of the material life. This is what we find when he quotes Walter Bagehot at the outset of his poem. "How can a soul be merchant? What relation to an immortal being have the price of linseed, the fall of butter...?" (*The Future Poetry*)

He finds no relationship between the soul and the 'price of linseed, the fall of butter'. He discovers the existence of a higher transcendent principle than the principle on which the material life of man is based. A higher life exists on this higher principle. The higher principle will evolve in man as a result of the discovery of the soul. We have earlier found that the discovery of the soul results in the psychicisation of the mortal selves, and such a psychicisation lays the foundation for the irreversible spiritual and supramental transformation of human consciousness for divine life on the earth.

Further, in the poem 'Dusk and Dawn', the poet John Fuller speaks of his higher realisations when he visits Mahabalipuram, a place in Tamil Nadu in India, a few miles away from Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, now called Puducherry, —the Ashram where Sri



Aurobindo not only brought about the Divine transformation in his person by supramentalising his individual being, but also brought down the Sovereign Supramental Consciousness from Its Sovereign Supramental plane of Existence to establish into the earth-existence for earth's supramental transformation as stated in the beginning of the paper. The poet, John Fuller says that in the advanced stage of our mundane life when we discover the spiritual reality based on some other principle than the principle on which we base the material reality, we find that we have lost something valuable by getting ourselves indulged in trivial things of the mundane life. In the afternoon of our life we have therefore an 'afternoon's heartache'<sup>21</sup> over such a loss. No material treasure of the world can compensate such a valuable loss: "And all the world's treasures/Are never enough to ransom/An afternoon's heartache." (Fuller)

Such a valuable loss lies in our failure to realize the spiritual truth. We have, therefore, to evolve to the plane of the spiritual consciousness for the salvation of our matter-oriented mundane life. In another poem *The Thread*<sup>22</sup> we find an agony which is spiritually oriented when the poet Peter McDonald gets the news of the death of the girl whom he 'flirted' twenty years ago.

"How slightly, twenty years ago,  
I managed to construe the girl  
I met three times, or twice, then so  
awkwardly flirted with, by proxy,  
dispatching printed poems of mine  
whose frail and thin-spun lines  
took scarcely any weight (I see  
that much), carried no weight at all.  
In a bored moment, by sheer chance,  
news of her death crosses my eyes,  
and minutes pass while I realize  
that now, at this far distance,  
I can't so much as picture her,  
feeling for the least snag or pull  
in a line that's barely visible,  
and slighter than a thread of hair."

(*The Thread*)

Since she has now undertaken her supraphysical journey after her physical death, he is unable to 'picture' her physically. The poet discovers the supraphysical plane of existence, 'line', as he terms, which is 'barely visible' to the matter-oriented human mind. It is barely visible because it is 'slighter than the thread of hair'. The very expression 'slighter than a thread of hair' for the 'line' which is 'barely visible' reveals that he has the vision of the existence of the supraphysical plane. Here, the expression 'slighter than a thread of hair' goes to transcend the physical plane exactly in the same manner in which Sri Aurobindo's expression 'subtle Matter'<sup>23</sup> does. The poet's feeling for the pull of the supraphysical plane of existence reveals his inmost yearning to be one with her on the supraphysical plane. Such a yearning goes to show that he is aware of the existence of her Divine Self which dwells on the supraphysical plane of existence after her physical death. He is aware also of the truth that her physical death does not bring an end of her existence. She continues to exist in her Divine Self. Further, on a closer examination it is found that the very feeling of the poet for the 'least snag' in the supraphysical plane, 'line', as he calls, is, in fact, the result of the 'least snag', or to say, the least resistance of the mundane elements in his being to the receptivity of the supraphysical plane. There is no snag in the supraphysical world of existence. His very admission of the snag which has, in fact, been created by the mundane elements of his being reveals his inmost yearning to remove the snag from his being to experience the Divinity of his beloved in Its sovereignty on the supraphysical plane. Such a snag is found in the unpsychicised state of human consciousness. In fact, he wishes to evolve spiritually.

Another poet P.J. Kavanagh hears a voice which comes to him from the supraterrrestrial plane of existence where no earthly creature like 'gulls'<sup>24</sup> 'fish', or 'deer' exists. In the poem *Small Voice* he says:



"Nothing is there, not gulls nor fish nor deer, nothing but moving air and the voice we hear is not in the wind and what we say we feel about what we see and we nearly hear will not (which is good) be ever quite right or enough."

The voice he hears is spiritual. He says that we can hear the voice when we transcend the physical plane of consciousness since it 'is not in the wind', the physical wind. Through this voice we shall attain the Divine Truth. Such a Divine Truth evades our mortal senses. Our mortal senses, more to say, selves are not evolved enough to receive the Divine Truth and Its Voice in Its sovereignty. We have an eclipsed reception of the Truth on the terrestrial plane of existence. Here, it is too eclipsed to be true or correct, or 'enough'. We need to evolve to the supraterrrestrial plane of existence for true receptivity of the voice coming to us from the supraterrrestrial plane of existence. The very fact that the poet has heard the supraterrrestrial voice speaks of his discovery of the transcendent plane of existence, and also of his destined evolution to such a transcendent plane of existence. His evolution to the transcendent plane of existence is destined for the reason that something of the transcendent plane of existence has descended into his being as a result of which he has heard the supraterrrestrial voice though 'small', that is to say, less audible or erroneous. It is logical to state further that when the descent from the plane of the supraterrrestrial existence takes place further, his evolution will get impetus. As a result of the evolution to the higher planes of consciousness the voice of the Divine Truth will be fully audible to him, no more 'small'. He will hear the voice in its truthfulness. The Vedas speak of spiritual hearing, *Sruti* as they call it, the capability for which evolves when one evolves to the higher planes of the spiritual consciousness. Many ancient writings of India, such as the Vedas, the Upanishads etc. are said to be the result of the spiritual hearing as noted earlier. Rishis heard the voice which came to them from the spiritual planes of Existence and encoded it poetically.

It is to be noted here that the Rishis were not limited to the voice only. The very truth, the voice of which they heard was also seen by them as discussed earlier. The self-discovery we see today in poets like Tomas Transtromer and Ian Gailbraith, and also in Peter McDonald was foreseen by Sri Aurobindo about hundred years back. He said:

That infinite self discovery would be the logical outcome of the movement of the past and the present century and the widest possibility and best chance open to the human spirit: taking up the thought of the ages into a mightier arc of interpretation and realisation, it would be the crowning of one and the opening of a new and greater cycle.<sup>25</sup>

In such a self-discovery we find the evolutionary movement of the latent spiritual consciousness on its higher planes. Such a movement erases the illusion created by the materiality of existence as it does in John Fuller. It further reveals the existence of the transcendent plane as we see in the case of Peter McDonald and P.J. Kavanagh. Therefore, the inward turn of the mundane human mind to discover the true Self of its being and, further, the discovery of the transcendent plane of Existence unmistakably show that the human mind is evolving towards the spiritual planes of the Mind-Consciousness where exists, what Sri Aurobindo calls, the Mantra. As a result of such an evolution the Mantric poetry will be the order of the day.

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1. Sri Aurobindo: *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, now Puducherry, 1991, P. 1;
2. According to Sri Aurobindo, spiritual consciousness is a higher plane of mental consciousness where we have the knowledge and realisation of the One Divine, the One Cosmic Self or wherein we are aware of the existence of the Divine Self in our being.



3. The 'supramental', as the word discloses, is the consciousness which exists beyond the plane of the mental consciousness. Sri Aurobindo has discovered that the mental consciousness is the divisive, or to say, the separative consciousness whereas the supramental is the integral consciousness. The supramental consciousness exists beyond the plane of the dimensionality, the dimensionality being the manifestation of separativity. It is the sovereign plane of the Consciousness of the Divine, the Transcendent Divine.
4. Sri Aurobindo: *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1990, P. 824;
5. Wordsworth: *The Prelude*, Book Second, lines 420-28;
6. Wordsworth: *Tintern Abbey*, lines 96-7;
7. Shelley: *Ode to the West Wind*, lines 13-14;
8. Keats: *Ode to A Nightingale*, line 61;
9. Blake: *The Tyger*, line 20;
10. Sri Aurobindo: *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, P. 121;
11. W.B. Yeats: *The Second Coming*, Macmillan London Ltd., 1974, P. 99;
12. W.B. Yeats *Sailing to Byzantium*, Macmillan London Ltd., 1974, P. 105;
13. Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1994, P. 1;
14. Sri Aurobindo: *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, P. 1;
15. Sri Aurobindo: *The Upanishads*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1988, P. 129;
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18. Sri Aurobindo: *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, now Puducherry, 1991, P. 16;
19. Fuller, John: *Dusk and Dawn*, Times Literary Supplement (TLS), London, June 18, 2004, P. 27;
20. McDonald, Peter: *The Thread*, Times Literary Supplement (TLS), London, August 20, 2004, P. 4;
21. Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1994, P. 103;
22. Kavanagh, P.J.: *Small Voice*, Times Literary Supplement (TLS), London, September 3, 2004, P.24;
23. Sri Aurobindo: *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, P. 152.

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## Reading *Hamlet*: An Approach through Indian Poetics

Kalikinkar Pattanayak\*

*Hamlet*, as viewed by T.S. Eliot, is the Mona Lisa of literature. Mona Lisa is a piece of wonderful painting; the smile of Mona Lisa is enigmatic: hence to read it requires dexterity. *Hamlet*, a classic, has been read over the centuries in diverse ways. In our times, the ideological and semiotic aspects of the play have given rise to different modes of reading: alternative, revisionary, oppositional, subversive, contrapuntal and so on. But the attempt has not been made to analyze this unique literary product of Western culture in the light of Indian Poetics. In this paper a modest attempt is being made to read *Hamlet* through the devices propounded by the aestheticians of India. The aestheticians of India focus on the intuitive perception of reality rather than on rational understanding of things. *Hamlet*, deals with elemental passions of Man: lust for power and sensual pleasure. The play is a masterpiece of tragedy because it evokes pity and fear in the theatre goers and the readers of plays. Pity is an impulse to advance; fear an impulse to withdraw. When the play ends the spectators watch a number of deaths and contemplate over the accidents - the working of fate that makes life unpredictable. Man trembles in fear because Fate disposes what man proposes. This play, Dr. Johnson notices, has 'variety': there is a play within a play which arrests the attention of the theatre goers to think of the theme of the play staged and also of life which Shakespeare, the dramatist visualises, a great play. This play is famous for memorable phrases like 'to be or not to be', 'what a piece of work is man!' and 'readiness is all'. If this play is studied in the light of Indian poetics it will afford immense delight to the reader. A sincere

lover of play and a keen student of life will learn a lot about life. There are various schools of Indian poetics: *The Rasa* (the theory of the aesthetics), *The Alamkar* (the school of the Rhetoric), *Riti* (Stylistics), *The Vakrokti* (obliquity), *The Dhvani* (suggestiveness). One thing is common to all these schools- to comprehend reality through intuition rather than through intellect. In fact, the exponents of Indian poetics stress on literature of power rather than that of knowledge. A person who studies *Hamlet* in the light of Indian poetics feels that *Hamlet* is moral rather than it has a moral because the perceptive readers get moved through dialogues, poetry and incidents that compose the play.

The introduction of ghost is vital for the understanding of the play. When ghost talks to Hamlet about the tragic death of his father and more tragic incident like the marriage of his mother to his uncle, Hamlet becomes a different man - there is a change in his consciousness and he thinks of taking revenge. The poet in Shakespeare writes:

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts -  
O wicked wit, and that have the power  
So to seduce ! - won to his shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queens.  
O Hamlet, what a falling off was there,  
From me, whose love was of that dignity  
That it went hand in hand even with the vow  
I make to her in marriage, and to decline  
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor  
To those of mine.

(Act I, Scene V, Lines 42-52)

If we study this passage in the light of theories of *Alamkar* and *Dhvani* we would realise the mysterious nature of woman. The ghost of his father talks to Hamlet about his mother; from the conversation it becomes clear that her mother has betrayed her father; she was befooled by the witty conversation and expensive gifts of her uncle. Hence, she desired to get rid of her husband and have



physical relationship with his brother - an incestuous relationship or adultery which is unethical. The visual images: 'beast', 'witchcraft', 'seeming virtuous queen', 'wretch', and so on, suggest more than they state - here lies the art of Shakespeare. The great playwright is dwelling upon some of major issues in human relationship: the fickleness of woman which Hamlet calls frailty, the collapse of marriage as a sacred institution and above all the internal hostility between the brothers. Shakespeare focuses on the imperfection of human nature but he does it in a way which is dexterous. In such a context the principles laid down by *Alamkarikas* like Dandin and Vamana need to be followed in order to interpret the lines which are memorable. Vamana asserts:

Poetry is one of the fine arts which have the expression of beauty as their goal. ... The world of Beauty is remote or at least different from the worlds of morality and Truth. Poetry as a department of Fine Arts does not directly aim at inculcating morally nor at ultimate Truth. The poet's duty as a poet is to be true to his own self and to art and express the visions he sees as best as he can. He may indirectly convey moral ideas by means of his dramas.

(*History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 373)

Vamana states that the beauty of the play lies in indirect expression. The aesthetic of poetry is not concerned with ethics. The physical relationship of Hamlet's mother's with uncle is not ethical but it is real; adultery or incest is a perversion of sexuality which is very much human. By picturing this art of seduction and shameful lust, Shakespeare emerges as a real artist - he holds mirror up to nature. His poetic play embodies beauty in the way it has been enunciated by Vaman. R.W. Desai, the editor, in the Preface to the book *Thirty one New Essays on Hamlet* quotes the views of Dr. Johnson:

If the dramas of Shakespeare were to be characterised each by the particular excellence which distinguishes it from the rest, we must allow to the tragedy of *Hamlet* the praise of variety. The incidents are so numerous that the argument of the play would make a long tale. The scenes are

interchangeably diversified with merriment and solemnity; with merriment that includes judicious and instructive observations, and solemnity not strained by poetical violence above the natural sentiments of man. New characters appear from time to time to continual successions, exhibiting various forms of life and particular modes of conversation. The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth, the mournful distraction of Ophelia fills the heart with tenderness, and every personage produces the effect intended, from the apparition that in the first act chills the blood with horror to the fop in the last that exposes affectation to just contempt. (Page V)

Dr. Johnson's comments can be well-studied in the light of *Rasa* theory which deals with 'the emotional experience of beauty in poetry and drama' (*History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 356). The *Rasa* theory is concerned with the dominant mood which is not broken up altogether by other *Bhavas* (moods or feelings). The dominant mood which is aroused by dramatic representation and brought to a state of pleasurable relish can be categorised into eight. In the passage quoted from Desai, Dr. Johnson experiences various kinds of *Rasas*: *Hasya* (laughter), *Karuna* (pathos), *Bhayanaka* (horror), *Jugusta* (repugnance) and so on. Thus, this play, for better comprehension and enjoyment, can be analysed in the light of *Rasa*, *Dhvani* theory. Hamlet's play within the play *Hamlet* is really interesting and many lines are highly suggestive. The players must act out the roles they are given in a play and life is finally swept on in a plot beyond the control of any player. Here is a brilliant passage that makes the mortals think of their plight:

Our wills and fates do so contrary run  
That our devices still are overthrown;  
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.

(Act III. ii. Lines 215-17)

These lines are highly thought-provoking; human wills and fates run contrary to each other - here lies the human predicament. Shakespeare grows lyrical when he contemplates over this issue. Lines like these should be



interpreted in the light of *Dhvani* theory which states that words suggest more than they state. Words radiate meanings and it is the duty of the perceptive readers to catch the right meaning.

Hamlet's soliloquies are most memorable passages in the book. The fourth soliloquy that is quoted here reflects upon existential dilemma:

To be, or not to be, that is the question;  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Of to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them.

(Act III, Scene I, Lines 56-60)

These lines embody psychological truth. The problem before man is the problem of choice - the choice between the right and wrong, good and evil, the ethical and unethical, activity and passivity. Shakespeare understands human psyche very well and puts his thought in the language - 'to be or not to be' which is an open-ended statement. Death puts an end to all sufferings. Hence, the concluding lines of the above passage sound philosophical. Man struggles and suffers throughout his life and in his death ends all the struggles and sufferings. 'To take arms against the sea of troubles' is the brilliant use of metaphor. Such metaphors need to be classified and interpreted in the light of *Alamkar* theory in order to titillate the intellect and stir imagination.

The mouse-trap scene is a thought provoking scene. In the relation between Hamlet and Ophelia, Hamlet does not address Ophelia as an equal. Their dialogues reflect gender-based hierarchy:

Ham. I did love you once.

Oph. Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Ham. You should not have believ'd me ... I lov'd not.

Oph. I was the more deceiv'd.

(Act III, Scene I, Lines 114-117)

The dialogues reflect patriarchal culture of Denmark. Hamlet attempts to force Ophelia into an

acknowledgement of her sexuality. However, she consents to be the object of Hamlet's pleasure but refuses to acknowledge her own desire:

Ham. Lady, shall I lie in your lap ?

Oph. No, my lord.

Ham. I mean, my head upon your lap ?

Oph. Ay, my lord.

Ham. Do you think I meant country matters ?

Oph. I think nothing, my lord.

(Act III, Scene ii, Lines 112-117)

In Elizabethan slang 'nothing' is a euphemism for 'female genitalia' (Modern Language Notes 64). Luce Irigaray (Page 99) writes that her sexual organs represent the horror of having nothing to see. For Hamlet, Ophelia like Sphinx possesses the power to lure man to their destruction. Hamlet says:

be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shall not escape calumny ... wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. (Act III, Scene I, Lines 135-136, 138-139.

In the above lines Hamlet uses figures of speech (*Alamkar*) which are traditional but his attitude towards woman grows cynical. Hence, he uses the metaphor 'monster'. If such passages are analysed in the light of *Alamkar* theory new meanings would emerge from time to time.

To conclude, to read *Hamlet* in the light of Indian poetics will be a meaningful experience - more meaningful and enjoyable than what an ordinary reader does with the text through common sense. *Hamlet* as a text has been read with interest since the time Shakespeare wrote. It is high time we changed the method of reading. Indian poetics focuses more on intuitive awareness than on critical understanding, *Rasa* (flavour or taste or relish) is the soul of real enjoyment of the text. This theory focuses on the impact of texts upon the consciousness of reader. If the reader is transported to a world of delight, the text is a good one. Critical analysis of the text does not provide as much delight as the spontaneous appreciation of the



text; here 'text' refers to any meaningful utterance. In Indian poetics the *Alamkar* theory is justified in the sense a patient requires honey to swallow a bitter pill. If a pill is bitter but is necessary to cure the patient, honey is required to mix it with the pill. Similarly, figures of speech are required to picture the existential dilemma or human predicament. After reading *Hamlet* a reader realises that delay is dangerous, indecisiveness is human, evil is self-destructive, attraction between man and woman is temporary, love is multi-dimensional related with passion, tension and sense of duty and so on. There is an orchestration of ideas in the play and just to instil these ideas in the hearts of the sensitive readers, Shakespeare has used various figures of speech, oblique expressions and exclamatory remarks which are as enigmatic and lovely as Monalisa's smile; the devices made by the exponents of Indian poetics are sure to unravel the beauty of the play.

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## Contribution of Nayantara Sahgal to Indian English Novel: A Study

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In recent times, Indian English Novel or Indian Novel in English has been granted a receipt auspiciously by admirers of both sides of the Atlantic. The entire literary globe exceedingly amazes to its incomparable place. Apparently, the unreserved appreciation goes to the great Indian novelists, in the present perspective to Indian women novelists, who have been broadcasting the eventual superiority all the way through their pen and brain with all-embracing proficiency since decades. For that reason, it has found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Looking forward, the present paper is an attempt to evaluate Nayantara Sahgal's contribution to Indian English Novel.

Nayantara Sahgal, a living genius, has occupied a distinct and distinctive place in Indian English novel by bringing out each novel with novel taste. As a result, her novels have brought the international recognition by winning laurels for their excellent distinction. Being a novelist, her reputation rests on nine novels. Her prolific writing career has spawned out of her birth in an aristocratic family. All the same, Sahgal was born and brought up in the 'first family' of Indian politics. She has earned the acclaimed integrity in literary realm. She has accomplished to produce an international readership. In the vein of Bacon's essays, her narratives are the dispersed meditations on social, political, cultural, economic, humanistic concerns and so on. Only few Indian women novelists have done this charisma.

As we know, Sahgal is blessed with grand family background, which has been everlasting in the political limelight. She has blood-relationship with three prime



ministers of Nehru family. However, she has been neither a member of Congress nor any political party or organization. She also participated in the Indian Freedom Movement, as a dedicated devotee of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Accordingly, she reveals new voice and vision in this dismal milieu of social, political, cultural, and economic. She keeps on striving to build the new society that should contribute to the institution of family, marriage, government, and democracy. She candidly acknowledges: "The material for my novels comes from direct experience, from my family background, the political and social scene around me, and from a sense of history" (Sharma 2). Her creative ability has been in motions towards the welfare of society and human being. On that account, her vision gets into perfect contour the new morality in the global village. Her novels have been doing sterling service as the gracious channel of communication among human race. All these dynamics attribute to her positive contribution to Indian English novel.

The image of socio-political life of the turmoil of Indian history, *A Time to be Happy* (1957) is placed in the unexpected pre-and post-Independence period. It deposits an analytical review of this period. Sahgal puts forward human crises with worldwide claim. She offers the disparate portrayals of the Indian history in the course of human relationships

An inspired segment pertaining to microscopic depiction of modern India among preferred area under debate and socio-political setting, *This Time of Morning* (1965) covers the globe of opportunist politicians along with insensitive bureaucrats. It centres on their unrestricted worship to lavish authority, huge wealth, and smart and sexy women. Throughout that, they enlarge their way of the world. To be honest, Sahgal does not index the real life characters and major events as it is in her novels. Reasonably, she puts on display an everlasting affair of the society and the new-born nation. She keeps an eagle

eye towards the politicians and the bureaucracy, and manifests life through the delicate feel of human acuity.

The moving display of political pursuit with personal understanding, *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) gets to be a worldwide discernment seeking human standards in aid of human relationships. It is a sane and sensible discovery of storm among souls from end to end an array of moral fibers in inaccessible location with miscellaneous plans and deliberations. It is a genuine portrayal of severe misinterpretations and ailing sentiments. The storm is a creditable revelation of deeper crossroad in the lives of human beings.

The graphical narration about divorcee and her single-handed struggle against the male-centred society, *The Day in Shadow* (1971) puts on magnificent display exclusively personal, enormously moving, unremitting financial stress, and political tensions on woman. The astonishing significance of the storyline lies in its deepest spirit of Indian marital life. That brings out catastrophe in heart. It brings up a heartrending relation to the excruciating occurrence of woman.

The narrative with regard to the corrupt politics and politicians with waning of treasured models, *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) authentically puts forward political concerns anchored in New Delhi. It divulges with time, however specifically human as well as social affairs of every section of society above all New Delhi, the microcosm of India. At this stage, a gamut of human relationships prospers on the productive soil of emotional sensitivity amidst the wide-ranging characters.

The representation of painful pleasure and pleasurable pain pertaining to the Emergency, *Rich Like Us* (1985) is a strong substantiation of the international readership of Sahgal. It is the most debated novel not only in India but also abroad. It took a lot of time to come out by reason of some unstated difficulties from the publishers. It probably found under the brutal political force. On the other hand, eventually the novelist overcame all



obstructions by publishing abroad, and she has been ranked among the top class major Indian English novelists.

The love story and mystery apropos of preparations for exit, *Plans for Departure* (1986) tenders the honest portrait of socio-political associations that marked human relationships. In the present novel, Sahgal is deeply concerned about arousing disagreement among human beings, largely it is utterly conflicting in human nature. She comes forward with compassion a propos human relationship.

The story of love and obsession against the backdrop of socio-political turmoil, *Mistaken Identity* (1988) is more or less a confirmation of emotional flood in life due to mistaken identity. That flood pilots towards extensive transformation in the destiny. The novel, above all, is as regards the love affairs. It gives birth to the eventual unification of the differing compelled forces. It is the consensus on different social backgrounds, and religious and political ideologies. Here Sahgal endeavours the matters of contemporary world by walking around widespread predicament of quest for identity.

*Lesser Breeds* (2003) interweaves contradictory analyses on *ahimsa* in the present state of affairs. Here, Sahgal unearths the nationalistic inferno, the extreme pre-eminence of the master race over the weaker race. She illustrates with proper examples the European dominance over the world. The incredible stress and intolerable strain between the colonizer and the colonized is the intimate framework of her oeuvre. Fundamentally, it is functional in the power game of postcolonialism.

Sahgal monitors varied themes in her fictional world like man-woman relationship, sex, feminism, imperialism, post-colonialism, morality, humanism, cultural relativity, ethnocentrism, meditation on history, and experiment in time, mapping cultural spaces, discourse on nationalism, identity crisis, alienation, women's questions, and autobiographical bearings. Her open multiplicity of themes carries to perceive her breathtaking even if meticulous craftsmanship in her exclusive way as a novelist. She

engages in experimentation regarding varied themes in the socio-political world.

Sahgal's fictional world is a union of the personal and the political lives. "In all her works there is a juxtaposition of two worlds: the personal world of man-woman relationship and the impersonal world of politics" (Arora 3). Furthermore, the personal life is a unique infrastructure on perceptive and essential organ of human relationships, and the political life is originated from and persuaded by political affairs. Being the observer of the turbulent period of Indian history and the personal and the political lives, she tries to humanize Indian politics in her novels. In reality, it is the impressive vicinity of her fictional world. Every human has been energetic due to his dynamic soul and body. To Sahgal, the personal and the impersonal worlds are soul and body respectively. Human cannot breathe single moment without soul and body. She thrives to proposition the objective and impartial justice to the personal and the impersonal worlds.

Sahgal facilitates the novel's facet towards Indian socio-political life. She is deeply integrated in Indian soil and affairs. She has been in close touch with high profile celebrities of socio-political world. Her huge accomplishment as a novelist "lies in her ability to project the image of contemporary Indian socio-political scene in an intensely moral frame (Rao 1976: viii). As a result, now and then, she falls short of tracking her exact course of unlimited creativity, thanks to the huge strength simultaneously with getting a hold painstaking position. She transmits numerous socio-political persona, as well the convincing events in her writing. Concurrently, she brings out the inner conflicts of their soul and psyche. She judges the novelist as an explorer of existence resembling to Milan Kundera.

In order to make the most of politics and social life, Sahgal holds the revelation of life. Her fascinating narrative proposes thoughtful evidence of her serious tone. She is of the view of human is a social along with political



animal. For her, human life is indivisible from socio-political life. Politics, the essence of Sahgal's literature, is in indomitable stroke. It is the most wanted territory and nourishment in her plot. "Constituting the very heart of the matter, politics functions as the germinal nucleus fermenting the human story" (Bhatnagar 13). She unswervingly complements politics with society. For this reason, she succeeds to place great socio-political novels in readers' hands.

Politics performs the principal role in her fictional world. It carries out the compelling conscientiousness. It constructs now and again her characters like a puppet. It renovates their minds. Hence, they grow into docile and pathetic beings. They proceed like the shadow. Moreover, politics propels towards their destination. It destroys the capability of characterization of the novelist. Therefore, her major characters are owned by politics and the upper class of society.

Sahgal has been the advocate of humanization of Indian politics since her prior days. In her hands, novel proceeds from a socio-political device for the human values. The humanistic letter in her script is evidently specialized and is a "genuine concern for human values and human beings" (Jain 9). She spellbinds the readers into intense self-assurance, and adds her pioneering revelation towards society. She demonstrates a profound moments into the human soul and analyses the age-old customs and customary tradition. Hence, she enlightens the lamp of estimable openness, strong will, and unquestionable sincerity. She evinces the Gandhian ideology in her accomplishment and storyline. Absolutely, she puts forward *satya*, *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* as the soul force. Unquestionably, it is the constructive force. She advocates the way of Gandhism by depositing into genuine practice properly and logically. That is the desideratum of this moment.

Sahgal's delivers the new woman, who is the radical edition of contemporary Indian woman. She sends for

her precious spell in searching for ceaseless operation for legitimate uniqueness and sexual freedom. She weathers a storm to call into being the women characters rooted in *Sita* and *Durga*. Her woman introduces the actual substantiations that she is the new woman of this brave new world. Her inherent thought of the new woman breaks all the hindrances due to man-woman relationship. The forceful hate of woman is the unwavering conclusion of her feminist stand that sets aside the social inequality and gender discrimination between male and female. For that reason, from this point of view, man-woman relationship attempts to re-evaluate the gender relationship in life. Really, it administers as a unique warrant to life. The new woman surfaces on the strength of forceful abhorrence in man-woman relationship. She prevails herself with recognizing her self-regulating inimitability. She has been against the acute discrimination at her level, and applies herself to be conquering by her eagerly shoulder. Therefore, her fictional world is bigger than real world.

Largely, a woman writer is exultant and ardent towards women characters. But Sahgal proposes the one and the same treatment to male and female characters drawn from humankind. On that account, for her humanism is religion. She is indisputably a spokesperson of human values. She exercises to confer a much-needed enhancement to re-exploration of humanity. She sets herself on the golden threshold of the new planet. She is the foremost woman writer, who has drawn hale and hearty alliance between humanism and morality with strong prominence. Her privileged desire is that human being should be treated as a human being. Her vision brings together the gargantuan swing over her breathing art of characterization. She directs her kind-hearted vision towards human being, sooner than as a man or a woman. She loves each character that can be pertinent to the human. She demonstrates affectionate admiration towards human life through the prismatic colours.

Sahgal, a prominent representative of the human



values, is worthy to be consigned an illustrious place in Indian English Literature, absolutely in Indian English Novel. She is in devotional tune with neither woman nor man, but with human being, who is the timeless spirit of her exciting storyline. She sums up an all-inclusive review and sober assessment of her profound supervision. She puts before her readers the painful pleasure and pleasurable pain, and sorrowful joy and joyful sorrow of human being. She has "always endeavoured to live upto the values of freedom and a broad humanistic approach to life and its innumerable pains and pleasures" (Rao 5). Hence, she comes confronting each other with the unsurprising results from the readers at both sides of the Atlantic. She puts on monitor the emotional shades of human beings swollen with anguish, annoyance, self-realization, quest for identity, weirdness, and fervor, which quintessentially can be called the components of life.

Sahgal puts ahead, resembling Matthew Arnold, her novels as a criticism of life on the institutions like marriage, family, government, and democracy. These institutions engineer human being as a husband, wife, brother, sister, daughter, son, father, mother, friend and so on. Her insight pertaining to life is the fresh vision on the vista of literature. That is yet hinted in her ingenious vein.

Sahgal is heartily integrated with her creative and critical writings for five decades. She ascends with flying colours to fly into temper her own way and principles. She bears "the new tensions and conflicts faced by a young nation and its men and women" (Abid 1618). She submits her ideal audacity in presenting her characters and scrutiny. She is grateful for an undying deliberation that the pen is mightier than the sword. She registers her distinct place between the three big brothers and the present day novelists. She moves to the determined mission of providing emotional shades by human regard.

Sahgal has put forward a remarkable contribution to Indian English novel, mostly on account of her revolutionary approach, corpus of events, authority over

English language, and unifying of the personal and the impersonal worlds. Despite everything, lamentably, many critics and scholars hold her as a political novelist with making of completely blind eye towards other facets like emotional shades of human life, human relationships, morality, cultural relativity, identity crisis, love, sex, marriage, feminism, and existentialism.

Sahgal has occupied an illustrious place in Indian English novel as a result of her perfect mastery over craftsmanship. She is a novelist of the life and literature. She ventures "a happy combination of two sensitivities- the sensitivity of an artist and the sensitivity of a humanist" (Asnani 38). She is successful to exchange a few words to the readers. That wins the heart of readers. Her novels have brought the international recognitions, and bagged many prizes, honours, and awards for her further inviting to a large extent criticism.

Sahgal's prime extent of deserving contribution to Indian English Literature is the social, political, cultural, and economic feature with fascinating story. She is the prime woman writer, who handles politics with human consciousness. Most critics and scholars hold her as a political writer. They underestimate her due to political aspect. Indeed, ever since her childhood, she has been witnessing politics. Consequently, politics transpires an inseparable part of her writings. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar remarks, "Mrs. Sahgal's feeling for politics and her command over English are rather more impressive than her art as a novelist" (474). Remarkably, by virtue of politics, she has taken delivery of love-hate relationship among the circle of critics and scholars.

Sahgal has made a sterling and matchless service to Indian English novel. Being a novelist, her great achievement is her stride energetically towards the personal and the impersonal worlds. Both these worlds are indispensable because that is unification of the subjective and the objective worlds. She assimilates both the worlds reminiscent of the moving and tuneful stream and thrives



to bring simultaneously both the worlds under a single umbrella of human practice. In her hands the novel enlarges into a socio-political mechanism for the emotional shades of human being. "This introspective probing of human mind, its complexities and the inexorable quest of the self, make the novels timeless. They throw light on what is unique and universal simultaneously" (Majithia 30). She puts into practice her pen like a sword against human established institutions, organizations, practices, and tendencies, however not against human.

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## Woman- A Commodity? A Womanist Study of Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

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Womanism, a gentler and less individualistic form of feminism, is about women saying, "I am a person too, I want my space and place." It's about bringing forth all the discontent of numerous women who could not speak out for fear. It's also about women protesting against their use as an article to be sold and purchased or as a belonging to be lost and won in a gamble. It's not about women inching towards freedom, rather, it's all about women inching their way away from the traditional image of being an idol of compassion, patience and tolerance. The present paper is an attempt to probe into Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* with a womanist stance. The question about woman being a commodity throws itself at the very outset of the novel when Michael Henchard sells, rather, auctions his wife, Susan in a drunken state. The absolute indifference with which Susan submits to her fate is but an articulation of her involuntary resignation to her husband's frivolity. This singular incident opens a way to the labyrinthine world of womanhood and innumerable issues associated with it.

The concept of Womanism has originated from theology. Initially, the notion was employed in terms of the struggle of the African- American community. Most of the womanists hail from this community and they are sincerely concerned with the struggle of black man and woman. Originally, the womanist theology concentrates on the well-being of the entire African American community, male and female, adults and children. It challenges all oppressive forces impeding black women's struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to the freedom and



well-being of women and the family. Womanist theology raises voice against all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical ability, and caste.

The pioneers of the womanist theology are Katie Geneva Cannon, Jacquelyn Grant, Delores Williams and Emilie Townes. They have offered feminist critiques of both classical theology and black theology such as writings of James Hal Cone. Grant differentiated between the oppression of black women and black men. As womanist theory concentrates on women and their welfare, it distinguishes itself sharply from black and white feminism. Some feminists consider it a corrective, constructive focus on women. The term *womanist* first appeared in Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983), in which the author attributed the word's origin to the black folk expression of mothers to female children, 'You acting womanish,' i.e. like a woman ... usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or wilful behaviour. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one ... [A womanist is also] a woman who loves other women sexually and/or nonsexually, appreciates and prefers women's culture ... and women's strength ... committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist ... Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender. (pp. xi-xii)

Although Walker states that a womanist is a black feminist or feminist of colour, she insists that a black feminist as womanist talks back to feminism, brings new demands and different perspectives to feminism, and compels the expansion of feminist horizons in theory and practice.....The late 1970s and the 1980s witnessed an internal insurgency in feminism led by women of colour who participated in fighting vigorously against sexual politics of the previous decade only to be confronted by the feminist politics of exclusion a decade later. Excluded from and alienated by feminist theorizing and thinking, women of colour insisted that feminism must account for

different subjectivities and locations in its analysis of women, thus bringing into focus the issues of difference, particularly with regard to race and class. If feminism were not able to fully account for the experiences of black women, it would be necessary, then, to find other terminologies that could carry the weight of those experiences. It is in this regard that Alice Walker's "womanism" intervenes to make an important contribution.

Further, Walker noted in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1984, "I don't choose womanism because it is 'better' than feminism ... I choose it because I prefer the sound, the feel, the fit of it; because I cherish the spirit of the women (like Sojourner) the word calls to mind, and because I share the old ethnic-American habit of offering society a new word when the old word it is using fails to describe behavior and change that only a new word can help it more fully see" (p. 94). With the passage of time new meaning was added to this term and it opened new horizons. "Womanism is a term that has a similar meaning to Feminism but describes all women, career driven and not. Womanism is a term of wholeness that displays women of all age ranges and cultures. This was not the case at first since the term was first used by Alice Walker, meaning Womanism referring to black feminist. Now this title embodies the whole essence of a woman's being .....no matter if she is rich or poor." (*|Feminism-vs-Womanism*) Presently the term womanist means "having or expressing a belief in or respect for women and their talents and abilities beyond the boundaries of race and class". (freedictionary.com)

*The Mayor of Casterbridge* is a novel that raises dominant questions about women and the space they were given in the Victorian society long before movements like feminism and womanism came into existence. A womanist study of the novel chiefly concentrates on the life and destiny of Susan. As the novel opens, Michael Henchard, a rugged hey-trusser of merely 21 years reaches the village



of Weydon- Priors in upper Wessex with his pale- looking wife, Susan and his young daughter Elizabeth Jane. Being unemployed he is in search of a job. As they enter the village, a fair was going on there. In the fun and frolic of the fair, Henchard stoops to heavy drinking and soon lapses into drunkenness. Having been overpowered by liquor he begins to complain against his early marriage and the difficulties that followed. Under the effect of the liquor he loses all sense and happens to invite a bid for his young wife. It embarrassed the spectators that surrounded the tent: "Don't, my chiel," whispered a buxom staylace dealer in voluminous petticoats, who sat near the woman;"yer good man don't know what he's saying." (Part1) The husband had now crossed all bounds of decency and dignity. He started raising the bid for auction; a sailor named Newson offers five guineas to buy Susan who accepts the agreement with 'absolute indifference.' When the money was actually offered and Henchard greedily agreed to grasp it, the event left the crowd awestruck:

The spectators had indeed taken the proceedings throughout as a piece of mirthful irony carried to extremes; and had assumed that, being out of work, he was, as a consequence, out of temper with the world, and society, and his nearest kin. But with the demand and response of real cash, the jovial frivolity of the scene departed. A lurid colour seemed to fill the tent, and change the aspect of all therein. (Part 1)

Even at this stage the auctioneer appears to be a better humanist and womanist than the husband of the poor woman. He declares:"'Tis quite on the understanding that the young woman is willing," said the sailor blandly. "I wouldn't hurt her feelings for the world." (Part 1) However, the husband remains unbent and the deal is finalized. At last the auctioned creature responded: "Mike," she said, "I've lived with thee a couple of years, and had nothing but temper! Now I'm no more to 'ee; I'll try my luck elsewhere. 'Twill be better for me and Elizabeth-Jane, both. So good-bye!" (Part 1)

Finally, the woman walks away with her new husband in principle. The next morning, the hey-trusser wakes up to find himself totally lost and deserted. He, then, takes an oath not to touch liquor for twenty one years as repentance. This incidence of the auction of wife leaves several questions about the place of woman in the society. Is she a commodity to be sold and purchased? Isn't she a person to be respected and allowed the rights of self-decision? In India, we have the instance of Draupadi who was lost in the game of gamble by her husband. Is she a property to be lost and won in a game? Does she have no rights to self-possession?

An insight into the auction-episode unlocks the silent resentment that fills a woman's heart. The 'absolute indifference' with which Susan submits to her destiny is but an expression of her inner cry and discontent with her status as the wife of a drunkard as she finally pulls off her wedding ring and flings it across the booth in the hay-trusser's face. Previously she had expressed with bitterness: "I wish somebody would," said she firmly. "Her present owner is not at all to her liking!" (Part 1) These words articulate her ultimate resignation to her fate yet reveal a deep rooted agony. Finally she warned her husband against her misdemeanor: "before you go further, Michael, listen to me. If you touch that money, I and this girl go with the man. Mind, it is a joke no longer." (Part 1)

Each word uttered by the dishonoured wife not only pronounces her indignation against the act of her husband but also expresses her protest against the social norms that compel a woman to yield to the words of her man, howsoever, inhuman and illogical he may be. Susan's return to Casterbridge after an interval of eighteen years is evidence to her involuntary departure with the sailor years ago. "A friend to whom she confided her history ridiculed her grave acceptance of her position; and all was over with her peace of mind." (Part 4)

She listens to her inner voice and returns to



Casterbridge in search for her departed husband as soon as she comes to know about Newson's drowning. Susan's withdrawal from conjugal happiness with Henchard is an incident that Hardy portrays with intense sensitivity and humanity despite any consideration of her social status. A woman from the masses draws the sympathy of the novelist beyond any bounds of class or race. What else can express the commitment of a true womanist than these words of Hardy at the end of the auction scene?

"The difference between the peacefulness of inferior nature and the willful hostilities of mankind was very apparent at this place. In contrast with the harshness of the act just ended within the tent was the sight of several horses crossing their necks and rubbing each other lovingly as they waited in patience to be harnessed for the homeward journey. Outside the fair, in the valleys and woods, all was quiet. ....In presence of this scene after the other there was a natural instinct to abjure man as the blot on an otherwise kindly universe; till it was remembered that all terrestrial conditions were intermittent, and that mankind might some night be innocently sleeping when these quiet objects were raging loud." (Part 1)

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## Diasporic Context and Conflict in the Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan

*Uday Shankar Ojha\**

The diasporic Indian is like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes, and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world. (Parekh 106)

As a diasporic writer, A.K. Ramanujan appears to be strongly endorsing the above-quoted views and himself emerges out as that "banyan tree" whose roots have not only permeated into his rich native soil of South Indian Cultures but also invaded to savour mouthful the mesmerizing world of Western reality and ethos. Hence, the nourishment drawn from both ways are never conspicuously absent in his entire poetic output. A remarkable subtle confluence of varied sensibilities is achieved in his poetry. And Ramanujan's ability to feel at home at several homes while away from his home is a riddle that Bruce King aptly analyses when he observes that most of the Indian expatriate poets "may look back on India with nostalgia, satirically celebrating their liberation or asserting their biculturalism, but they also look skeptically and wryly on their new home land as outsiders, with a feeling of something having been lost in the process of growth. The ability to tolerate, accommodate and absorb other cultures without losing the consciousness of being Indian marks the expatriate poets" (209-10).

The inherent diasporic conflict, howsoever subtle it may be, floats on the surface when Bruce King appreciates Ramanujan's adjustability to proliferate "in two different worlds" - the world of his self and memory which is



"within" him and the world of the present which is "without". However, the seed of all his poetic oeuvres amply exemplifies that "the core of the essential self remains as an inner world, but this is modified by changed circumstances and decisions" (214-15).

Thus, A.K. Ramanujan, the poet, indubitably got moulded his poetic sensibility under the pressure of two diverse socio- cultural identities. Born and brought up in Mysore (South India), he served different academic institutes and universities in India as a Lecturer and subsequently shifted to U.S.A as a Professor of Linguistics and South Asian Languages and Civilization at University of Chicago. He breathed his last, too, in the West. The shift of location from Mysore to Chicago brought with itself a sharing sensibility of Indian and Western cultural traditions paving a way for that significant diasporic consciousness and conflict which is reflected throughout his poetic landscape.

Before we look into the diasporic elements in Ramanujan's poetry, it is equally interesting to find the dichotomy of his being a bilingual poet who composes poems in Kannada and English with equal command and mastery. "By the time I was 17", he says, "I spoke Tamil downstairs, English upstairs and Kannada outside." Talking about the unique texture and flavor of his poetry, he further explains:

English and my disciplines (linguistics, anthropology) give me my 'outer' forms - linguistic, metrical, logical and other such ways of shaping experience, and my first thirty years in India, my frequent visits and fieldtrips, my personal and professional preoccupations with Kannada, Tamil, the classics, and folklore give me my substance, my 'inner' forms, images, symbols. They are continuous with each other and I can no longer tell what comes from where. (Parthasarthy, 197)

Hence, his poetry is appreciated and evaluated as the product of what R. Parthasarthy calls "a specific culture" and his real greatness lies in his unsurpassable ability to translate this experience into terms of another culture.

Ramanujan's creativity whether in prose or poetry is deeply imbued with the ingredients of loss, alienation, memory, nostalgia and desire for roots. However, it is also accompanied with a sense of recovery. This recovery may be the imagination based on memories of the past to compensate for the loss of being away from the mother land. In Salman Rushdie's terms:

"Exiles or immigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do in knowledge - which gives rise to profound uncertainties - that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable to reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost: that we will in short, creates fictions not actual cities or villages but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, India's of the mind" (Jain 74).

Like other diasporic Indian poets such as; Agah Shahid Ali, G.S. Sharat Chandra and Meena Alexander, Ramanujan also tries to carry on Indian legacy through his nostalgic memories. If he appears to be celebrating his liberation of being away from India in America, it is soon eclipsed under the force of his Indian roots. In a way his poetry is marked with agreeable objectivity because he doesn't shy away from articulating even the unpleasant or ridiculous aspects of Indian life.

In his poetry, the two factors of his life - Indian past and American present - are complimentary to each other. To him, the Eastern and the Western are the two lobes of brain than can co-exist. C.D. Ramakrishna has rightly observed Ramanujan's unique "ability to contain within himself the binaries, explaining the East to the West and the West to the East with perfect equanimity" (11). Ramanujan's four collections - *The Striders*, *Relations*, *Second Sight* and *The Black Hen* are replete with the fond memories of the past and especially of his relations and home. His poetry is a wonderful expression of Indian sensibility, sharpened and nourished by Western education and environment. Chidanand Das Gupta opines: "As with so



many Indian writers living abroad, it is the Indian experience - a whole storehouse of it that they carry inside review, re-live from time and bring into contact with the present experience - that nourishes Ramanujan's poetry".

Poems like "Compensations", "Conventions of Despair", "Prayers to Lord Murugan" and especially "The Last of the Prince's" portray the tragic colonial picture of India. The plight of an Indian prince is paradoxically presented here in the "The Last of the Prince's":

He lives on, heir to long  
fingers, faces in paintings, and a belief  
in auspicious  
snakes in the skylight: he lives on, to  
remember and sneeze a balance of phlegm cough  
and bile, alternating loose bowels and hard sheep's  
pellets. (CP105)

The Hindu consciousness is so permeated in his poetry that in his poem "Conventions of Despair", he expresses his helplessness for his unflinching faith in it:

I should smile, dry-eyed,  
and nurse martins like the Marginal Man.  
But, sorry, I cannot unlearn  
Conventions of despair.  
They have their pride.  
I must seek and will find  
My particular hell in my Hindu mind. (CP34)

It is quite evident that his poetic output is a queer fusion of Indian sensibility with his American experiences. Rather this conflict adds the necessary tension to his poetry and makes it sublime. In his famous poem "Chicago Zen", Ramanujan co-relates his present in Chicago with that of his past spent in India :

Watch your step. Sight may strike you  
blind in unexpected places.  
The traffic light turns orange  
On 57<sup>th</sup> and Dorchester, and you stumble,  
You fall into a vision of forest fires  
enter a frothing Himalayan river, rapid, silent  
On the 14<sup>th</sup> floor,

Lake Michigan crawls and crawls  
in the window. (CP 186)

A diasporic literature generally shows a discontent for his foreign locale and culture but Ramanujan's comfort with America is also a unique individual experience. But even this acclimatization with America could not really hamper his inborn affinity with India as it is very beautifully reflected in "Death and the Good Citizen":

Hearts,

With your kind of temper,  
may even take, make connection  
with alien veins, and continue  
your struggle to be naturalized:  
beat, and learn to miss a beat  
in a foreign body.

But

you know my tribe, incarnate  
unbelieves in bodies  
they'll speak proverbs, contest  
my will, against such degradation.  
Hidebound, even worms cannot  
have me: they'll cremate  
me in Sanskrit and Sandalwood,  
have me sterilized  
to a scatter of ash. (CP 136)

Ramanujan has shown his tremendous exploratory poetic vision while diving deep into India's glorious heritage of ancient myth and profound living tradition. He laments more like T.S. Eliot on the tragic decline of that age - long Indian tradition, myth, literature, family system - all in a decadent social structure of post colonial scenario. In "Prayer to Lord Murugan" the loss of myth and legends is deeply regretted as "We eat legends and leavings, / remember the ivory, the apes, / the peacocks we sent in the Bible / to Solomon, the muslin; wavering snakeskins a cloud of steam. / Even-rehearsing astronauts / we purify and return / Our urine / to the circling body / and burn our faces / for fuel to reach the moon / through the sky/ behind the navel" (CP115).



It appears that Ramanujan is quite nostalgic about the mythical and literary past of India. The two collections *The Striders* (1966) and *Relations* (1971) present a harmonious fusion of what we often call tradition and modernity. In this connection, Ramanujan strongly emerges as a traditionalist bearing the influence of Hindu heritage. Bruce King concludes this debate quite objectively: In Ramanujan's "The Striders" (1966) and "Relations" (1971) poetry seemed to grow out of Indian experience and sensibility with all its memories of family, local places, images, beliefs and history, while having a modern stance with its skepticism, ironies and sense of living from moment to moment in a changing world in which older values and attitudes often are seen as unrealistic. While Ramanujan can evoke the warmth of traditional Indian family life and the closeness of long remembered relationships, more often he shows conflict, arguments, surprises; he also shows that the supposed glory of the Tamil cultural heritage is a fiction which ignores the reality of the past (219)

The beauty of Ramanujan's poetry comes through his powerful evocative and telling images that smell of his dear past. He smells "the silk and white petal of his mother's youth upon this twisted blackbone tree" in his poem entitled "Of Mother's, Among Other Things" (CP61). Similarly, his poems nostalgically make a perpetual retreat down to the memory lanes recalling his father (in "Obituary"), his wife (in "Love Poem for a Wife"), his great Aunt (in "History") and even his loved house (in "Great House") and whatever has ever figured or happened, the poet thinks about it all : "Sometimes I think that nothing that ever/ Comes into this house go out." (CP 96)

The poet's embarrassment in the American socio-cultural milieu gets emphatically translated under his strong Indian ethos in the poem "Still Another View of Grace":

Find a priest. Find any beast in the  
wind for a husband. He will give you  
a household of legitimate sons.

It is too late for sin, even for the treason. (CP 45)

In a way Ramanujan's poetry has variety of shades of diasporic sensibility which is chiefly governed by what he calls 'laws of my land' ("Still Another View of Grace" CP 45). Critics like Bruce King have minutely observed that lopsided poetic sensibility having its "background in complex ways" in his South Indian Brahminical bonds but at the same time suggested to "ignore critics who assume that the interest in Ramanujan's poetry consists of nostalgic memories of South-Indian life, that his poetry is limited by an inability or unwillingness to embrace some larger assertion of an Indian ideal or tradition, or is limited by a failure to express a fuller or a more comprehensive vision of Indian society" (210).

In the defence of the objective and pragmatic features of Ramanujan's poetry, it can be well argued that literature is more akin to actual experience of life than to the world of politics, fantastical sentiments and rhetoric. It is in this mode that Ramanujan created a balance between his love for India and understanding for Chicago. That his poems could "reflect a personality conscious of change, enjoying its vitality, freedom and contradictions, but also aware of memories which form his innerself, memories of an unconscious 'namelessness', which are still alive, at the foundations of the self" (212).

To conclude all about the socio-cultural matrix the family saga and the diasporic consciousness of Ramanujan's poetry the only phrase 'lost long ago' from his poem "Great House" appears to be befitting because it echoes his longing to his roots.

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## Arun Kolatkar's *Sarpa Satra*: Text, Context and Contemporary Issues

Sudhir K. Arora\*

My name is Arun Kolatkar  
I had a little matchbox  
I lost it  
then I found it  
I kept it  
in my right hand pocket  
It is still there (CP 229)

...  
Give me the matchbox  
before you go  
will you?  
a sceptic match coughs (CP 47)

These are the revealing words from the pen of Arun Balkrishan Kolatkar (1931-2004), who, by virtue of his matchbox which possessed the matches that made the things visualize, is considered, to quote Aravind Krishna Mehrotra, "as one of the great Indian poets of the last century" (CP 12). Every match in the matchbox is "sceptic" that "coughs" when it finds anything unusual. This is the sceptic match that makes him see the unseen view of *Jejuri*, reveal the ugly, tiresome and struggling life of the people associated with the vicinity of *Kala Ghoda* and demonstrate the invisible fire in the visible fire lit by *Janmejaya* for the *yagna* to wipe out the species of snakes. That's why he always keeps it in his right hand pocket. It is the matchbox full of matches that possess the substances of irony, satire, defamiliarization, myths and the like which when are stuck reveal the things that confirm his poetry as non-conformist and anti-established in approach and nature.

Like his matchbox, Kolatkar's pen has the charismatic power that makes him compose poetic collections like



*Jejuri*, *Kala Ghoda Poems* and *Sarpa Satra* in English. Prash published *The Boatride and Other Poems* in 2009 after his death while Aravind Krishna Mehrotra did a commendable job by editing all his poems and providing them in one collection, namely *Collected Poems in English* (2010).

*Jejuri*, which made Kolatkar win the Commonwealth Writers' Poetry Prize in 1977 for being the best book in English, is his *magnum opus* by virtue of his innovative technique of being involved as well as uninvolved simultaneously. He is uninvolved because he is not interested in rituals and outdated traditions and remains involved because he reveals what remains unseen to the reader who wonders at the commercialism that has entered the religious places where everything is present except faith and devotion even in the hearts of the concerned people. The poet of *Jejuri* appears in a new avatar in *Kala Ghoda Poems*. Scepticism and rationalism that he had while visiting the pilgrim town Jejuri in *Jejuri* disappear in *Kala Ghoda Poems* where he emerges as the champion of the underdog to the extent that he has attracted the attention of the rich civilized world towards the marginalized people who live life despite the adverse circumstances. His poetic journey from *Jejuri* to *Sarpa Satra* is replete with quotidian experiences articulated in day-to-day language. But, he has also inserted allegory, narration and myths in order to make his poetry contemporary relevant though sometimes he comes down to the level of profanity or obscenity which generally either shocks the reader or makes him wonder at his candidness.

*Sarpa Satra* (2004), a long narrative poem consisting of three sections namely 'Janamejaya', 'Jaratkaru Speaks to Her Son Aastika', and 'The Ritual Bath' with stanzas of three lines each respectively begins with a brief epigraph that runs thus: "According to *Mahabharata*, a sacrifice performed by Janamejaya with the object of annihilating the Nagas, or the Snake People." As Janamejaya wishes

to take revenge of Parikshat's death due to the poisonous bite of the snake Takshak, he performs the snake sacrifice which compels snakes through a spell to come to be burnt to death. The death of his wife in the burning of the Khandava forest by Arjuna and Krishna motivates Takshak to take revenge on Arjuna's grandson King Parikshat. With his skill of interweaving myth, history and allegory, Arun Kolatkar has exploited this revenge motif to make it into a contemporary poem that reveals the chaotic state of the present human world where festivals of hatred are celebrated to the point of mass destruction out of violence. What makes *Sarpasatra* different from the original story of the *Mahabharata* is that the human world is not seen through the eyes of Arjuna and Krishna but through the eyes of Jaratkaru, a snake woman who makes up her mind to make an end of this violence with the help of her son Aastika.

Janamejaya decides to take revenge of the death of his father and so performs a snake sacrifice which, by virtue of its spell, forces each and every snake to come to the fire to be burnt. Calling Takshak "a scheming snake", he makes his intention clear:

My vengeance will be swift and terrible.

I will not rest

until I've exterminated them all.

They'll discover

that no hole is deep enough

to hide from Janamejaya. (CP 187)

The decision to ruin the whole species for the crime of one man shows how fanatic Janamejaya is. He is in power and no one has the courage to raise voice against the decision.

The poet Kolatkar makes Jaratkaru speak from the points of view of the snake people. She is the female protagonist who puts the case of the snake species which will come to an end because of the snake sacrifice. She tells her son Aastika about this snake sacrifice because she finds him the only man who can save the snake



species from its extinction by persuading Janmejaya for stopping the *yajna*. Great *rishes*, *mahrishis*, great thinkers and even people like Atreya, Uddalaka and Shvetaketu attend the snake sacrifice and the strange thing is that none stop him as they long for the profitable status in the state. These so-called "living volcanoes of conscience" who were ready to raise their voice at any wrong doing have gone astray from the path of righteousness for the sake of a job as officiating priests.

Jaratkaru does not appreciate Takshak for his action.

To say that he was always an extremist

is not to make excuses for him.

He deserves the harshest punishment in the book.

(CP 193)

She calls Takshak an extremist and thinks that he deserves punishment for what he has done. His act is not less than the act of a terrorist. She blames Indra for protecting him.

And I certainly do not approve  
of the way he's hiding now  
behind Indra's throne to save his skin,  
hoping his powerful friend  
will help him escape the consequences  
of an act we're now paying for.

It only shows what cowards  
all terrorists are

behind their snarling ferocious masks. (CP 193)

She calls all terrorists coward because they hide themselves behind the masks and operate their terrorist activities while having a protecting cover in the form of either industrialists or politicians. Kolatkar turns the poem into an allegory as he somewhere associates the incidents to make them contemporary relevant. It always happens that politicians shelter the terrorists who get escape free and are let loose for committing further crimes that may help in making their position strong. As long as Takshaks are present in the garb of terrorists, political Indras will be there to save them from being punished.

She blames Takshak for not performing his duties as

he was not present in the Khandava forest when it was being burnt by Arjuna and Krishna. Where he was, is not certain. But it is certain that he should be present there to save his wife, children and the forest. She also fails to understand why he did not take revenge on Arjuna whom he could easily kill in his old age. As "true revenge accepts no substitute" (CP 200), why did he bite Parikshat, not Arjuna?

Now, she narrates how the snakes are forced to be burnt under the spell of the mantras recited during the Snake Sacrifice. The snakes come "floating, writhing through the air" and "throw themselves into the fire" (CP 201). She considers it to be an insult to Agni, the fire god. It is a "mockery" or "parody / of the institution of yajnya" (CP 203) and so it should be stopped. But, who can have courage to stop this? Those who can do it are on "the payroll of Janamejaya" (CP 203) and have no courage because of selfish motive of getting advantage. The air that now blows will soon become "as something un-Indian, alien / and antinational" (CP 204) because of the smell of the burnt snakes. She is surprised to see that the wise men fail to take any action. How can they forget that this earth rests on the hood of Shesha, a snake? Shesha is her brother whom she sends a *rakhi* which reminds him of her. If he comes to know about this happening, what will happen? It will result not in the end of naga species only but of all. If he moves his head slightly, the world will come to an end.

A slight toss of his head...

the merest shrug...

and it will be all over.

Khatam.

That's what I'm really worried about. (CP 205)

She thinks that it is time to intimate Janamejaya that on whom he intends to rule when the earth will come to an end. She finds her son Aastika the right man because of his clear vision for this job and hence asks him to go to meet Janamejaya who either may stop him at the



gate or beat or insult him. She recalls how they beat Sarama's son for no fault. But, there is no other alternative left and it is not possible to sit and watch "this holocaust" (CP 207) as she knows that if it is not stopped, she with Vasuki "will end up as burnt offerings" (CP 208). She asks Aastika to see the naga family that move to the "unholy river of dirty smoke / that has poisoned the whole / atmosphere" (CP 209). She cannot see Vasuki suffer. It is the same Vasuki, the great serpent king who "coiled himself around / Mount Mandara once / to churn up the ocean for gods and demons" (CP 209). She makes Aastika recall that though he is her son, he is a man who belongs to human race. As he is a man, he is the right person to stop this sacrifice for the sake of the humanity. She blesses him with all her prayers saying:

My heart tells me  
you'll find a way  
to put a stop  
to that festival of hatred. (CP 211)

The poet in Kolatkar presents the scene when after attending the sacrificial jamborees, the officiating priests, guests and intellectual creams return to their respective homes with the gifts. As soon as the mandatory bath is over, kings return to their capital with a plan of attacking the neighbourly kingdom or levying a new tax in order to fill the coffers. She is sure that people will forget it and start talking about other subjects. They will make themselves busy in simple pleasure like kite flying, collecting wild flowers and making love. Life will come to its own normal course. She hopes that "sooner or later, / these celebrations of hatred too / come to an end / like everything else" (CP 213). But, fire which was lit will not be extinguished. Fire that was produced by Parashara for the destruction of rakshasa still continues "in the great forest beyond the Himalayas" (CP 213). Despite the fact that he stopped the sacrifice at the request of Poulastya, it continues "to consume / rakshasas / rocks / trees" (CP 214). The poem ends in despair and

does not give any message of hope. It is true that the fire of hatred continues to burn and will continue till the world ends. No doubt, the poem *Sarpa Satra* leaves in frustration of hope but it makes the world realize the havoc and desolation that it causes. It quite applies to the contemporary world which is burning with the fire of hatred and violence. It also offers an allegory to the present scenario dotted with the nexus of corrupt politicians, cunning ministers and so-called maniac messiahs who do not feel hesitation in protecting the terrorists.

The text *Sarpa Satra* raises the issue of environmental pollution and the ecological problems that appear out of the forest fire. No doubt, Arjuna and Krishna are heroes but they have done the unheroic task by burning the Khandava forest for reasons unknown. The tone of Jaratkaru is satirical and mocking when she reveals the truth of these two legendary figures of history. Jaratkaru narrates how Arujun with Krishna burnt the Khandava forest. Ironically she calls Arjuna, the grandfather of Janamejaya "the great superhero" who received the divine weapons. God knows what happened to him that he used the divine weapons for destructive purpose. He burnt down the Khandava forest, "one of the largest rainforest in the land" and reduced it "completely to ash" (CP 195). This was "the very first act of heroism" (CP 194) that he did with his divine weapons and in this heroic act Krishna with his Sudarshan chakra assisted him. The burning which resulted in ash did not leave "one green leaf, / not a single blade of grass" (CP 195) behind. The heaps of ash continued to smoulder for many months. Some old trees that "contained a wealth / of medicinal plants" (CP 196) were destroyed. Nothing remained behind, not even the great sanctuary that Indra loved. All the trees, birds, insects and animals like elephants, gazelles, antelope etc., met the same fate. While narrating this to her son Astika, Jaratkaru becomes emotional because this fire did not leave "people as well / simple



folk, / children of the forest / who had lived there for generations, / since time began" (CP 196). Their sheltering place was destroyed for the reasons which are not known yet. Mark the excerpt for the destruction of the Khandava forest for no reason

Why did they do it?

Who knows!

Just for kicks, maybe.

maybe just the fact

that now they had all these fantastic weapons

went to their heads

and they just couldn't wait

to test their awesome powers.

maybe they just wanted

a clear title to the land,

unchallenged

by so much as a tigermoth. (CP 197)

Sudarshan Chakra cuts every single honeybee and comes back to "the tip of Krishna's finger / for fresh instructions" (CP 198) while Arjuna's arrows give death to swans. These two heroes feel proud of themselves at the destruction that they have made in the forest to its birds, animals and folk people. The poet leaves the reader to reflect over the deed whether it was heroic or shameful.

Arun Kolatkar has attempted to deconstruct the text as he has made the snake woman Jaratkaru the main protagonist for articulating the viewpoints of what the snake people think. He has undermined the master narrative which favours the great men and does not hold them responsible for the crime which they commit for the sake of pleasure. The poet reveals the truth of their action which is certainly inhuman. The burning of the Khandava forest cannot be justified on the human ground. The heroes like Arjuna and Krishna responsible for burning are not heroes but villains if seen from the viewpoints of Jaratkaru who do not adore them to the extent of deification. *Sarpa Satra* also voices the snake people who seem to be subalterns. These snake people while living on the periphery tolerate the dictatorship and monopoly

of the people who have dominated the centre. If seen from this angle, *Sarpa Satra* becomes a postcolonial text that deconstructs Vyas' master narrative to bring the subaltern to the centre so that they may voice their grievances. The whole snake race has been colonized by the powerful people like Arjuna and Krishna. Later, Janmejaya represents the centre that subjugates the peripheral people. The extinction of the snake race from the world shows Janmejaya's inhuman behavior and dictatorship. To take revenge to the whole snake race for the crime committed by one man cannot be justified from any angle. The poet has shown that the centre misuses power for the sake of play and pleasure. The discourse that he has raised through Jaratkaru is contemporary and quite relevant to the present day situation.

Kolatkhar has exploited the *Mahabharata* myth to register his hatred for the violence, oppression and exploitation prevalent in the contemporary world particularly India. Hence, the text emerges as an allegory as somewhere it traces out the poison of extremism to the point of fanaticism and the fire of violence which makes the present day world burn to the extent of the danger of the extinction of the human species from this earth. Kolatkhar, with the help of the literary devices like pointed irony and pungent satire makes *Sarpa Satra* flow smoothly into the heart of the reader who feels at ease with the lucid language dotted with the colloquial phrases. No doubt, it has the impression of the poet's cynicism but the way it is narrated is praiseworthy. While going through *Sarpa Satra*, the reader recalls the ancient tradition of orally story telling. The fire of hatred continues right from the beginning of the world. This fire is more and more ignited by the terrorists who have a mission to ruin the world without realizing the fact if the world does not remain, how they will survive. Even today many Takshaks are alive in the garb of terrorists who get shelter from Indras disguised as politicians. Arujana, Krishnas and Janmajeyas are alive



in the garb of industrialists who are polluting the environment at the cost of the extinction of the human species. The poem leaves the reader in distress as it provides no solution at all but it is significant because it makes the world conscious of the seriousness of the problem which if not taken into consideration, will result in the extinction of human species.

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## Challenges and Prospects of Teaching English in Rural Colleges

N.R.Gopal\*

Multilingualism is a unique trait of our multifarious national character. Undeniably, English manifests as a *generic patios* which binds the entire populace of India in spite of all its multiplicity. Lord Macaulay declared in 1835 while suggesting a detailed plan of British education in the peroration of his Minutes thus:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste in opinion, in morals and intellect...<sup>1</sup>

In the Colonial times, English language connoted the idea of permeating the slit between India and the Western World and thereby advancing Westernization. Today, English facilitates in conjoining us with the rest of the human existence on this globe.

The precipitous progression of Secondary and University education in the phase after 1947 reinforced the urge to acquire requisite skills to learn and understand English in India. English as a subject acquired a significant position in the educational curriculum. While the concept of English Language Teaching (ELT) has been thoroughly innovated and revolutionized today in the urban areas, the rural areas still need to go a long way. Globalization and the liberalization of the Indian economy in the early 90s altered the whole take and perception concerning English as a language. English was perceived as a language which could open up immense prospects and opportunities for the youth. In metropolis, English is not just picked up and acquired as a 'library language'<sup>2</sup> today but more stress is being put on utilizing it as a 'language of communication' by assimilating all the four skills of



English Language which form a complete quadrate of language proficiency - reading , writing , listening and speaking. Simultaneously, in order to meet the requirements of the present times , English for Specific Purposes (ESP)<sup>3</sup>, which defines teaching requirements depending upon the specific needs of different groups of students , is now being explicitly and unambiguously designed for students of Science and Technology or for other specialist professionals.

In contrast with the urban locale where there is the presence of private educational institutes in enormous magnitudes, the rural areas largely have government run regional-medium schools. A sizeable bunch of pupils from these schools enter colleges with varied abilities of English comprehension. The rural colleges are largely receptive to all the students irrespective of their merit including those who have compartments in Inter-mediate School or Junior College. Many of them have to study Compulsory English at the undergraduate level. Most of the students entering college in rural stretches do not possess ample and acceptable base of English language. There can essentially be two factors responsible for this inadequacy

1] The teacher's language proficiency.

2] The exposure of pupils to English outside school.<sup>4</sup>

The environment in which the students survive may or may not be conducive and advantageous to grasp a distinct language. The rural students coming with different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds are extensively stimulated by them. They are not adept to follow the tonal nuances and the stress patterns to be followed in English. Often while writing or speaking in English they interchange the gender and the number of the noun. The students in Uttar Pradesh are heard calling 'English' as 'Englishia'. In Himachal Pradesh where I have been teaching for past fifteen years, students interchange labio-dental sounds with bi-labial sounds and vice-versa. For example, 'Van', which is a vehicle is pronounced as 'Ban'. 'Ban' which means prohibition is pronounced as 'Van'.

Similarly, 'There was a King' is pronounced as 'There bas a king'. One of the foremost reasons for not being able to learn proper English is that the students study all the subjects only from the examination point of view. Our examination system promotes memorization rather than the actual test of creative and analytical skills. The only dictum of the students, it appears, is to get a Degree.

The school education provided to pupils in countryside does not equip them well with the necessities meant for understanding the English language taught to them in colleges. Application-oriented advanced grammar is not taught in our schools.<sup>5</sup> The students do know the examples (is, am, are) of the helping verbs but they do not know the reason why they are called so. In India there is no assimilation of curriculum to associate and connect the School, College and University Education. Schools, Colleges and Universities do not work in tandem to make a more comprehensive and connective syllabus. Often the teachers who teach students in schools and colleges are not well read and limit themselves to the books prescribed for teaching. The teachers often pronounce words wrongly and pass the same wrong pronunciation to students. Among the students who enter college after the completion of inter-mediate school, is a assemblage of those who have studied through Hindi medium or through their mother-tongue in their schools. They do not possess a very agreeable familiarity of English to gather and cherish English literature with inclination and acumen. The number of such students is pre-eminent in rural and town colleges. There are a small number of students in rural colleges who use English very fluently. This stirs dissension and division among the students.

The teachers in colleges find it very difficult to teach the literary language to such students who wish to specialize in Language and Literature studies. The pressure of completing the syllabus is always on but the poor level of language proficiency amongst the students makes the teachers begin with the fundamentals of the language



including Grammar. Truly, the syllabus is lost somewhere while this happens. The challenge before the teacher is to teach Wordsworth or Shelley to a student when the student is not in a position to form proper sentences using the language. It therefore needs to be stressed here that Language evaluation need not be limited to "achievement" with respect to particular syllabi, but must be reoriented to measurement of language proficiency.<sup>6</sup>

Certainly, this is not the way to higher education. Basic Grammar and Language competency before entering into the domain of literature is a must. Teachers often resort to the bi-lingual method of teaching to solve this difficulty of the students. The potential of good teachers who are well-versed in their subject of specialization goes unutilized and this makes the purpose of higher education frivolous. Such accomplished teachers are discouraged by this scenario especially those who teach in rural colleges. Providing individual attention to a large class of more than hundred students is practically not feasible. It requires devotion of extra time and efforts to do justice to a class with students having diverse levels of competence. At such a stage it becomes important to put forth a ample choice of books along with multimedia aid before the students. If the students of the same class are categorized according to their abilities and trained accordingly then the whole process will tend to become burdensome and time consuming for a teacher. The problem finally leads the teacher to impart only necessary lessons to the students. They train them to successfully pass the examination rather than impart true knowledge to them. The government and administration annually spend a huge amount of funds on education but the ultimate outcome is not very gratifying. The focus of the educational institutions should rather be on conducting enhancement classes by appointing extra staff exclusively to teach students for developing basic competence in language.

There is definitely something wrong with the system of education which procreates these students with weak

knowledge of English. It also leads to the deviation of a teacher's efforts at the college level from highlighting the literary features of writing to the improvement of the basic English language skills of the students. We need to look for a solution to overcome this major hitch. The prospects for improvement lie in the modification of the entire education system which forms the back-bone to the College education. Yes, we need to reassess the hierarchy of the education system. Corrections and curative measures are the need of the hour and have to be made at the different levels right from the Primary school level through the Inter-mediate level. Consequent to the remedial measures, the teachers at the College and higher level should be able to teach literature with minimum efforts and thus help the students to aspire the goal of higher education.

Primary education has been emphasized as an important germinal means of enriching and empowering our national human resource. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, states that - 'the curriculum and the evaluation procedure should aim at the all round development of the child; that learning should be through activities, discovery and exploration in a child friendly and child centered manner; [Gazette of India , No. 39 , 27 August 2009.]

The teaching of English language in rural primary schools has so far been through grammar- translation method and at times teachers themselves are not very good at it. The teachers in primary schools and intermediate schools are not properly equipped and skilled to teach the language. Ultimately, students develop a fear and dislike for a language which is not very useful in their immediate rural environment. The necessity is to provide quality education in English to small children by training and developing proper technological and human resources. It is aptly summarized thus:

Input-rich communicational environments are a pre-requisite for language learning....Such an environment lays the foundation of spontaneous language growth with the



understanding of spoken and written language as precursors to language production... There should initially be a regular exposure to variety of meaningful language inputs like Big books, parallel material in more than one language and media support. Beginning with action rhymes, simple plays as genuine class activity the teachers can promote the child's engagement with language.<sup>7</sup>

The Government needs to spend on training teachers to use multi-media facilities in the classrooms and thus bring in innovative teaching in the farthest most stretch of our country. The aim of course should be to develop basic language and grammar competency. The basic skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing should be attained by a student on completion of school and which is presently not the case.

The teachers teaching at all levels right from primary, secondary, higher secondary and at college level should not be reduced to Syllabus teachers or textbook teachers. Appropriate opportunities for research and development should be provided to them to consequently find the enhancement of the students to whom they teach. The teachers at primary and secondary level, for example, can make use of 'talking books' (cassette plus book) which provide model speech as well as reading for both teachers and learners. In fact, there is a view that 'Grammar is not a route for developing primary or usable knowledge of language' *but* can be useful for further improving the language skills.

The difficulties faced by teachers in teaching English in the far-flung areas of our country cannot be denied. These problems need to be encountered and sooner the better. There is a vast difference in the structure of our education system and the real scenario. The structure needs to be modified as per the need of the hour. Not only do we need reforms at different levels of education but also extra coaching and counseling should be given to slow and weak students. Though the government has already started remedial classes but well before that there is a scope for revision and bridge courses to be introduced.

Once the students complete the school, they need to be exposed to various English language courses like -Revision Courses, Bridge Courses, Remedial courses. The English teachers can impart the nuances of spoken aspects of the language once a week as a remedial measure in a student-friendly learner-centric environment and also encourage participative learning.<sup>8</sup>

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## Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower*: A Study

Hitendra B. Dhote\*

Aravind Adiga, journalist turned author of marvellous skills, has carved his name in the galaxy of eminent Post-colonial Indian novelists writing in English today by winning the coveted man Booker Prize of 2008 for his debut novel, *The White Tiger*. He has also a collection of stories, *Between the Assassinations* to his credit. The present paper is an attempt to critically evaluate Aravind Adiga's second novel *Last Man in Tower*, published in 2011.

Aravind Adiga is a realist and the truthful portrayal of the Indian society is the important feature of his writings. His *The White Tiger* portrays real India. He has evolved *Last Man in Tower* out of real life. As he answered to one of the questions on the book:

The novel evolved out of real life. Back in 2007 and 2008 developers were making lavish offers of redevelopment to ancient buildings across Mumbai - they would offer up to 250 per cent the prevailing market rate if the residents agreed to sell their flats and move out. Often there would be one old man or woman saying "No" to this offer. This person just did not want the money. And tensions developed between him and his neighbours. I could sympathise with both sides. Of course, the old man had the right to stay in his home if he wanted to; but on the other hand, what about the needs of his neighbours? I was intrigued by the core issue - in a democracy, what is more important, the individual's right to dissent, or the overall happiness of his society? *Last Man in Tower* dramatizes such a clash - I have taken care to represent the views of all three sides in the story (Masterji, his neighbours, and Shah)"<sup>1</sup>

In *Last Man in Tower*, set in Vishram Co-operative Housing Society, Mumbai, Adiga has dramatized the clash

as such. The tower of the title is the Vishram Society, a co-operative Housing Society, made up of the residents of Tower A in Vakola, handily situated near both the slums and the airport in Mumbai, an area of Mumbai which is less important. Built in 1950, it was intended to serve "as an example of good housing for good Indians". Seven storey's tall Tower A, accommodated by citizens of many religions and which once represented 'new India', is now in dilapidated state and beset with so maintenance problems. Each middle-class block in Tower A is in a crumbling state. The water only works for a couple of hours twice a day and each monsoon threatens to bring the roof in. But it does boast the Vishram Society. The Society residents are all respectable, hard-working or retired people a close knit, middle class proud, virtuous group. They have lived together in their co-op building for more than 30 years, sharing their lives, helping each other, working through petty disagreements. They may gossip about each other but they are devoted to one another. Enter the villain. Dharmen Shah, ruthless real estate developer, proposes to build a glittery new edifice, a luxury apartment complex, the Confidence Shanghai, on the site of Vishram Society's Tower A. He and his jack of all mayhem Shanmugham have already emptied Tower B, filled with young executives eager to rise in the world. He offers more than the existing market rate to buy out the residents, a payment of, on average, £210,000 per flat to leave their homes. The catch is that according to the terms of the buyout, the residents must unanimously accept the offer or it will be withdrawn. Most of the residents are only too happy to dissolve their precious social unit before the rains dissolve the last of the mortar in Vishram's crumbling walls: "Now all of us in this building, all of us good people, have been blessed by the Hand of God," one happy mother declares. But Shah meets his match in one man, Masterji, a retired school teacher. Recently widowed, haunted by the death of his daughter, he has no interest in a new life. He



refuses to abandon the building he has long called home. He wants to save the residents and becomes the leader of the opposition. However, under the pressure of intimidation and the lure of hard cash, the opposition breaks down. They find that their only chance of a better life is slipping away from them. Masterji's obstinacy grows even after the other families have agreed. Masterji remains *Last Man In Tower*, a lone holdout against encroaching gentrification and slum clearance. Tensions rise among the once civil neighbours. As the demolition deadline looms, Masterji's neighbours and friends who had respected him for long time become his enemies. Acquaintances turn into conspirators, even at the point of losing their humanity to score their payday. Mr Shah finds his final fantasy of making a mark on Mumbai being stolen from him by inflexible Masterji. What this stubbornness unleashes is the story of the novel.

Adopting traditional plot construction, beginning with the exposition and ending with resolution, Adiga has divided the story in ten parts-books and each book has been titled. The main narrative focuses on the residents of Tower A and the attempts of a property developer to buy them out of their homes. The tale of good people standing up to fight the evil developer seems predictable and straight forward, but it goes far deeper than that as the novel marches forward. The Booker-winning writer Aravind Adiga has sharpened his observations of the new India in his new novel, *Last Man in Tower*.<sup>2</sup> The aspirations of rich, poor, and middle class, the simple, yet complex relationships between neighbors, the general attitude of people living in an Indian Metro, the innumerable complications in a real estate project, and the high pedestal the Indians place their teachers on, greed, ambition, the corrupt system, gentrification and development, the individual's fight against corruption, principle against the combination of society and individual self interest, divided loyalty are the issues that Adiga has woven in the narrative of this novel.

With a shining talent, Adiga brings in a bundle of characters and gradually develop their own distinctive personalities and sub-plots. With humanity and humour, he paints a picture of friendships, favours and shared histories that bind a community together. He takes his readers into their lives and let them know gradually that the inhabitants of Vishram Society not only encompass a wide range of personalities but also varying natures, needs, thoughts, dreams, worries, concerns, pleasures and fears. As things progress they all display the best and worst of themselves. The narrative gets imbued with suspicions, envies, old grievances, personal issues, religious and cultural clashes towards its tumultuous conclusion.

Most of the main characters, particularly the residents of Vishram Society, are solidly middle-class. They're all alive with contradiction. Ibrahim Kudwa, proprietor of the Speed-tek Cyber Zone Cyber Café, is a man with child-like personality which has never suited his business. Ramesh Ajwani, Mumbai's real-estate brokers, has hitherto been unsuccessful to hit the big time. Georgina Rego, known as "Communist Aunty", is staunch in her loathing of amoral redevelopers but tormented by the need to "trump" her well-to-do sister. She is a social worker and works in the poorer districts of Mumbai after her husband absconded with a younger lover with all her family wealth. The retired Mr. and Mrs. Pinto are torn between the desire to send dollars to their children in America and their loyalty to Masterji. Mrs. Puri is the busiest figure in looking after her 18-year-old son with Down's syndrome. Kothari is the long-standing secretary of Vishram Society. Mary is the destitute cleaning girl who lives in the slum and fears for her job.

The narrative has two major protagonists. Yogesh Murthy, affectionately known as Masterji, is 61-year-old, distinguished emeritus teacher of St Catherine's High school. He is retired and widower whose beloved wife and daughter have recently passed away and surviving son migrated to the inner city. He has accepted his lot with dignity. He



has memories of his daughter and wife associated with Vishram Society. He is idealistic, old-fashioned and incorruptible. He is a highly respected member of the community and still gives extra lessons free of charge to several of the Society's children. Adiga has made Masterji admirable in many ways. He has also made him conceited - intensely conscious of his high status as a teacher - and inflexibly self-righteous. We have to respect his determination. At the same time we cannot acquit him of a lack of understanding of those for whom Mr Shah's money offers the chance of a better life. We cannot take his side for his idiocy and stubbornness which make him deaf to the emotional appeals of his neighbours. His secret and apparently inviolable weapon, a lack of material desire comes to seem like a weakness, indicating an inability to empathise with his fellow residents. Though principled, he appears to be arrogant at his determination, simply surrendered to his sentimental attachment to past memories.

Dharmen Shah, the second major protagonist, is the builder and developer. Similar to Balram of *The White Tiger*, the eponymous White Tiger, a poor but ambitious who sees himself as an entrepreneur, whose potential was not yet fulfilled murders his master to rise in the life, Adiga has drawn Shah as the white tiger of this book, a compelling, ambitious, self-made man: "You should look around you," he says. "You should always be thinking, what does he have that I don't have? That way you go up in life." Having decided not to stay in the village of his birth to "shovel cow shit", he moved to Mumbai with no money and big dreams. He made his fortune as a developer in the toxic world of construction, buying off the residents of blocks of flats, razing the buildings and constructing gleaming, futuristic towers instead. Shah is a memorable and instantly recognizable creation, almost Mephistophelian in his dealings and determined to build his great project of Gothic style, Rajput porch, Art Deco fountain. With his health deteriorating, the Shanghai is meant to be his legacy. Adiga has portrayed him as

sympathetic as the last-man-in-tower. As our sympathy is almost entirely with Masterji, particularly as his neighbours begin to treat him with increasing disdain and viciousness, we cannot but move with sympathy for the developer, who could have been a caricature capitalist, and whose project is less about making money than it is about his need to leave some kind of tangible mark on the world. Adiga has also shown him the ruthless builder who hires thugs to rough up people who stand in his way.

Adiga has drawn his characters sympathetically and affectionately. He has poked fun at their pretensions and frailties at the same time. 'Adiga is absolutely fair in his treatment of all his characters, even the grotesque and unlikeable Shah'.<sup>3</sup> His characters are bundles of moral ambivalence. He leaves it to his readers to judge Masterji and Shah, and also to see them through the eyes of the huge cast of characters. His characters belonging to different class, caste and religion, are multidimensional--a splendid mixture of virtues and vices. They also stand for particular point of view: the idealist teacher, professional and cunning-scheming builder, etc. They are also various types-ambitious, jealous, idealist, bold, selfless, corrupt, greedy and scheming-as real men and women are. Adiga's characters prove that he can command variety of character and make them living and breathing. Through them Adiga shows how Mumbai is full of men, busy in remaking themselves, dreamers, schemers and restless aspirers.

The most prominent and richly drawn character of the story is Mumbai itself in which the action takes place. Adiga has drawn a living breathing metropolis. *Last Man in Tower* is dizzying portrait of Mumbai'.<sup>4</sup> The Maximum City of Mumbai is presented in all its glory, squalor and beauty. His Mumbai is no Orientalist fantasy of saffron and saris but a city of work and waste. At one side he shows an aeroplane, flying over a temple glistening like a sea snake leaping up, while on the other side he shows water buffalo wandering near the same temple, covered with dust and dung. The buffalos and plane



suggest connectedness of old and new in 21st-century Mumbai and the contrasts at the same time. The story reflects the daily humiliations of living in Mumbai. Adiga captures with heartbreaking authenticity the real struggle in Indian cities, which is for dignity. *Last Man in Tower* offers a sharp portrait of the subcontinent's most cosmopolitan city, and holds a mirror up to the complexities and dualities of the many Indias that it exemplifies.<sup>5</sup> Adiga has examined both the positive and negative aspects of gentrification, present world wide, particularly in Mumbai in this novel. He shows the process of gentrification and the dream of wealth can corrupt even decent people and brings them down to any point of even to the point of behaving badly and committing an appalling crime.

Adiga shows how Mumbai is being transformed through development. It is a city where great fortunes are being made, particularly in the construction industry. It was here Dharmen Shah has made his fortune. The novel also demonstrates how the same industry has brought the chaos and conflict along with progress. Such progress breaks social bonds and corrupts relationships through the prospect of sudden and previously unimaginable riches. Adiga shows how even the only son blames his father for nothing but money. He insults his father by pasting the most humiliating notice on the notice board of the society, charging him for the mistakes which he never committed:

I, GAURAV MURTHY, SON OF Y.A. MURTHY AM PUTTING THIS NOTICE UP TO SAY I HAVE NO FATHER. I am shamed by the actions of the present occupant of flat 3A, Vishram. After promising my wife and me that he would sign the proposal, he has not signed. This not the first time he has lied to us. Many jewels in my mother's possession, and also bank certificates in her name meant for me and my son Ronak, have never been transferred to us. My son Ronak, my wife and I will perform the one-year Samskara rites of my mother on our own. We request all of you not to associate us with the actions of the present occupant of 3A, Vishram Society. <sup>6</sup> (p.320)

Rather than making *Last Man in Tower* a story about poverty of the slum dwellers, he has made it the story of the lower middle classes of Mumbai. 'As with "The White Tiger", Mr Adiga describes an India that is avaricious, acquisitive and insecure. His earlier work told the story of a desperate, rural poverty; "*Last Man in Tower*" depicts a genteel middle-class impoverishment of imagination and hope'. The contrasts between the lucky rich and the frightening existence of the very poor are woven into the story very subtly. The author has highlighted the cosmopolitan nature of the city, the differing religions and cultures. 'Behind the tale of a struggle by a developer to acquire, for flashy redevelopment, the three towers of the lower-middle-class, crumbling Vishram Co-operative Housing Society, lies a colourful and ambitious novel about the changing standards and habits of the citizens of Mumbai, poisoned as much by the rocketing wealth all around, as by the foul air and excrement-laden byways.' The end is savage, sordid and ever so sad. The way that the residents of the society take is a bad one, but it is through this only we know what is truly right, and what is truly wrong in this world of ours. Nobody can sympathize with them over their actions, but everybody will empathize with them over their dilemma.

From journalistic writing Adiga has cultivated a narrative technique of his own. The figurative language used for the delineation of thematic concerns and the expression of the feelings and emotions of the protagonists shows his shrewdness in the manipulation of English language. The narrative of the novel consists of detailed description of places, characters, incidents and minute observations. There is a wonderful use of various literary devices throughout the novel which Adiga has used as modes of expression of moods, thoughts and feelings. The novel is replete with various figures of speeches like simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, oxymoron, etc. Another narrative device used by Adiga is the



convention of capital letters, a device to assign prominence to certain words to mark out an idea or concept. Use of vernacular elements to give local colour to the speech is another stylistic device used by Adiga. He has also used some peculiar Indian honorific 'ji' formations to depict a formal respect. He has also used Hindi with English translation. Formation of compound or complex nouns by combining English and Hindi words together is another stylistic device used by Adiga. 'The novel is comic, lyrical and serious by turns, but I do have a nagging sense that Adiga is playing to the audience in the same way that Dickens did, writing ingratiating rather than precise prose; often as I read this I thought of Dickens, both his strengths and his weaknesses, and the strengths include a wonderful description of lawyers, which seems to owe something to Jarndyce v. Jarndyce'.<sup>8</sup> Use of symbols is another outstanding feature of Adiga's narrative technique. A stray dog, a pair of hawks fighting outside a high-rise, and an evicted mother crow are some of the symbols used by Adiga in the narrative.

Adiga knows how to squeeze meaning from every possible encounter and environment. He pulls out his marvellous talents and provides us with all the fascinating particulars of the residents and the developer. Their motives, weakness and eccentricities are illustrated with deceptive simplicity. Adiga has a gift, reminiscent of Graham Greene, in picking up striking conceits and metaphors: 'young rich Indians compared with plump glossy chicken breasts on a rotisserie', 'a statuette of Ganesha at a lawyer's office is 'like a soft white rat living on the staircase'. There is a Dickensian element to this book as it touches on a variety of lives from different castes, religions, and throws them into the roiling maw of a great city and also illuminates social ills.

In *Last Man in Tower*, with the same fearlessness and insight of *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga has embodied the truth about our times by exposing and exploring savage, sordid face of Mumbai, one of the mightiest cities

on earth on the one hand and the chasm between the rich and poor, the venal and the incorruptible on the other. Adiga has opened the hearts and minds of the inhabitants of a great city where ordinary people are pushed to their limits in a place that knows none. 'This is a very fine novel, wonderfully rich in detail and the evocation of everyday life. It is a social novel full of memorable individuals. It has a range, ambition and humanity which one rarely finds in contemporary British or US fiction: further evidence that the true successors to the European novelists of the 19th century are now to be found in the Indian sub-continent and the Arab world.'<sup>9</sup> Adiga has succeeded in giving a voice to the powerless in this novel and also in presenting the view of Mumbai, seen from above the heights of its towering new centers of enterprise and commerce, and the slums in the narrative at the same time.

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## Crossing the Lines: Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*

Tulika Sharma\*

For over forty years, Nadine Gordimer's work has mirrored the course of South African history, its twists and turns that has eventually brought freedom to her homeland. She has had actively participated in struggle against apartheid through her writings. After 1994, against the speculation of her literary career coming to an end after the end of apartheid in South Africa, she continued to expand her literary horizon traversing the untraversed capturing the world along with the observation of her own society. The present paper thus examines the post-apartheid issues treated by Gordimer in her novel *The Pickup* (2001) in the context of political reality of the time with specific focus on the theme of migration in the globalized world.

*The Pickup* is an attempt by Nadine Gordimer to move beyond the borders of South Africa thereby encompassing a wider perspective on issues concerning South Africa by placing them in a more global context. Gordimer transcends the boundaries of South Africa to capture the ethos of an unknown Arab country. As Ileana Dimitriu in her study "Postcolonialising Gordimer: The Ethics of 'Beyond' and Significant Peripheries in the Recent Fiction" has noted insightfully:

She seems to have renounced her exclusive focus on South Africa which, in the past, she considered to have been 'the example, the epitome of cultural isolation'...Now that writers feel less moral pressure to engage with the repressive social context, she is keen to offer literary replies to an important question: 'How, in national specificity, does each country go about moving beyond itself, to procreate a culture that will benefit self and others?' ( 159-180)

In an interview, much before any changeover, Gordimer has pointed out the universality of her writing, saying; "quite a lot of my writing could have come about absolutely anywhere" (Bazin and Seymour 35). With *The Pickup* she seems to signify that the necessity to focus exclusively on the internal situations of the country is no longer apparent as compared to the need of global contextualization. As Karina Magdalena Szczurek quoting Ileana Dimitriu writes that Gordimer "expresses a new interest in the dynamics of the local and the global, of the global beyond the local, and looks at broader issues of postcolonial relevance in the world today: identity and (dis)location, migration and exile, hybridity and liminality- all steeped in the tension between 'centre and periphery' as a global phenomena after apartheid, and after the Cold War" (233). Pointing further at Dimitriu's observation, Karina writes that "after the transition and the first few years of grappling with the New South Africa, the burden of social responsibility is lifted from the writer's shoulders and he/she becomes 'freer to engage with the reconstitution of the civil imaginary'" (233). Gordimer seems to have introduced this change in the direction of her writing towards the turn of the last century.

*The Pickup*, as Karina Magdalena Szczurek points out, does not boast of a complex plot as most of other plots of Gordimer's novels but "in its character development, scope and narrative complexity it can certainly be considered a novel" (235). Julie Summers, a privileged white girl meets Abdu, an illegal immigrant in South Africa working as a mechanic in a garage when her car breaks down and falls in love with him. When he is caught and is ordered to leave the country she goes with him to his country which eventually turns out to be a home away from home for her in all true senses for it is in his country that her true self is revealed to her. A quick overview tells the reader that it is simply a boy meets girl story by Gordimer but a close observation brings home other aspects closely related to the post apartheid South Africa.



In 1999, Thabo Mbeki was sworn in as the new president of South Africa and replaced Nelson Mandela. In his inaugural address on June 16, 1999, Mbeki addressed the vital problems that the country faced and still facing:

Our nights cannot but be nights of nightmares while millions of our people live in conditions of degrading poverty. Sleep cannot come easily when children get permanently disabled, both physically and mentally, because of lack of food. No night can be restful when millions have no jobs, and some are forced to beg, rob and murder to ensure that they and their own do not perish from hunger. [...] There can be no moment of relaxation while the number of those affected by HIV/AIDS continues to expand at an alarming pace. Our days will remain forever haunted when frightening numbers of the women and children of our country fall victim to rape and other crimes of violence. Nor can there be peace of mind when citizens of our country feel they have neither safety nor security because of the terrible deeds of criminals and their gangs. [...] Neither can peace attend our souls as long as corruption continues to rob the poor of what is theirs and to corrode the value system which sets humanity apart from the rest of the animal world. The full meaning of liberation will not be realized until our people are freed from oppression and from the dehumanizing legacy of depravation we inherited from our past (quoted in Szczurek 75).

The speech clearly brings out the problems haunting in the post-apartheid society and Mandela's dream of Rainbow Nation still far-fetched. Mbeki assured to alleviate "indiscipline, permissiveness, corruption and disorder" post 1999 elections but in reality "exactly the opposite was already happening" (Johnson 164). Under Mbeki's leadership, the South African political and business arena was becoming an extended family business. He, in his turn, continued to play what Johnson terms "dirty tricks" by exercising complete control over various policies promulgated and still remained behind the scenes evading any direct responsibility (172). Mbeki's neo liberalism policy put the need of reaching the global economy status over the basic needs of his countrymen and which in

turn resulted in rich getting richer and poor becoming poorer. It also created a wide gap between those working in formal sectors and those working in informal sectors or who are unemployed. The government and its policies has created what can be termed as 'class apartheid' and the discrimination now existed between the have and the have nots coupled with the problem of "mass illegal immigration that contributes to a rise in unemployment and, consequently crime" (Szczurek 83).

South Africa, thus, became "the country of two nations- divided by the economic gap that is widening to an alarming extent, and many other gaps, finds itself confronted with extremes" (Szczurek 85). The capitalist society that emerged perpetuated the earlier horrors that plagued the society. Andre Brink in his article 'Our Model Democracy is a Lost Dream' points out:

As black capitalist proved they could be as ruthless as their former white masters in labour relation, cronyism and the pursuit of profit, hundreds of thousands of jobs were lost in mergers and 'restructuring'. Between 1995 and 2000, as the black 'empowered' moved into white enclaves of wealth and privilege, unemployment almost doubled and the majority of South Africans fell deeper into poverty. (quoted in Szczurek 90)

It no longer remained a country divided by blacks and whites but that of affluent and poor. The affluents including both whites and blacks create discontentment among the impoverished. Karina Magdalena Szczurek contends "Most affluent people, both black and white, are trying not to think of 'the other out there'. They build their housing estates, put fences and barbed wire around their gardens and expensive alarm systems in their houses and cars". Her further remarks on post apartheid South Africa presents its hopeless situation despite all the efforts to build and embrace culture in South Africa it binds and it separates the people. She says that "the concept of the Rainbow Nation need not necessarily represent South Africa in its present state. It can remain a vision to which the nation must forever aspire". (86-87).



In *The Pickup*, Gordimer captures with a discerning eye these aspects of post-apartheid South Africa albeit, not in a very detailed manner. Nonetheless taking her earlier novel *The House Gun* into consideration the readers do get a complete and revealing picture of the same interwoven in the story. The novel depicts racial segregation slowly breaking down as the poor flood into the city, "...Crazed peasants wandered from the rural areas and gabbled and begged in the gutters outside..." (5) and as immigrants from Nigeria, the Congo, and Senegal ply trade in sex, drugs and tourist souvenirs in a city where black is no longer excluded from the public space. When Julie's car breaks down in the middle of the road, she is caught up among "a traffic mob" throwing expletives at her and she is helped by "one of the unemployed black men" and similar other black men who "push her car into a loading bay" (3). Whereas Gordimer's apartheid-era fiction reveals the stark contrast between black townships and white areas, here instead she explores a world divided between those who are able to move freely anywhere in the world and those who enter them illegally to work in menial jobs at the edge of global cities. Additionally, however, one fact that is made evident in the start of the text is that despite the apartheid laws dissolved long ago the racial feelings can still be seen as somebody in the crowd called her "*Idikazana lomlunga*" which means "white bitch" as one of Julie's black friend told her when asked later on in the L.A. Café.

Abdu alias Ibrahim Ibn Musa is an illegal immigrant who, despite, possessing a degree in Economics from a university of his country of origin, is forced to work as a car mechanic in a garage in this Westernized city of South Africa. He belongs to an unknown Arab country identified as Yemen by Maureen Freely in her review of the novel (55). The idea seconded by Ronald Suresh Roberts although Gordimer herself insisted that it is Saudi Arabia (619). However Karina Magdalena Szczurek identifies the unknown place as Morocco (235). But

irrespective of what the country is, Abdu just wants to escape it at any cost. Being aware of the new kind of apartheid between Westernized and non-Westernized countries and that of global cities and surrounding regions, she says:

World is their world. They own it. It's run by computers, telecommunications...the West, they own ninety-one percent of these. Where you come from-the whole Africa has only two percent, and it's your country has the most of that. This one?-not enough to make one figure! Desert. If you want to be in the world, to get what you call the Christian world to let you in is the only way. (Gordimer 160)

Abdu is determined to go to any country, especially America, in order to rise and find his identity in this world. He measures success by the standards of the west and thus is unable to identify himself with his own country which he considers backward replete with religious conservatism and political corruption. Julie, on the other hand, wants to escape her own situation of being a privileged white, a legacy of her parents and leaves the posh suburbs to stay in a sort of "backyard cottages adapted from the servants' quarters" or "modest apartments" which she can afford by her salary (Gordimer 8). She renounced the kind of life her wealthy and well connected father and his new wife represent and joins her group of bohemian friends known as The Table at L.A. Café referred to as "EL-AY Café" (Gordimer 5).

Through the EL AY Café setting, Gordimer seems to depict the globalization taking place in South Africa and the city of Johannesburg (though not named in the text) getting included in the global network. As Karina Magdalena Szczurek has observed "She continues observing the present, but now 'more expansively: the word 'globalization' seems gently to tap one's shoulder while reading her recent work" (236). The present novel evidently proves the observation. Julie and her friends stand for a generation in opposition to her father and his generation. They are the product of globalization,



"...who have distanced themselves from the ways of the past, their families, whether these are black ones still living in the old ghettos or white ones in The Suburbs..." (Gordimer 23) for the members of The Table have lost all their affiliation to their own cultures: a black member retaining only those traits that can belong anywhere in the world. Another member has converted to Buddhism. Even Julie contributes to this global culture in her job as public relations officer for an entertainment company which organizes concerts of celebrities from around the world. But though it suggests globalization yet the members are portrayed mockingly by the narrator and the adoption of other cultures seems superficial serving just one's own needs. They seem to be detached from each other's feelings and are portrayed as unsupportive of each other's needs in the wake of participating in the global cultural flows. These friends "are not the kind to ask what's going on, that's the part of their creed: *whatever you do, love, whatever happens, hits you, mate, Bra, that's all right with me*. People come and go among them..." (Gordimer 23).

With globalization, capitalism has entered the country as well and Gordimer leaves no chance to depict that in her work. It has captured both black and white in this post apartheid era. The new ruling class and the new elite are shown to be smeared with corruption and their actions motivated by financial gains. Profit motive is what guides everyone now as one of the members of The Table remarks:

What happened to Brotherhood, I'd like to ask? Fat cats in the government. Company chairmen. In the bush they were ready to die for each other-no, no, that's true, grant it- now they're ready to drive their official Mercedes right past the Brother homeless here out on the street...the one who was battle commander at Cuito, a hero, he's joined an exclusive club for cigar connoisseurs (20).

The poet among them, quotes Yeats and says "... 'Too long a sacrifice makes a stone of the heart'". Further the

member puts it "...why should people abandon what they've believed and fought for, what's got into them between then and now...Brotherhood is only the condition of suffering? Doesn't apply when you have choice, and the choice is the big cheque and the company car, the nice perks of Minister" (21). The inherent sarcasm on the new government is clearly visible in these lines. However one of the most striking aspect is the reappearance of Hamilton Motsamai of *The House Gun* at a party in the house of Julie's parents one of the guests refers to him as "...the black lawyer who saved the son of the Summers' great friends. Such nice people, awful affair. Got him off with only seven years for that ghastly murder a few years ago- the son shot the homosexual who seduced his girl, and he'd an affair with him himself. Could have been life in prison"(47) (There is a direct reference to Duncan Lindgard and his parents). Gordimer undoubtedly intends to bring out how much things have changed in the new era for Hamilton Motsamai is now a financier, a more lucrative business in the changed circumstances.

At the same time, the attitude of white upper class still is the same and it can be gauged by the fact that Julie notes with a surprise the presence of blacks at her father's party: "...there already was a black couple among the guests-amazing: the innovation showed how long it must have been since she came to one of the Sunday lunch parties in that house...". However, she realizes that the change has to do with her father's pragmatism because he "an investment banker in this era of expanding international financial opportunities and the hand-over-fist of black political power on the way to financial power at home, must have to add such names to the guest lists for a balance of his contacts..." (Gordimer 41). The past however still lingers which gets further revealed by the narrator's comment on the whites gathered at the party and Motsamai:

...all these are immigrants by descent. Only the lawyer Motsamai, among them, is the exception. He was here; he



is here; a possession of self. Perhaps. Lawyer with the triumph of famous cases behind him, turned financier, what he has become must be what he wishes to be; his name remains in unchanged identity with where his life began and continues to be lived. (Gordimer 48)

The irony in the above lines reveals the true situation in the post-apartheid South Africa. The one who truly belongs to the country and identifies himself with this country 'perhaps' has lost his 'identity' in this era. Motsamai belongs to the new era, no longer a lawyer but a financier which is more profitable than the former profession. In the new times the division is no longer based on race and skin color but class, defined by the materialist and capitalist attitudes prevailing in the social upper strata of the country. Isidore Diala in her essay 'Interrogating Mythology: The Mandela Myth and Black Empowerment in Nadine Gordimer's Post-Apartheid Writing' suggests: "In following the career of this member of the new black elite, Gordimer sets in even starker relief the temptations that befall his group" (52). She further discerns that "their compulsion towards the same golden calf that captivated the Boer tends to perpetuate the spectre of the apartheid state" (54). The observation undoubtedly underpins the fact that people like Motsamai who belonged to the disadvantaged group on getting the opportunity to become rich and powerful have unabashedly joined hands with the suppressors. Julie's remarks definitely serve to place him in the context "...but does he still practise law? I think he's given it up for money-making, you saw how he was one of the cronies" (Gordimer 64). Shortly afterwards, the narrator confirms her assumption: "...Senior Counsel was an acting judge for a period, and could be permanently His Honour Mr Justice Motsamai on the bench of the High Court now if he had not decided for that other, more profitable form of power over human destiny, financial institutions..." (Gordimer 76-77).

After Abdu has been served the order to leave the country, Julie in order to prevent that and on Abdu's

insistence, meets Motsamai in the hope of getting a way out but is disappointed when Motsamai expresses his inability to help them. His behaviour, instead, serves to add to Julie's initial perception of him as belonging to the coterie of upper class driven by the hunger of money and power which she vehemently tries to cut out of her life. She feels that he disapproves her relationship with Abdu and thus is forced to think that he "...is one of *them*, her father's people and glossy Danielles...it doesn't help at all that he is black; he's been one of their victims, he's one of *them* now. He, too, expects her to choose one of her own kind- the kind he belongs to" (Gordimer 80). Thus through the portrayal of Motsamai Gordimer vividly brings out the changed reality in the new South Africa where things changed and still nothing changed. And though Motsamai tries to sympathize with Julie on her predicament, Julie knows quite well that he is just "... claiming his rightful brotherhood of his people's suffering along with his present successful distancing from it..." (80). It can be observed that he might be black but his skin color no longer is of any importance as he too now belongs to the league of Julie's father and his wife and is one of 'them' representing everything that Julie wants to leave behind her in search of a new identity.

Globalization in its wake has brought to the fore the problem of migration wherein residents belonging to the underdeveloped country try to find a place in developing or developed countries of the world in order to pursue their dreams of making big. Not everyone is lucky enough in that case so as to gain a legal entry to the desired place. This, off late, has become a major problem and Gordimer evidently explores the same in the present text. Julie, owing to the fact that she belongs to class of privileged white, can move anywhere freely, very much similar to the people in the Summers' circle "...who may move about the world welcome everywhere" as compared to people like Abdu who "...has to live disguised as a grease-monkey without a name" (40). He has to suffer the



constraints of being nameless and of having to do manual labour without workers' rights. Whereas Julie and her kind are the "...right kind of foreigner. One who belonged to an internationally acceptable category of origin..." (140), Abdu and his kind belong to the 'wrong' kind for they are not the part of organized labor and they are the truly disadvantaged either unemployed or underemployed. Like Abdu in the novel who is an economist working as a mechanic in a garage illegally as "...It's cheap for the owner; he doesn't pay accident insurance, pension, medical aid..." (17). They are relegated to some decaying inner part of the city away from the limelight of the globalized world on the periphery to which illegal immigrants are drawn without any name and identity. The author describes these places as "...labyrinth to get lost in" (86) rather than getting indulged freely in this global network. While Julie is free to choose an identity, Abdu is addressed vaguely as "some sort of black" (40-41), "some sort of Arab" (44), and the "young foreigner (coloured, or whatever he is)" (46). He becomes "the Someone" (42) who has no control over his future; for his future in this globalized country depends on whether he is successful in evading the law.

Migration, thus, becomes one of the thematic concerns for Gordimer in the post apartheid era. In an interview with Karina Magdalena Szczurek, Gordimer reveals the news of "58 Chinese immigrants who were found suffocated in a lorry on the ferry from Calais to Dover in June 2000" (253). Through Abdu, Gordimer exposes the difficult situation and suffering of illegal migrants especially from the underdeveloped third world countries. She considers it as "...terrible. Inhuman. Disgraceful" (19). According to Sue Kossew *The Pickup* gives evidence how "globalization, rather than leading to more choice for those from 'underdeveloped' nations, reduces such choices, while enabling only the already- privileged to participate in the interchange of ideas [...] of cultural globalization" (quoted in Szczurek 253). Julie, her parents and other whites

in the text are free to move anywhere around the world whereas Abdu and millions like him belonging to underdeveloped countries and who aspire to achieve economic advancement in the developed countries have to suffer indignities.

Eventually, Abdu gets deported to his country of origin; his desert village which he despises in all its extremity as it has nothing in it: "no work, no development" and suffers from "corrupt government, religious oppression, cross-border conflict" (Gordimer 14). Since the beginning of coming in contact with Julie Abdu knows that he "...wasn't one of them..." (Gordimer 7). Julie and Abdu are worlds apart; Abdu aspires to become one which Julie wants to escape. Thus, the commonality between them is the aspiration to redefine themselves and claim a new identity. Julie does not want to be identified with anything her parent's wealth and class symbolizes whereas for Abdu the very sense of identity lies in the wealth and class and hence is not able to comprehend why Julie wants to leave all this. As Andrew Sullivan in his review of *The Pickup* suggests "Julie wants out; he wants in" (Sullivan n.p.). It becomes evident from the instance when Julie takes Abdu to her parents' house and notices "...how he listens to this intimate language of money alertly and intently-as he never listens at the EL-AY Café; always absent, elsewhere....She is overcome by embarrassment- what is he thinking, of these people-she is responsible for whatever that may be. She's responsible for *them*" (Gordimer 45). Julie however fails to realize the extent to which people belonging to her background matter to him. After reaching the cottage from the party, ignorant of Julie's desire, he remarks "Interesting people there. They make a success" (Gordimer 51). Despite being getting a comment about them Abdu admires them. For him "They are people doing well in their life. All the time. Moving on always. Clever. With what they do, make in the world, not just talking intelligent. They are alive, they take opportunity,



they use the...will, yes, I mean to say, the will. To do. To have"(Gordimer 62).

Julie tries to hide her affiliations with the upper class from Abdu and she has to take him to her parents' party unwillingly as the narrator puts it "...The shame of being ashamed of them; the shame of him seeing what she was, is...this origin of hers now expansively revealed before him, laid out like the margaritas and the wine and the composed still-life of the fish platter, salads and desserts"(Gordimer 45). Hardly does she care to realize that Abdu aspires for the same which she is ashamed of and acts as a blind to notice all these things which divide them. What is noticeable is the fact that despite being antagonistic to all the greed and snobbishness that her biological clan represents, Julie is unable to realize that Abdu is also one of them or if not then has a strong desire to be one of them. As Michiel Heyns points out "[a]shamed of her affluent background, she has no way of knowing that to an illegal immigrant this is her main attraction, that she promises access to privileges of the new country"(quoted in Szczurek 243). Thus, for them "the respective opposite other represents the desired self"(Szczurek 246). They perhaps share mutual unintelligibility about each other: "She is ashamed of her parents; he thinks she is ashamed of him. Neither knows either, about the other" ( Gordimer 38).

It is in order to maintain the sense of sexual location that Julie relocates with Abdu alias Ibrahim Ibn Musa(his real name) to his desert country, much to the dismay of her father and also Abdu who is reluctant to take her along, which also reveals his selfishness: "What'm I expected to do with her. There....What use will she be. To herself, to me. She's not for me, can't she realize that?"(Gordimer 95) Unlike other white South Africans who migrate to Australia, Canada and Britain Julie's journey brings her to this impoverished country which in fact bestows on her a consciousness of self that makes her seem "...strangely new to herself"(Gordimer 117).

Abdu on the other hand is unable to understand the reason behind her coming to this country where he thinks it is better to be "dead" than to "live there" (Gordimer 95). Julie, on the contrary, finds 'home' here. Michiel Heynes points out "it is a horrible irony that Julie should through her involvement with Abdu follow him to his desolate desert community, whereas he had hopes of being given access to her prosperity" (quoted in Szczurek 252). While Abdu argues that she will find nothing in his country, for Julie there is nothing in Johannesburg for she has long transferred her affiliation from the members of *The Table* to her lover:

The struggle stays clenched tightly inside her. It possesses her, alien to them, even to those she thought close; and makes them alien to her. She feels she never knew them, any of them, in the real sense of knowing that she has now with him, the man foreign to her who came to her one day from under the belly of a car, frugal with his beautiful smile granted, dignified in a way learnt in a life hidden from her, like his name. Her crowd, Mates, Brothers and Sisters. They are the strangers and he is the known (Gordimer 91-92).

Unlike Abdu, Julie by virtue of being a privileged white, has the choices opened to her, as Anthony York, in his review of *The Pickup*, suggests that the freedom of making choices is accompanied with class privilege; "Through Julie, Gordimer illustrates how privilege is not something that can easily be renounced. The latitude it allows to those born to it persists even when their circumstances when their circumstances change....It is this unequal ability to experience freedom that remains the gulf between the two lovers" (York n. p.). Gordimer has also validated this point in the text when the narrator says "...She was the one with choices. The freedom of the world was hers" (115). Out of her own volition Julie chooses to stay in a place bound by various restrictions imposed on the females of the community. While Abdu remains alienated to his own society, Julie finds fulfilment and integrates with the same.



Gordimer provides a sort of detailed description of the small underdeveloped country with a male-dominated society where people live according to the rules of Koran, where, should Abdu take Julie he must marry her. Abdu has to conform to the rules of his society "...So he even married her; had to, couldn't take her to his mother as if she'd some whore he'd picked up in his loneliness..."(174). The lines besides confirming the aforementioned observation also throws light on Abdu's perception of his relationship with Julie, for him there is no love, just a kind of moral obligation of his society that forces him to marry her. Right from the onset Abdu tries to hide his origin from Julie because, as Maureen Freely in her review of the novel points out, "Abdu is as ashamed of his origins as she is of hers"(55).

Quite contrary to what Abdu thinks and interprets about Julie's perception of his place, she is shown adaptive to the new environment and new customs. She is not bothered by the strange people, language and culture. Earlier in the novel there is a discussion about relocation and the narrator reveals that to locate means "...to discover the exact locality of a person or thing; to enter, take possession of" but the question remains "...where to locate the self?..."( Gordimer 47)The narrator further explains "...To discover and take over possession of oneself, is that secretly the meaning of 'relocation' as it is shaped by the tongue and lips in substitution for 'immigration'?"( 48) In the new country, Julie takes 'possession of the self' and which eventually becomes her home. She develops a bond with the females of the family especially Maryam, Abdu's sister. They become friends by "...bridging hesitancy with gestures-Julie, with mime-and laughter at each other's attempts at being understood..."( Gordimer 135).In order to create bond with the community and especially with Abdu's mother leads her to learn their language and in return teach them hers. She thinks "...Why sit among his people as deaf-mute? Always a foreigner where she ate from the communal dish..." (143). She

begins to teach English to children and other ladies at the house of Maryam's employer in exchange of learning their language. Despite the fact that she does not possess any qualification to teach, nonetheless she discovers the skill within her. Not only that, she finds a purpose in life in the pursuance of this service which she never found in her earlier profession:

Almost a year since they arrived at his home. She was fully occupied now. Strange; she had never worked like this before, without reservations of self, always had been merely trying out this and that, always conscious that she could move on, any time, to something else, not expecting satisfaction, looking on at herself, half amusedly, as an ant scurrying god knows where...( Gordimer 195).

All this while Abdu has been trying his best to escape out of the "hell"(Gordimer 98) he has come back to and dismisses Julie's efforts as one of her "adventures"(153). For him, the desert is "desolation" and "the denial of everything he yearns for"(262); he shuns it, trying to "...apply for visas for emigration to those endowed countries of the world...Australia, Canada, the USA, anywhere, out of the reproach of this dirty place that was his"(137-38). He finally succeeds in getting a visa to United States of America. On the other hand for Julie desert is "eternity"(172), and all this while she "...has come to be accepted as one of the women who share household tasks, and she makes use of her education to teach English to schoolchildren and anyone else in the village...who would like to improve their chances in what(he has said) is the world...she thinks it's the first time that expensive education has been put to use"(169-170). She has come to find warmth of family in this desert country which is missing in that global country. What Gordimer probably wants to suggest here is that in this era of globalization when countries are trying to evolve into the most advanced of them all have become places where human relationships, feelings and emotions no longer reside. In this global world, people lose a sense



of connection with others even as they try to connect with the people across the globe. Thus Gordimer portrays Julie returning from her solitary forays into the desert to the closeness of Abdu's family. Eventually she refuses to accompany Abdu to USA and says "...I am staying here"(253) decides to stay in his country and as Maureen freely writes "Julie falls in love again—with the world her husband is so keen to leave", it goes without saying that she has found her abode here.

Through Julie, however, Gordimer also exposes the false glamour these Promised Lands for immigrants promise which, in fact, is one of the reasons why she does not want Abdu to go. She refuses to see Abdu degraded in America, where he would lose his self respect without gaining much material rewards. She thinks: "...Again. Living in a dirty hovel...with Christ knows what others of the wrong colours, poor devils like himself (as he used to say), cleaning American shit...doing the jobs that *real* people, white Americans, won't do themselves"(230) and again: "...America, America. The great and terrible USA....The harshest country in the world. The highest buildings to reach up to in corporate positions (there he is, one of the poor devils, the beloved one, climbing a home-made rope ladder up forty storeys; and to jump off from head- first. *That's where the world is.* He thinks I don't know; *he* doesn't know..."(230).

Nadine Gordimer emphasizes that discrimination exists even in the most advanced economies of the world but at the same time she does not want to portray that it has vanished in her country. It becomes evident through Abdu's take on the subject when he angrily retorts back to Julie: "...in *your* city? Your country? All *real* people by law now, but who still does the shit work, neither Nigel Ackroyd Summers nor his daughter Julie..."(230). The lines give a clear indication of earlier division still persisting. Further, however if Abdu stays and agrees to the partnership with his uncle then he must participate in an economy that is based on nepotism and bribery

as is evident from the shady arms deal which however proves the point that corruption that has seeped into post apartheid South Africa is not exclusive to this country alone. J.M Coetzee echoes similar thoughts and has called it the novel's 'political thrust':

'not only in its exploration of the mind of the economic migrant, or one type of economic migrant, but in its critique and ultimately dismissal of false gods of the West, presided over by the god of market capital, to whose whims Julie's South Africa has abandoned itself so unreservedly and who has extended his sway even into Ibrahim's despised patch of sand...' (quoted in Szczurek 268)

Unlike Helen Shaw of *The Lying Days* and Rosa Burger of *Burger's Daughter*, Julie leaves South Africa but does not return to it at the end of the novel, which makes *The Pickup* unusual among Gordimer's novels. After apartheid, Gordimer can now create characters, who foray beyond the borders of South Africa for in this globalized world Gordimer's concern is the global discrepancy between rich and poor. Gordimer, here, traverses the borders not to tell about the rich developed countries but the underdeveloped countries of migrants on whom the rich countries depend to a great extent. Similar to her earlier task of describing the townships that are separated from the white world, here she takes on the exploration of marginalized countries of the world away from the glamour zone of the globalized world. At the same time by depicting Julie adopting people and adapting culture in a foreign shore, Gordimer gives a strong indication a true meaning of globalization which includes synthesis of different cultures. For Gordimer, as she contends in her book *Living in Hope and History*, the globalization of culture either emphasize "the unity, the oneness of cultural expression" or to "value the differences, bring them into play across aesthetic frontiers and thus disprove the long-held sovereignty of national and political divisions over the development of human potential" (209). Julie, undoubtedly, is the apostle of



Gordimer's belief for she not only transcends her cultural frontiers but also negotiates a new place for herself in the community.

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## Search for Roots in R. Parthasarathy's *Rough Passage*

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R. Parthasarathy's *Rough Passage* is the vocalization of pains and perforations that the poet had undergone during his stay in England where the poet actually realized the worth of motherland and the alienation, which led him to search for the roots that had been lying buried in the deepest crevices of poet's heart. In 'Exile', the poet experiences the 'Homecoming' and at the same moment, he creatively indulges himself into a dialogue with the past replete with countless memories, thoughts and feelings in his deliberate escape from the present gross realities that he had to face and he finally finds himself searching for the roots that have evolved the tree of the present. The present paper discusses the deep-rootedness of the roots of Parthasarathy in his single collection of poems titled *Rough passage*.

Parthasarathy's *Rough Passage* is a single but significant contribution in the Indian literary tradition of poetry as it deals most graphically with the issue of cultural and linguistic clash of a poet living in exile. Before him, no poet in Indian English literature could articulate the feelings of an author who had been in exile for couple of years in such a vivid and expressive way. It is well-known that Indian writers in English have been for long concerned with the problem of categorization. They are at times involved in the debate of calling Indian literature or Indian Literatures while at the other time they raise the issue of prioritizing language over culture or vice versa. Parthasarathy, too, suffered this malady and the result of his clash with linguistic and cultural change in U.K. was rather creative and not otherwise. He did not

react like an average Indian who adopts the milieu, neither he revolted against the environment in subversive manner but his poetry evinces that he not only showed the distaste for the things that were around him but he also expressed his unmixed love and adoration for the motherland where his roots still lie. The collection *Rough Passage* is the testimony that sets up the poet's presence firstly on Indian English poetry firmament on one hand, while on the other insinuates that the roots of culture and language are too deep to uproot as they nourish the consciousness of man and journey with the man lifelong.

The remarkable poetic collection *Rough Passage* that appeared on the Indian English platform in the year 1977 with 39 poems of three lines each, though 'all the poems form part of a single poem' and the poet too 'considered' and asked his readers to let the book be 'read as one poem'. The book is divided into three chapters titled 'Exile', 'Trial' and 'Homecoming' all dealing with the cultural and emotive clash that incite the poet to go back to search for the roots by jumping into the lanes and by-lanes of memories and carry the readers into a peculiar world to correlate to their own distinct past cluttered with countless memories which sink the childish innocence of man deeper and deeper into oblivion with each passing day. The poet's stay in U.K. aroused in him a love for his motherland and made him realize about his roots that actually grew in the tree of his consciousness. The alienation did not dismay and shrink him, rather, it oozed out in the form of poetry. His love for his culture, and language thus found a way to flow in the form of verse. The poet in the first part of the poem accepts his past, which is nothing but the colonial impact over Indian mind. He writes, 'However, the most reassuring thing/ about the past is that it happened.' (15) Later, in the second and third part of the collection, the poet faces and meets the past more vibrantly, chirpily and even sensuously. The last chapter of the collection 'Homecoming' completes the journey of the poet that



starts from England and travelling from various metros of India ends in reaching the home of the poet where 'after a generation' the poet feels 'at the end'.

The poet starts his search for roots with his strike at the term called experience that a person continues to have but does not perfect himself. Because it is not certain that the felt-emotions or thoughts may always be true as the man may falter repeatedly and revise certain suppositions that were gained from experiences of life that continue to change kaleidoscopically. Therefore, the poet writes, 'Experience doesn't always make for knowledge:/you make the same mistakes.' In an altogether changed British atmosphere, the poet feels shrunk inwardly and naturally this shrink in the consciousness forces him to return to search his original Tamil sensibility that made and nourished his being. The poet, after a deep reflection, could realize that English is the woman whom the poet loved to the core of his heart but could not marry because marriage is the meeting of souls not the minds or bodies only. The poet writes this predicament in a conversational tone:

The woman you may have loved  
You never married. These many years  
You warmed yourself at her hands.  
The luminous pebbles of her body  
Stayed your feet, else you had overflowed  
The banks, never reached shore. (13)

And the poet found the communion with English which is symbolically termed as woman very deceptive and fruitless as it ended in smoke. The woman stayed with him whole night and left the poet as the dawn approached. The poet was all alone, perturbed, and distraught.

All night your hand has rested  
On her left breast.  
In the morning when she is gone  
You will be alone like stone benches  
In the park, and would have forgotten  
Her whispers in the noises of the city. (13-14)

In the second poem of the collection, the poet observes

others imitating the English life and culture unlike him. Ravi Shanker, the sitar maestro is one of such persons who adopted the English culture and life style. His youth has been the story of adoption of English culture. The poet writes:

...While Ravi Shanker,  
Cigarettes stubs, empty bottles of stout  
And crisps provided the necessary pauses.  
He had spent his youth whoring  
After English gods. (15)

The poet also knows constraints of an alien and the restraints that a man has to face in his stay in the other nation. Despite acknowledging the deep-rootedness of time, culture and language he writes ironically: You learn roots are deep/That language is a tree, loses colour/Under another sky. (Parthasarathy 15)

The poet considers the past as the indelible truth in life. One cannot ignore or tear off the page of past from the book of human life. Therefore, he writes, "However, the most reassuring thing/about the past is that it happened. (15)" The poet acknowledges his love and regards for his homeland more and more when he observes people like him are termed as 'immigrants' or 'coloureds' by others in alien land. He finds no joy in the alien city called London rather he feels alienated and forlorn. He expresses his anguish when he says, '—the city is no jewel'. He now finds the foreign land 'full of smoke and litter/with puddles of unwashed /English children' (15) and he also gets perturbed when—..... he heard an old man/ At Trafalgar Square: 'It's no use trying/To change people. They'll be what they are. (16)

The poet dates back in his memories and recalls the days when he had to leave his homeland under pressing circumstances. He terms Bombay as "euphoric archipelago" because the city, unlike London is not inhabited by people who have loneliness of islands rather the residents of the city have "euphoric" hearts. Poring over the pages of past, the poet attempts to 'return to the city' he 'had quarreled with'. The poet reminisces



and writes graphically: The city reels under the heavy load/Of smoke. Its rickety legs break/Wind, pneumatically, of course,/In the press of traffic. (20)

The poet mirrors the pollution of the city when he writes about the sun that '... burns to cigarette ash. / Clouds hiccough, burp/from too much fume.' The birds of the city '..too struggle, / struggle, pressing thin feathers/ against the glass of air.' It is the city where 'language is a noise', and where suburbs are 'no better than' 'ghettos'. Nevertheless, the poets still loves the city for 'its traffic of its traffic of regulated /affections, uneventful but welcome.'(19)

The poet visits several Indian cities both outwardly and inwardly, outwardly when he narrates the changed faces of the cities and inwardly when he associates his memories with the cities. A few urban shots captured by the poet that testify the fact are as follows:

...streets unwind like cobras  
From a basket. A cow stands  
In the middle combing the traffic. (20)

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I step out, and a carreira  
Takes me to the heart of Goa.  
Echo of immaculate bells from hilltops  
Flagged with pale crosses. (21)

\*\*\*\*\*

A grey sky oppresses the eyes:  
Porters, rickshaw-pullers, barbers, hawkers,  
Fortune-tellers, loungers compose the scene. (24)

The poet is grieved to see the Western influence on Indian mind to the extent that an average Indian human mind has lost its originality and had cut itself from its roots. The cause for the search of roots grows more potent when we see him castigating the Indian who has lost its identity in the cultural clash. The westernization and urbanization has cankered the human thought even so the roots that had been nourishing the mind and souls of Indians are now withering away. Thus, the roots have become rotten. The poet writes aphoristically: The impact

of the West on India/Is still talked about,/Though the wogs have taken over. (23)

The second part of the collection is 'Trial', which talks of poet's love, chiefly physical yet a mysterious phenomenon, for the poet feels, "Love, I haven't the key/ to unlock His gates./Night curves." (29) Love with the companion offer soothing calm and relief to the aching and woe-stricken soul in exile. The calming waft of love touches the alienated and burnt soul of the poet and offers him an opportunity to heal itself. The poet touches the hand of love and gets healed. He writes: I grasp your hand/ in a rainbow of touch. Of the dead/I speak nothing but good. (23)

His mind again sinks into the floods of memories when browses over the pages of family album. He becomes nostalgic when he comes across the pictures of family and his wife and writes:

Over the family album, the other night,  
I shared your childhood:  
the unruly hair silenced by bobpins  
And ribbons, eyes half-shut  
Before the fierce glass,  
A ripple of arms round Suneeti's neck. (30)

The poet now is left with the wealth of memories. He writes, "Now, only the thought of you (live coals/ I blow on) burns the distance to a stub." (32) The physical touch of the beloved makes the poet sensuous and even erotic. He expresses his earlier experiences with the beloved as:

I am all fingers when it comes  
To touching them. Their fullness  
Keeps the eyes peeled  
With excitement. A nipple hardens  
On the tongue. Here,  
Pleasure is elliptic, wholesome. (33)

The poet's sensuousness gets deeper and even wider near his lover. The marks of love leave a lasting effect on the poet's self, "stones of the day turn phantoms./ But in the dark, hands and lips/ have marked the spot/



we touched." (31) The thoughts of the beloved make the poet reflective. He says, "Night closes in: I go/weak in the knees, thinking of you, /Anupama Devi of Belur." He feels his 'hands' filled up slowly with beloved's 'breasts'. The complete sensuousness of the poet can be discerned in the following lines in which the poet seems using all senses.

Touch:

The touch  
of your breasts is ripe  
in my arms. They obliterate my eyes  
with their tight parabolas of gold.

Eyes:

.....Eyes  
drowned in the skull  
as flesh hardened to stone.

Ear:

A knock on the door:  
you entered .

Undressed quietly before the mirror  
of my hands.

Tongue:

It's you I commemorate tonight.

The sweet water  
of your flesh I draw  
with my arms as from a well,  
its taste as ever  
as on the night of Capricorn. (37)

Smell:

Tonight I breathe on your skin:  
it clouds over. Soon, it will reflect  
nothing. (34)

From the pleasures of love, the poet starts thinking about the pangs of death. The very thought of death 'skates/on the thin ice of sweat' on protagonist's forehead and 'an octopus past' curl around him and make him insomniac and restless caused by his 'hob-and-nob with death. By the same time the poet realizes the importance of the past when he writes: I confess I am not myself/ in the present. I only endure/a reflected existence in the

past. (43) But for the poet, the past is not something to feel shame or escape. It is a teacher that guides him in the future. He regards past as something that needs to be polished. The more a man polishes the stone, the more future will shine. He writes: My past is an imperfect stone:/the flaws show. I polish /the stone, sharpen the luster to a point. (43)

The third section of the collection 'Homecoming' deals with linguistic bindings of the poet. He tries to reconnect to his Tamil language, culture and relations. He feels that his long stay in England has made him imitator of the Westerners and the English language. He says:

My tongue in English chains,  
I return, after a generation, to you.  
I am at the end  
of my Dravidic tether,  
hunger for you unassuaged.  
I falter, stumble. (47)

The poet in Parthasarthy acknowledges the importance of the classical Literature like the Valluvar's *Kural*. However, he is grieved to see the people of Tamil Nadu who are forgetting the worth of mother tongue and motherland. He writes, "To live in Tamil Nadu is to be conscious/every day of impotence." In addition, he advises the indigenous poets saying: How long can foreign poets/ provide the staple of your lines?/Turn inward. Scrape the bottom of your past. (48)

K. N. Daruwalla once discussing about the poetry of A. K. Ramanujan wrote about the plight of Indian Poets in English, who suffer the loss of language and culture in the foreign land and also the same loss of values in their homeland. He wrote:

But I know of Indian poets in English, who as a matter of poetic strategy, have exploited (I am not using this word in any derogatory sense) the fact of their exile or immigration, call it what you will. These poets have written about their alienation from their new surroundings.... After alienation, comes the attack on the social ethos, the racial discrimination, and the fast food values where the soul



itself gets eaten up like a hamburger. And running parallel to all this, one comes across in the poems of these writers a nostalgia for India bordering on the maudlin. (Daruwalla 170)

The same plight is with Parthasarathy who also seems concerned about the issues of Indian language (esp. Tamil) and culture. But the grim situation before him makes him more and more perplexed. He becomes accustomed to mishaps in life. "I made myself an expert /in farewells." But the most tormenting tragedy in the life of poet is his sudden demise of his father. "I crashed, a glasshouse/ hit by the stone of Father's death." (50) The sudden bereavement makes him feel forlorn and helpless. He understands the transitory end of life and becomes philosophical. He experiences the eternal truth called death and expresses that he has become his own father and very soon he will follow his father and that day is also not too far when his son will follow him on the path of death.

Parthasarathy's alienation actually takes birth when his English hangover gets over. In his long stay in England, he realizes the worth of his people and motherland when he suffers the problem of identity crisis. Salman Rushdie realized the predicament of Indian writer and raised few thought-provoking questions related to it.

To be an Indian Writer in this society is to face everyday problems of definition. What does it mean to be 'Indian outside India? How can culture be preserved without being ossified? How should we discuss the need for change within ourselves and our community without seeming to playing into the hands of racial enemies? What are the consequences, both spiritual and practical of refusing to make any concessions to Western ideas and practices? What are the consequences of embracing those ideas practices and turning away from the ones that came here with us? These questions are all a single question: how are we to live in the world? (Rushdie 17)

In this utter despair and desolation, the poet also

admonishes his own talent of writing poetry. He considers the art of poetry as an art that imitates only, lacks originality and sublimity, and steals ideas from earlier poets and authors.

'What's it like to be a poet?'

I say to myself, 'The son of a bitch

Fattens himself on the flesh of dead poets.

Lines his pockets with their blood.

From his fingertips ooze ink and paper,

as he squats on the dung heap

of old texts and obscure commentaries . (38)

And after journeying too long into the dungeons of dejection and melancholy, he finds himself watching 'forty years' swimming 'effortlessly ashore in a glass of bear' and finds himself lighting a cigarette and emitting out smoke to follow it. He returns home tired and feels "his face pressed against the window of expectation." (61) And very soon, he finds the time to observe silence. It's time I wrung the handkerchief/ of words dry. Dipped it/ in the perfume of silence. (62)

Thus, the search of the poet culminates in silence through which the poet hopes to find the root-cause of his discomfort and pains. The poet had to bear with pains and perforations during the period of alienation and these pains had shaken the being of the poet in his long stay in an alien nation where he had to come across hardships of cultural and moral clash. But the poet was not lost in his pains rather he was searching the roots of his cultural tree like a seeker and the end of the poem establishes that the roots of poetic genius of a poet are too deep to fathom. Because these roots of *sanskara* have nourished and fostered the mind and soul of the poet and have also guided him on his path of life when there was none to guide him, one cannot even imagine the existence of one in the absence of the other.



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## Influence of Fine Arts on Indian Fiction in English

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Enduring fiction forges itself in the smithy of reality. Indian fiction in English has also held a mirror unto Indian social and cultural life and down the decades it has explored the varied facets of Indian society. Influence of fine arts – music, painting, sculpture have also figured on the screen of Indian English Fiction. In order to understand this influence of fine arts on Indian English fiction, it is necessary to understand the concept of interrelationship of fine arts and literature, imitation as an aesthetic exercise and concept of Inter art movement. Besides, it is also relevant to frame a suitable method to study the influence of fine arts in relation to literature.

### Inter-relationship of literature and fine arts

When we think of art-history and literary criticism, we naturally start with the problem of interchangeability of critical terms. When we use terms freely like a 'baroque' style of novel or the 'timbre' of a poem, or the "architectonics" of a play, and the Rasa in music, or the Dhvani in dance, what are we trying to suggest? As all fine arts employ different media-very different from words-are we only trying to catch what is ephemeral, or push the frontiers of language, or attempt to give a sound-sight picture to a deaf and blind? All senses and sensibility are constantly seeking some balance in imbalance. What was called the quest for beauty and the discovery of bliss in classical poetics in the East and the West is no more mere "imitation of nature" or 'the best words in the best order'. The Brahman created world as play (Leela) and was a spectator and an outsider (Sakshin). A stroke of brush or a plucking of strings or a careful



chiselling may achieve a world of its own which is beyond words. Art is the universal language, in this particular sense.

Literature, painting, music, photography, cinema, and many other forms of art such as, dance and sculpture are all independent mediums of expression (by the artist), that evoke understanding, thoughts and emotions (among those who see, read and hear such art). Each one of these can exist independent of others, but frequently more than one medium of art are combined to produce much better result than what would have been possible by the sum of effect of each one by itself. For example, a good ballet is essentially a combination of dance with a narrative; in addition it also uses music and visual art in form of the stage art and even the dresses used by performers. Let us see how cinema makes very- effective use of all other art medium.

The story or script of cinema is a piece of literature. So are all the spoken parts of cinema. Photography is, very much an essential part of cinema. Photography itself produces what painting does, except the method of creation for the two medium are different and to that extent, the scope and limitations of the quality of output is different. Cartoon films are actually just like painting with motion. Background music and songs add to the value of cinema. The visuals that accompany the music also have the potential of enhancing the effect. Songs and music are frequently presented in conjunction with dance. And both these are forms of many movies.

It is not possible to present sculptures in cinema without some loss of effect of their three- dimensional nature. But sometimes this can often be more than offset by additional capabilities of cinema, for example, a cinema may present an aerial picture of a monument like Sphinx from different angles and distances which an ordinary tourist will not be able to get. We give words to our feelings in literature by writing; in arts we give symbols to our feelings. Spectators have to understand the idea

behind the painting or the poem, so they are related. Both have deep meanings and literature can help to inspire other mediums of artistic expression. Challenging and powerful - literature can set the stage for amazingly powerful and compelling representation in other forms. For example, Picasso's rendering of "*Don Quixote*" raises as many thought provoking discussions as Cervantes' work itself. However, there are times when literature cannot seem to make the jump from its pages to other mediums. But there are times when literature cannot be replicated into other mediums. Having said this, perhaps the relationship between literature and other mediums is that they can both be used to articulate experiences within the human predicament. They might be able to serve vehicles that express the level of "truths" that we endure and seek to voice.

Each of these things is a method by which creativity happens and human nature can be reflected. They're connected in that they require someone with a point of view to create from a particular perspective. They're similar because they have the ability to elicit a response from those who experience the creation. They're all art.

### Interart Poetics

An increasing number of scholars and critics today are questioning the validity of traditional disciplinary studies, and express a desire instead, to transcend disciplinary boundaries. *Interart Poetics* is a concept that has been adopted as a means of linking the separate but interrelated developments in criticism, aesthetic thinking and artistic practice, which together produce an innovative conception of the interartistic potentials of the arts and literature. "The Interart Movement" <sup>1</sup> forcefully argues for the need of interdisciplinary approaches in the study of the arts and literature. Drawing on the analogy of recent developments within natural sciences, where shifting intellectual alignments have precipitated the establishment of entirely new academic subjects, the



movement also pleads for more collaboration among literary critics, art historians, musicologist, and literature scholars in the study of culture, past as well as present

The Interart Movement deals with various dimensions of 'ekphrasis'. W. J. T. Mitchell and James Heffeman have defined it as the "verbal representation of visual representation"<sup>2</sup>. Oliver; however, argues that this definition excludes several sub-categories to which the term is also applicable.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, he proposes a semantic expansion to include the verbal representation of non-representing images like architecture, and the verbal representation of objects or texts composed in non-verbal sign systems, like music and dance.

Tamor Yacobi too, focuses on the concept of 'ekphrasis', claiming that there is an unstable borderline between description and allusion in ekphrastic lexis.<sup>4</sup> She concentrates on the latter, referring to Meir Steinberg's quotation theory, and argues that figures of speech referring to visual art also have an obvious ekphrasis dimension. Not only the visual image as a whole but also what she calls the visual model as distinct from the unique work of art, are latent in the verbal inter-medium allusion and evoked by the ekphrastic figure.

By tradition and convention ekphrasis is claimed to be a verbal genre. In her essay, Siglind Bruhn includes in the concept a reversed relation between the source and the target of the transformation: musical representation of verbal representation. She shows how the semantic structure of Aloysius Bertrand's poem "Ondine" (from *Gaspard de la nuit*) is transformed into musical form by Maurice Ravel, and claims that the musical interpretation in its turn influences our way of reading the text.<sup>5</sup>

Another type of interaction between visual and verbal representation is demonstrated in Arnt Melbers's essay, where the strong colour in Cezanne's mode of painting is proposed to have had a decisive impact on Rilke's poetics.<sup>6</sup> From the painter's skill in thus transforming the visual image into a "thing", the poet, turning to the

poetical figure, adopted an analogical method for fit medium when in the Duino-elegies and Orpheus-sonnets, he implemented his ideal of a 'factual' objective poetry.

### Method for the Study of Literature in Relation to Other Fine Arts

It is particularly certain that music and literature, usually combined with dance, arose as a single activity long before the concept of an art existed. In later stages of history, the connections between the musical and literary arts have varied from nation to nation and period to period. The relationship was close in Elizabethan England and remote in Augustan England. It has always been close in the folk epic. The Homeric minstrel, the Anglo-Saxon *scop*, and the twentieth-century Yugoslavian singer of tales cannot function without a musical instrument. But in the literary epic it has been at best vestigial, and the connections between the *Aeneid* or *Paradise Lost* and music are in general negligible.

As soon as the arts of music and literature began to draw apart, the possibility of one's influencing the other arose. Instrumental music in its modern tradition is only some five centuries old, but Plato could complain that instrumental music is a bad thing because, in the absence of words, "it is very difficult to recognize the meaning of the harmony and rhythm, or to see that any worthy object is imitated by them." <sup>7</sup> By Plato's time narrative program music was already two centuries old. In 582 B.C. the Pythian Games introduced a composition for *aulos*-solo, the prescribed subject being Apollo's victory over the python, in five episodes.

Aesthetic speculation about the interrelationship between literature and music has been regarded as a fascinating and elusive, if somewhat suspect, border area of literary criticism. In their influential *Theory of Literature*<sup>8</sup> Rene Wellek and Austin Warren voiced particularly strong scepticism concerning the possibility of successfully combining the "sister arts." Yet the numerous examples



of "great artists in the field of literature [who] also feel a need for going beyond the limits of their art and striving after a symbiosis with the other art" <sup>9</sup>

Determining a fruitful method for the study of literature in its relation to the other fine arts depends on the affinities general theory has discovered among the arts, and on how readily the affinities can be concretely illustrated. From ancient times, there has been much speculation about harmony of the arts, an urgency to reduce them to a simple system of common qualities, ends, or principles governing the making of art objects, which in turn, differentiate the fine arts from nature and from the practical arts. But much of the speculation has not been utilized for the concrete and analytical comparison of art objects different in kind. The failure may in part be ascribed to the slow development, especially in literary study, of a method for the concrete and close analysis of an art object in terms of its own specific context. Literary study has strongly tended to detail the historical context, probably more so than studies in the other arts where concrete analysis, like Wolffin's in his *Principles of Art History*, of structural features of the art object as such is not exceptional. The failure, however also be due to the highly abstract nature of the speculation on the harmony of the arts, to the kind of vagueness found, for instance, in a passage in Cicero's *Pro Archia* (I.2) which became a common place in discussion of harmony: "Indeed the subtle bond of a mutual relationship links together all arts which have any bearing upon the common life of mankind." <sup>10</sup> By Cicero's generalization, presumably only some arts are found by a relationship to life; but when one considers that human activities are not so bound, the generalization becomes so sweeping as to be meaningless.

Similar vagueness is found in comparison drawn among some of the arts. Simonides' popular saying that painting is silent poetry and poetry a speaking picture <sup>11</sup> is a typical statement of affinity which cloaks the abstract

with metaphor and often minimizes the large question of differences and their relevance to the differences in the effects produced by like elements in two arts. In his commentary on Simonides' epitome, Plutarch, for example, while recognizing the difference in material (words and colours) and in the manner of imitation (painting by means of design depicting an action as if now happening and poetry narrating it as having happened), minimize the difference and suggests a vague identity of purpose in the two arts, namely vividness in the imitation.<sup>12</sup>

In the light of the theories discussed above, we can easily trace the influence of fine arts in the works of most of the Indo-Anglican fiction writers. However, works of R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Rabindranath Tagore, Bhawani Bhattacharya, Balchandra Rajan, Arun Joshi and Arundhati Roy are analysed here. A close study of the pictorial aspects and musical quality of their fiction will very clearly bring into light the influence of fine arts on their works.

Apart from their pictorialism, that is their practice of describing people, places, scenes or parts of scenes as if they were describing a painting or a subject for a painting and their use of art objects for thematic projection and overtone, one may also raise the question whether in structure and style their novels resemble the works of a particular school of painting. What is assumed when this question is raised is either that all the arts reflect in certain ways the pervasive "time-spirit" or that there exist certain families of style even though it is not contemporary. Thus, in the first instance, we might ask what did they have in common with the Impressionists and in the second, how is their style related to the Mannerists, the art of the past which impressed them most deeply? Just as metaphors communicate with immediacy the feel of experience: in a way which abstract or discursive language cannot, comparisons between the arts serve to sensitize the reader to qualities in the works



otherwise difficult to define, but each art having its own techniques and traditions, this critical approach necessarily becomes less and less valuable the more one tries to penetrate to the formal, structural elements of the works being compared.<sup>13</sup>

An outgrowth of these novelists' habit of seeing a landscape or figures "composed" so that the scene appears to the spectator as a living picture perhaps recalling a real one or as a subject for a picture is his use of The "framing"<sup>14</sup> device. Any scene or part of a scene may be considered framed if through visual imagery or description it is circumscribed and set apart from the rest of the narrative. Framing may serve various purposes: it may integrate description with action or with characterization, especially if the scene is presented through the consciousness of a character with a painter's eye; it may convey with great precision the particular tone of the setting or appearance of a character. Most important of all, it may symbolize relationships and underline themes.

### **Raja Rao and his 'pictorial' world**

Though man's relationship with Reality is the main theme of Raja Rao, the manifestly limited reality of the external world is certainly not ignored in his fiction. In fact, the manifold ways in which the world without relates to the quintessential Reality within constitute a significant counterpoint to his major preoccupation. As Raja Rao's vision develops, the role of the external world in his fiction inevitably changes in consonance with the pressures of his central thematic concerns.

An outstanding feature of *Kanthapura* is the expression in it of a youthful writer's delight in the beauty of rural landscape, its teeming abundance and its changing moods, as the cycle of seasons runs its age-old, appointed course. The description of the location of the village in the opening para-graph itself sets the tone for this:

High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that

face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar Coast is it, up Mangalore and Puttur and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugar cane. Roads, narrow, dusty, rut-covered roads, wind through the forest of teak and of jack, of sandal and of sal hanging over bellowing gorges and leaping over elephant-haunted valleys, they turn now to the left and now to the right.<sup>15</sup>

The repeated use of inverted syntax in the passage and the breathless rush with which the sentences chase one another with adjective crowding adjective and the 'toe' of one noun touching 'the heel' of another, indicate the lyrical fervour with which the landscape is treated in the novel. Nature-description in *Kanthapura* employs all the classic strategies of the word-painter. First, things are never shown in their static aspect the dynamic element being invariably stressed, as in "The day dawned over the Ghats, the day rose over the Blue Mountain, and churning through the grey, rapt valleys, swirled up and swam across the whole air" (p.56). And the writer's verbal resource is always more than adequate when he wishes to recreate in words the pulsating life and uncontrollable power of the elemental forces of nature as, for example, in this description of the coming of the first rain ;

It churns and splashes, beats against the treetops, reckless and wilful, and suddenly floating forwards, it bucks back and spits forward and pours down upon the green, weak coffee leaves, thumbing them down to the earth, and then playfully lounging up, the coffee leaves rising with it, and whirling and winnowing, spurting and rattling, it jerks and snorts this side and that. (p. 73).

The careful noting of the action of the rain upon the coffee leaves here is a copybook example of the use of minute details—a result of acute observation—which is another standard device of description. And as an effective counter-point to the overriding impression of vigour and energy in such passages comes the softer word-music of geographical names like 'Alambe' and 'Champa' and Mena and Kola passes' (p.1) and "fair-carts.... from Maddur and Tippur and Santur and Kuppur" (p. 56).



In Raja Rao's sensuous apprehension of nature in *Kanthapura*, two senses seem to be especially active—those of sight and hearing, and hence the visual and the auditory imagination shapes most of his descriptions. For instance, the month of Kartik comes with "white lights from clay trays and red lights from copper stands and diamond lights that glow from the bowers of entrance leaves" (p. 81); and when the first rains arrive, "there is something dark and heavy and hard black and the trees begin suddenly to tremble and hiss, and..... there is a surge and grunt behind the bamboo cluster". (P. 50)

### R. K. Narayan's verbal interplay with Fine Arts

R. K. Narayan's famous novel *The Guide* employs contrapuntal structure. The movement between the story of how Raju becomes a putative 'Sadhu' in the present and his account of his past which centres on his activities as a tourist guide and his affair with Rosie, a married female dancer from Madras, involves a dialectical interplay with arts. In the novel this interaction with arts occurs in a number of ways, but most notably in parallels between the interest of the characters of Marco and Rosie.

Rosie's dancing and Marco's archaeological work initially seem to be diametrically opposed. When Raju asks Rosie what interests her, she replies "'Anything except cold, old stone walls'" (*Guide* -72)<sup>16</sup> and both her sexuality and her ambition to be a professional classical dancer in contemporary South India seem to be at odds with Marco's absorption in what Raju sees as a sterile past: 'Dead and decaying things seemed to loosen his tongue and fire his imagination, rather than things that lived and moved and swung their limbs' (*Guide* 71). So we come across as an ill-matched couple who represent a contrast between stasis and kinesis, a dead past and a living present. Raju's narration tips the balance firmly in favour of the latter. Despite his familiarity with the ancient cave-paintings that Marco is examining, he is

dismissive of the mythic past, seeing it as ossified and irrelevant to contemporary living.

Dance may seem to be a secondary concern of the novel, functioning mainly as a medium for developing Rosie's character, but it is a significant subject in its own right and the details of Rosie's training and career as a dancer provide Narayan with an opportunity to draw on his lifelong interest in Indian classical music, specifically the Karnatic tradition of South India. Rosie's success as a practitioner of '*Bharat Natyam*,' generally considered to be the oldest and most traditional of the six major forms of Indian classical dance and still widely performed in Tamil Nadu,' and so, as she trains herself to become proficient in this ancient art, she is undergoing a possible transformation which is analogous to Raju's in the later action. Additionally, dance is a trope for performative identity more generally and Narayan seems to be tracing correspondences between ancient thinking on the nature and significance of *Bharat Natyam* and its manifestations in the present. Raju's possible metamorphosis takes place after the submerged ancient temple reappears; Rosie becomes a star performer of a classical art form that saw a 'resurgence' at the beginning of the twentieth century and so the novel also deals with the relationship between ancient and modern thinking in the sections that focus on her career. Marco may be the professional archaeologist of the novel, but Raju and Rosie are also involved with excavations of the past.

Rosie is defined by her dancing and when, with Raju's help, she embarks on her study of *Bharat Natyam*, her absorption in her art seems to distance her from the temple-dancer stereotype, with its lowly associations. In his next novel, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, Narayan would include a character, Rangi, who, though not unsympathetic, more straightforwardly embodies the traditional association between temple-dancers and prostitutes. Rosie's training to become a serious exponent of "classical" dance is, however, built around a study of Sanskrit texts,



particularly the methods embodied in the classic work on the subject, Bharat's *Natya Shastra* (or *Science of Drama*), without which she feels it will be 'impossible to keep the purity of the classical forms' (*Guide* 107). Coupled with this, in a passage which reads as a fictional equivalent of Narayan's decision to enlist a scholar to help him with his own study of Sanskrit texts, she asks Raju to find her a Sanskrit pundit, who can read episodes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* to her. Narayan's study of ancient texts led to *re-tellings* of the epics and other mythic tales and fictional works in which they are transformed in contemporary situations. Rosie's study of the *Natya Shastra* may suggest an attempt to learn the conventions of an ancient form of dance, which if simply copied in a mimetic way would preclude creative interpretation. In fact, though, she turns to classic writing on the subject as a source from which she 'can pick up so many ideas for *new compositions*' (*Guide* 108) and this is very much in keeping with the spirit of Bharat's treatise. The *Natya Shastra* outlines a theory of *rasas* or tastes, which, though developed primarily in relation to drama and dance, has implications for all artistic genres and stresses the relationship between artistic taste and food consumption. <sup>17</sup>

The dance motif also has resonance in relation to the work of the third member of *The Guide's* eternal triangle, Rosie's husband, Marco. The couple seems to be on the edge of reconciliation when he discovers a fresco of dance notations dating from around the fifth century. At this point, Rosie's enthusiasm for Marco's findings suggests a degree of convergence between their interests. However, Marco, resistant to any suggestion that the classical and the contemporary may be related, quickly rejects this, branding Rosie's dancing 'street-acrobatics' and 'not art' (*Guide* 130, 131). So he remains skeptical about her artistry, whereas the trickster Raju has the vision to see her dancing as 'pure abstraction' (*Guide* 110) and initially evinces a clear preference for her vitality over what he sees as

Marco's sterility. Subsequently Raju's estimate of Marco's work is less dismissive. Having initially seen him as a copyist and, it would seem, having had little regard for this particular branch of paleography, Raju later becomes more sympathetic to Marco's view that his discoveries will 'be responsible for the rewriting of history' (Guide 129). Marco's claim may be inflated, but it is partly endorsed when his work on the cave paintings appears in a beautifully produced monograph entitled *The Cultural History of South India* and is hailed in the press as "An epoch-making discovery in Indian cultural history" (Guide 176). As with Raju and Rosie, his excavation of an ancient Tamil mode opens up the possibility of transforming present-day experience" through per formative interaction with the classical past. It is no coincidence that the frescoes he finds contain what Raju calls 'abstract verse about some theories of an ancient musical system' (Guide 129), since this suggests an affinity between his project and Rosie's study of the *Natya Shastra*.

### Balachandra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* and its Ekphrastic Effect

While Rajan's fame as a critic and scholar has been well established, the debate about his vision and art as a novelist is still going on, both in India and abroad. <sup>18</sup> *The Dark Dancer*, his first novel, is a bright and sensitive work; it is *much* too deep and subtly allusive for a commoner's zeal to categorize and label it only as a portrayal of a sociological confrontation between two cultures, in which convenient and facetious judgments are made of winners and losers. But *The Dark Dancer*, it appears, is a much more comprehensive, illuminating and ripe work, both in breadth and scope: it portrays the quest of the Cambridge-educated Krishnan for identity and enlightenment; and it deals with the myth of the dark dancer, Shiva, the central figure of the story. In his review of the book, Monroe Spears remarks: "*The Dark Dancer*: is an extremely ambitious work, in that it deals



explicitly with the greatest issues, political, moral, and religious; it presents a wide range of characters and shows them in crucial years of re-cent Indian history; it takes the greatest risks possible." <sup>19</sup> V. S. Krishnan's alienation, resulting from his prolonged stay in England, is a historical and social phenomenon, but the unostentatious confrontation with the matter-of-factness of the situation and the evolutionary process of awakening to various phases of reality and of expanding consciousness define the mythos and *dainoid* of the work.

The central symbol in the novel,<sup>20</sup> is the Nataraja. There are repeated references in the narrative to the symbolic myth of Shiva, the cosmic dancer who holds in unison creation and destruction and good and evil. This mythic perception of unity in diversity and multeity is characteristic of the Indian mind in much the same manner as the Faust myth is characteristic of the German mind. Earlier in the story, Krishnan hears the myth of the Dancer sung at his wedding feast:

She sang of Shiva dancing in the great temple of Chidambaram, the timeless dance in which each gesture is eternity with every movement of that mighty form expressing and exhausting the history of a universe. "You who danced with your limbs held high, the moon in your forehead and the river Ganga in your matted locks, nit me great Shiva as your limbs art; lifted." In the beginning was rhythm, not the word. Not darkness, but moonlight and the radiance of creation. There had never been nothing without form and void but always form in its essence, everlastingly changing, he heard, half heard, the drums and the *tambaura* accompanying the voice—throbbing, civilized, sophisticated frenzy. He saw the great figure of the Nataraja, one leg arched in that supreme; expression of energy, the dying smile of the demon beneath the other's lightness, all that infinite power of destruction drawn back into the bronze circle of repose . . . Creation, Destruction. Two concepts but one dance, die trampling leg, the outthrust arms asserting the law invincibly,

ecstatically, the drums beating, the strings plucked in supplicating monotony, raise me, raise me into mystery's center; for something to be born something must die. (27-28)

These lines are punctuated by a quotation from Eliot's *Burnt Norton*: "neither flesh nor fleshless / neither from nor toward, at the stilt is point there the dance" (28). Krishnan is wondering rather skeptically about the metaphysics of the unifying principle and its relevance to the problems of time and existence. Later, when he joins Kamala in Shantihpur, he sees in the anteroom the bronze image that Kuinala has carried with her. This time Krishnan's mind experiences the image aesthetically as a work of art: For a better understanding of the symbol of Nataraja the two interpretations, philosophical and aesthetic, should be read together.<sup>21</sup> One can recall Keats's response to the Grecian Urn, Shelley's response to da Vinci's Medusa's head and Botticelli's Venus and of course Byron's re-sponse to the Apollo Belvedere.<sup>22</sup> In Rajan's own response to the molten image, the focus remains on the paradox of the mystery of the still center: while the stillness of the image merely refers to physical reality as defined by temporal time, motion, spontaneity, balance, symmetry, rhythm and harmony are mentally perceived. But in another sense the still center refers to the very source of consciousness, the point of intersection of time and eternity. The iconography and the statuesque, rather sculpturesque, form of the molten image convey not only harmonious transmutation of power, the spontaneity, symmetry and balance in its visual expressiveness but also the ontological unity of Becoming and Being and the ecstasy in the inexplicableness of order. The presiding idea of the image, including the meaning of the dance, is recreated in the song; the singer communicates the rhythmic structure of the dance and the otherwise incommunicable ecstasy. Paradoxically, "the pure circle of form" is the all-inclusive circle, exhibiting various aspects of Shiva—Kala as time, Agni as consecrator and



Vishnu as restorer and preserver. At the cosmic level, "the pure circle" as the circle of destiny contains the cesspool of history and yet it portrays a state of serenity and a condition of truth that are beyond desire—and hence beyond the "catharsis of art." The "ekphrastic" <sup>23</sup> image of "the pure circle" directs not only the movement of the text but also the reader's response to issues of intertextuality and contextuality.

### Reflection of Fine Arts in Arun Joshi's Existential Vision

Arun Joshi is another contemporary sensibility who has explored the reality of cultural interaction and has located its significance in Indian life through its fine and performing arts. In this fiction the encounter of cultures does not come up directly, it is wrought in the concept and conflict of tradition and transition and in the juxtaposition of the materialistic, empirical rational view of life and the artistic & spiritual stance of life. In *The Foreigner*, Sindi Oberoi is a fall-out of the situation of not belonging to any culture. A real nowhere man, an anomic, devoid of love, a wandering alien, he turns into a character like Camus' outsider or Naipaul's unanchored souls. His stay in Kenya, London and Boston have remained no more than whirls for Sindi and though his relationship with Anna, Kathy and June have enriched his experiences they have not yet brought him out of the labyrinth of meaninglessness. It is in India, his ancestral land, which he is able to forge out an authentic self for himself out of the dialectics of being and nothingness.

In fact, June's death acts as a tragic peripeteia. He gets another flash to insight at the river where he goes after June's death and watches the dawn breaking over the dark water and the sun rising. Detachment at that time had meant inaction....Now he had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachment consisted of right action and not an escape from it. The primordial symbols of hill,

the river and the sun indicate that Sindi is on the right path of becoming. The dawn breaking the dark water is the breaking of the darkness within him. Consequently, when he comes to India he encounters at Khemka's house the bronze figure of the dancing Shiva. He is held, as it were, in supreme ecstasy: "For a moment, just one brief moment, I was struck by the intense beauty of the divine dancer. America, India, Egypt, all mingled behind him in aeons of increasing rhythm."<sup>24</sup> The archetypal image of the dancing Shiva is a product of Arun Joshi's collective consciousness, his racial inheritance, his Indian heritage. It is also a correlate to the turning phase in Arun Joshi's *Odyssey* in his life. The protagonist is a queasier incognito. This image gets fuller dimension in the symbol of Lord Krishna that pervades the whole of *The Last Labyrinth*. The dancing Shiva is the paradox of truth; he is both destructive fury and creative force.

In fact, the novel assumes a deeper connotation if explained against the cultural perspective. Genetically, Sindi was an orientator. He finds his roots in Indian soil, in the matrix of Indian culture. The truth that detachment does not consist in withdrawal but in involvement, in devotion, in sacrifice is deeply entrenched in Indian way of life. It is this cultural stance represented through arts that gives a meaning, a significance to his existence and identity.

*The Last Labyrinth* further illumines fresher perspective on the dilemma of modern man lost in the labyrinth of tradition and modernity, the rational world-view and the spiritual vision, the essential spirit of the West and the artistic & spiritual vitality of the East. Bhaskar, a product of the dual world, of Descartes and Darwin, Pascal and Spinoza, Lord Krishna and Maya, of Bombay and Benaras, of science and mysticism, is an authentic voice embodying the compulsive duality of cultural heritage in a modern India, which is reflected through its artistic glory of the past.



### Mulk Raj Anand as a Connoisseur of the Arts

As writer and art-critic, he was a rebel within, a pilgrim with a heart of dissent, searching for truth, truth that would reveal the whole man and usher in understanding and comradeship against pain and brutality of existence. His early novels, particularly *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936)— two world classics in terms of sense of form and purpose— reveal his awareness of the true measure of the damage oppression of different sorts could cause. His later novels, particularly *Nine Moods of Bharata* and *Of Power and Pity* reflect his mellowed moods, moving beyond ire and indignation and tending a pilgrimage towards transcendent possibilities. His setting of Indian sculpture, artistic monuments and cave paintings depicting tales of compassion serves as the pilgrimage motif for transcendence in these two later novels. Existential humanism, with hope in the morrow, was a supreme mover of his sociological imagination and art-criticism as well. The Indian perception of the 'third Eye', the eye of discernment, and the aesthetic experience of *karuna rasa* unified his literal and artistic sensibilities. His phase novels such as *Nine Moods of Bharata* and *Power and Pity* hovering around a kind of autobiographical historiography communicate a quest for a pilgrimage towards a holistic understanding of life via reflections on the art-heritage of India.

### Rabindranath Tagore

His word paintings and lyrical prose, besides being a great universal poet, the genius of Tagore as a novelist, dramatist, short-story writer, musician, philosopher, painter, educationist, reformer and critic and in every field he has earned a niche for himself. There is hardly a field of literary activity which is not explored and made fruitful by his daring adventures. His genius enriched whatever it touched. Like the Sun, after which he is named, he has shed light and warmth, both on his each choice.

*Chaturanga* is a fine testament of the sanest and soundest common sense. S.C. Sengupta proclaims that "It rivals the English *Gitanjali* and Bengali *Balaka*." <sup>25</sup> It is a novel with a compact and well-knit plot embedded with music, and poetry. Though the novel has only four chapters and four characters, one of whom tells the story, it is one of Tagore's best and has been described by a competent critic as "a work of art without blemish". Here, too, there is a love triangle, one woman and two men. But the theme of love is subordinated to the spiritual quest of the protagonist. Sachis is the central character of the novel. Sribilas is Sachis's friend who marries Damini in the strange circumstance and who narrates the whole story. The part played by Damini as a whole and the portrait of her character need to be studied in the light of Sachis' quest for Truth, the central theme of the novel. In the novel Tagore exposes the religious fanatics who, in the name of Hindu orthodoxy and Vaishnavism, indulge in religious aberrations and self-exhibitionism and mislead the people from the true path of spirituality. Here the conflict is between love and religion, rather spiritual *versus* sensual. 'Niharranjan Ray' praises the novel" in these words: "One of the finest, one of the tensest and one of the most compact and competent works of art that Tagore ever produced." <sup>26</sup>

*Farewell, My Friend* (Sesher Kavita) is unique among the novels of Tagore. In this work, the poet in him once again dominates over the novelist. It is a "great love poem written in prose." It combines lyricism and fiction. 'S.K. Banerjee' is of the opinion that the novel is written in a "more consistent poetic strain and on a more purely poetic theme than perhaps any other novel in the world's history." <sup>27</sup>

*Two Sisters* (Dui Bon) is a simple and short novel, dealing with the usual triangle — two sisters in love with the same man. Here Tagore once again takes up the theme of illicit love as in his other novels. It exposes the problem of psychological maladjustment in married life. In this novel Tagore takes up the eternal problem



of love and suggests the time-worn solution. In none of his works does Tagore present this tragic problem with as much intensity as he does in this novel. The two sisters – Sarmila and Urmimala stand for the two different aspects of womanhood, the “mother-kind”, and the “beloved-kind”. Here the novelist wants to clear that no doubt ever/man seeks in woman both the kinds but a combination of these two aspects in one woman is an unattainable ideal. So one must make peace with the got kind otherwise the pleasure of married-life will be spoilt, making the two lives miserable, unhappy and wretched. Bhabani Bhattacharya remarks that though the novel may not be comparable to Tagore’s best yet it is “a work of art exquisite in its own individual fashion.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Bhabani Bhattacharya and his “Sensory” Narrative Technique**

The novel as an art form is more than a literal transcription of reality because the author selects or arranges his experience into a unique view of reality, in basically the same way that a painter or a composer does. The quality which gives his view of reality its distinction is the way in which he orders and selects the material of his novel, or what we call his narrative technique. More than that, it refers to the specific mode of rendering experience into fiction. It answers the questions of how the story purports to exist and who talks to the readers; it is the method by which the novelist bridges the gap between the stuff of the story and the readers. It is an integral aspect of the creative process, not a means by which pre-conceived content is translated into fiction but a transforming and, informing agent that unites with content in the art of expressing it. The narrative form of a novel is inextricably bound with its subject; the best form is that which makes the most of its subject.

It is not only with the help of images, particularly metaphors that Bhattacharya succeeds in conveying his impressions of characters and, incidents. Indeed, Bhattacharya employs the various devices of story telling

in a way that his narrative strongly grips the reader's mind; it has several stimulating moments that provoke and involve a serious reader. It invites the participation of the reader in the execution of the inherent narrative intention. "Involvement of the reader or spectator as accomplices or collaborators." Writes Lowry Nelson, "is essential in the curious situation of artistic communication." <sup>29</sup> Though Bhattcharya regards technique most essential for a novelist, he is for a complete assimilation of technical knowledge in the act of unfolding his story. As for himself, he applies it as naturally as a painter applies his knowledge of colour, rhythm and design, or the musician, his knowledge of both the musical theory and the instrument upon which he performs.

### **The "Folklorist Musicalty" of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things***

Readers of the novel are attracted to Roy's use of language. She employs her language which allows her readers an access to an Indian consciousness, reinventing itself on its own terms. She evokes Indian ambience. Her nature descriptions reveal her involvement with the place, she was born in and nurtured. She describes 'the June Rain' thus:

Heaven opened and the water hammered down, reviving the reluctant old well, greenmossing the pigless pigsty, carpet bombing still, tealcoloured puddles the way memory bombs still, tealcoloured minds, The grass looked wetgreen and pleased. Happy earth-worms frolicked purple in the slush. Green nettles nodded. Trees bent. Further away, in the wind and rain, on the banks of the river, in the sudden thunderdarkness of the day, Estha was walking. (10)<sup>30</sup>

The use of gripping metaphors, similes and comparisons makes the narrative arresting. The foregoing description of nature has certain amount of violence in it because of the words like "hammered," "bombing" and "thunderdarkness."

The nature descriptions also have allegorical significance. Roy rivets together human feelings and



external nature, she has a style of her own. Though it conventionally means the use of language but it is a way of perceiving the world – it is a way of *seeing*. She possesses extraordinary linguistic inventiveness. Paranjape points out, – "Indeed, what distinguishes Roy's style is that there is something fevered, desperate, even excessive about her imagination."<sup>31</sup> She regards English language having a tremendous potential in portraying us Indians to ourselves and to the world, because it transcends all barriers, the transnational and the cross-cultural. But it is most fascinating in its innovative language use, with metaphors, alliterations, (folklorist) musically.

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Is she, the writer, recording a likely pronunciation of the words or requiring a humorous response? But she has used the language the way she likes, with rule-bending creativity.

Arundhati Roy offers occasionally some specimens of inappropriate English, with a bit of Malayalam at times, as direct or indirect speech. We also come across the reversed spelling of words, something like 'itahdnurA yoR. She follows the standard use of English and then suddenly, every now and then, from beginning to end, we are faced with, say, unexpected combinations or constructs of words, or a sentence without a verb as half a line or a paragraph. A number of incomplete sentences also appear together as a series of paragraphs. A few lines of poetry and music have occasionally been cited, but there is plenty of alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, reiteration as impressive of song and music.

Let us cite a few examples. The title of the first chapter "Paradise Pickles & Preserves" refers to 'paradise' (as prayer and worship to begin the narrative?) and offers a specimen of alliteration, a rhetorical device which is also an aspect of modern advertisements but frequently appears in literary works, prose or poetry. At times we encounter parallel words with similar sound in the

beginning, in the middle, and at the end. To go on, in the list of chapters, we come across,

Big Man the Laltain,

Small Man the Mombatti

Arundhati Roy had been trained as an architect once. The two lines as presented here, whether her own contribution or the publisher's/printer's, manifest an architect's talent, followed in the list of chapters as a whole. But it is particularly the connotational use in the chapter heading cited above that sounds interesting. Analogy is a significant aspect of everyday conversation, and in India we use mixed forms like 'cinedak,' for example. So, 'laltain' for 'lantern,' 'mombatti' for "candle," exemplify a radical metaphoric approach.

A writer interested in the kind of language use, we come across in the book is most unlikely to be concerned with politics or philosophy. But a non-ideological literary work may still have a certain appeal. It can be enjoyable like music and dancing. Roy's novel appears to be more interesting in this respect than in its material or technique. It implies welcome acceptance of everything in life, with whatever perspective, point of view or significance we may or may not assign it. But it goes beyond this into the folklorist use, so to say, of language for entertainment.

Because of the specific properties of language in the book, we feel every now and then while reading it that we are watching musicians in a huge gathering—Arundhati Roy, we know, has worked for films. After a few serious things, at times, we suddenly come across a theatrical performance, as if it were, with the humorous and the comic.

Thus, in the light of the above discussion, we cannot deny the impact of different forms of fine arts on Indian English fiction. The pictorial description in the works of Raja Rao, verbal interplay of fine arts in R.K. Narayan's fiction, ekphrastic effect of Balchandra Rajan's novels, reflection of fine arts in Arun Joshi's existential vision in his fictional world, art critic's approach of Mulk Raj Anand in his literary endeavours, Ravindra Nath Tagore's



word paintings and lyrical prose, Bhabani Bhattacharya's 'sensory' narrative technique and Arundhati Roy's 'folklorist musicalty' are those artistic pillars on which the mansion of fine arts in their respective works stands. Reading these writers is synonymous of being transported in the world where literature goes hand in hand with fine arts.

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## Addressing the Issue of Sexual Anarchy in *Paro*

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Like any other feminist author, Namita Gokhale challenges the authenticity and universality of the literature that "serves to invalidate female experience and to consolidate patriarchal power through the social, cultural and political disenfranchisement of women." (Howthorn 2000: 197) The new woman realizes that to men, she is merely a "sexual being....absolute sex, no less" (Beauvoir 1949: 17) and the Sita, Savitri myths so religiously perpetuated by the patriarchy are merely strategies to keep her away from the power structure. Simultaneously, the Freudian myth that regards woman as a mutilated male, as one who is constantly aware of her inferior sex- is also unacceptable to her. Though the most significant element that defines new age woman is the acceptance of her sexuality as something natural, the same sexual freedom turns into sexual anarchy when woman uses her body as a weapon to hook male, for in this process she inadvertently objectifies and degrades herself from the status of a human being. *Paro* by Namita Gokhle indulges in such extremity.

*Paro* by Gokhale created a furore and stirred entire contemporary literary scene when it was first published. The novel takes sexual liberation of women to the stage of sexual celebration and marks the beginning of an entirely new era in feminist discourse. Here is a woman who uses her sexuality as a bait to hook desired men in her life. She is not ashamed of her female anatomy, but her body is her greatest asset, sex is the greatest medium to rise above her class. *Paro* initiates a trend in novelists that was later followed by Shobha De and a whole new generation of writers who have acquired a celebrity status, latest in the series being E.L James.

Basically *Paro* depicts life style, dreams and ambitions of two women protagonists—Paro and Priya Sharma. Both of them want to rise above their class and hope to live life on their own terms, no matter whatever sacrifices they have to make in this process. Paro may be guilty of using her physical charm and youth as a bait to hook unsurprising male, but her charm never fails and the victims include a former king of a state, a middle aged minister, high profile businessman to a young educated son of a politician. As the number is large, so is the variety in their background and age. Gokhle has created woman who is bold, vivacious and far ahead of other characters depicted in contemporary novels. Unlike the common, ordinary females she rejects the notion that "contribute precisely to presenting her as a biologically determined, earthbound creature that no woman reader can really admire". (Moi 1979: 47) She is neither afraid nor ashamed of her sexuality, but rather takes pride in her natural physical instincts and celebrates her sexuality. On top of it, her conscience is not burdened by any moral or social qualms, so she remains fair and true to herself. It is against this background that one must read *Paro* of Namita Gokhale.

As one examines the motive for compulsive desire of the narrator to express herself, one is not sure whether the autobiography of the character called Priya Sharma is also not a covert biographical literary portrayal of a protest against patriarchal society. The real reason, however, has been slipped in as a typical feminine trait rarely witnessed in such measure among men, the green-eyed monster called jealousy and hurt. Priya felt hurt when her boss cum lover B. R. gets married to Paro and she could "never forgotten, nor forgiven, a hurt. This book, too, is a vindication" (121) as she herself admits, this is evident then, that though Priya is a "voyeur, a conniving observer who records what she sees, even if the view contradicts her dream visions" (Davis, Anisa TLS :1984) the book was not the outcome of any creative instinct but jealousy and thwarted biological needs.



Paro is the heroine of the novel without a matching hero. The timid, weaklings called males are, in fact, minor characters who fall prey in a sort of succession to the domineering sexual charm and cajoling of Paro. What matters most for Paro is zest for life and living, wherein the desirability or otherwise of the means do not matter in the least. The end alone does, because that is the substance of life. Be it life or death, Paro succeeds in exercising so much charm that her charm itself gets converted into a kind of glue or an urge for collective living and socialization. "Her need to live was so total, greedy and heedless, that she would doubtless have exhausted anyone in the sexual fray." (64) Whatever it may mean to a lay person indulgence in the act is a means to overcome loneliness. For Paro there is no sanctity attached to marriage and even after divorce she is not averse to having sex with her ex-husband as and when she finds that sex could help her achieve her goal—overcoming loneliness. Like any other modern woman she does not hide herself under veil, but what are most amazing about her are her brazenness and the intense desire to be noticed which she does sometimes by painting her fingernails in gold and red stripes or by flaunting the most astoundingly low necklines, and consequently all eyes would "stand riveted to that careless display of mammary volume. ....she needed to display the remnants of her sexuality amidst the obese wreck of her body. (73)

Let's have a look at the male characters in the novel. A rich, pompous, self-opinionated and oversexed businessman named B.R. furnishes the most appropriate backdrop for Avinendra alias Lenin who finds an individual's independence totally unacceptable. He must live off someone else and if for support in life he cannot find anyone than a woman could also fulfill the role of a guardian. The nickname Lenin, in fact, reveals more about the man than his other congenital behaviour. Like many other intellectuals of his generation he too is capable of broaching a topic and sustaining its tenor for a while only to forget that his ideology does not confirm his

action. Raja Birendra Singh of the erstwhile state Bhandpur is also symbolic of his being a *bhand*/buffoon or a man of no substance. If he continues to be called Raja of a State that exists merely in name it is largely because the writer must underscore his worthlessness. Loukas Leorors, supposedly a lonely stalker of reality, is a filmmaker by profession but is a practising homosexual by option. The former an ex-husband and the latter—soon going to don the mantle of one 'plunges headlong into his first ever matrimonial adventure,' (148) join hands to celebrate the marriage to Paro with rare gusto. Paro the forever unpredictable, daring and mad must make an exit from the world too in the same dignified, indulgent manner as she once strode it down during her lifetime.

In terms of story, it is extraordinarily simple. The entire plot revolves round two women characters—Paro and Priya. The social background of both has nothing in common. Paro is upper middle class—the only child of middle-aged parents from army background who got constantly transferred. "I was a bother in their well-ordered lives." (30) Therefore, on her own admission "I spent my whole life in the hills." (30) She confesses that it is here in some hill school she got initiated into sex by her art master. She tells with tears oozing out of her eyes, "He raped me in a grove of pine-trees. He sodomized me in the woods behind the chapel." (30) Since it is difficult for her to distinguish between fact and fiction, she soon contradicts herself. "I don't know what's happening but I sort of like it...I liked it one hell of a lot" (31). She chuckles as she describes graphically her first sexual encounter. She soon has no tears to even suggest that it was a painful/humiliating experience. Indeed, at one point in time she is grateful that her father-in-law (B.R.'s father) did not go into her background or else there would have been no marriage for her to celebrate. Despite that there is not a single indication that she is a misfit in this upper-class family. Even on the day of her marriage party, her mannerism and her attitude depict her self-confidence and poise. As Priya observes:



She was wearing a silver tissue sari and was positively glittering with diamonds. Rai Bahadur rushed to receive them...Hi Daddyji' she said throatily, planting a kiss on Rai Bahadur's forehead—she had to bend over slightly to reach him. Her audacity and self-confidence took my breath away. (10)

She represents new woman who is confident of herself and does not carry any traces of self-conscious, nervous bride of past. Then comparing her situation with that of Paro's, she (Priya) says:

This was not how brides behaved in my world. All the brides I have encountered kept their heads—which were so perilously downcast as to appear automatically endangered—well covered with their sari pallaus. But she stood proud and strait, and led the way, with B.R. and her parents trailing behind her. (10)

If this constitutes the beginnings of Paro's tale, Priya's background furnishes a colorless counterfoil. One could easily prepare her profile—the only working member in a family of three where in the overbearing mother dotes on her son because he is to become a doctor and the daughter is condemned to lead a spinster's life since no dowry is possible to be given in the likelihood of anyone trying to offer her a chance of married life. Family circumstances had more or less forced her to take up a secretarial course rather than complete college. As the priority of the family was to educate the male child, all their family savings were spent on her brother who was studying in a medical college. She grumbles that as it was difficult for the family to afford any dowry, her mother "forbade a bleak spinsterhood" (8) for her. She has nothing to fall back upon — neither a staid, supporting family nor a future of any grandeur. She barely has an existence; therefore, her love life — if any, must look like a dream come true.

There are no other women in the novel of any consequence except when they must play a given role either of a friend, colleague, mother or a social acquaintance. For example, at the time of Paro's marriage her parents gave the appearance of being, "an average

member of the upper middle class" (10) with polite vacant smiles fixed uneasily to their faces. They gave the impression of being too "mundane and ordinary to have bred so exotic a creature as the shimmering bride before them. (10)

The so-called 'vacant smiles' that they wore on their faces is, in fact, the direct consequence of class differential. Not only because they probably didn't know anyone around but also because they found themselves to be total misfits in the class, which they had come to join. Contrast the circumstances of the marriage of Priya. The news that there exists a possibility of marriage for Priya makes her mother "incoherent with excitement" (20) The record of the marriage shows that it was a typical middle class wedding, "uneventful even a little boring." (20) For honeymoon whereas Paro goes to Europe but Priya must feel contented with a trip of Nainital. In contrast to B.R. who needed no help from his wife in his career or business, Priya decided to groom her husband patiently until her "ministrations bore dividends." (24) The way middle class persons go up was the only way open to Priya and her husband, which they adopted. The path for upward mobility lay through careful short-listing of the useful people and their assiduous and intensive program of cultivation. The strategy to be adopted in all such cases has to be a joint one i.e., in which both husband and wife move along purposefully. For the upper class, there is hardly anywhere to go. Therefore, for them life is sedate, eventless and somewhat boring, which requires occasional flings at discovering meaning in bouts of passionless sex. The bumpy life of the middle class can be a challenge for survival, if not recognition, self or power. Both these aspects of life can be witnessed in the present literary work. Sex is employed by B.R. as an escape from boredom, routine and ennui as it were. The compulsiveness of sexual engagements must be seen against the background of both status and wealth he already possesses. Priya is perceptive enough to observe that:



Sex had become, to him more than a sport, it was a duty, a vocation, a calling. I sensed that it was with sex alone that he reached out to the world, and it was with sex that he shut our thought, emotion and feeling. Women could perhaps sense this immense sexual generosity, and came to him for succour and healing. And he allowed himself to be used as a lamp-post, or as a letter-box for women to send messages to their husbands through. (40)

For Suresh (Priya's husband) however, sex is only a means to express intimacy, togetherness and familial relations. The contrast explains an ideological dimension—meaning or the purpose of sex to the differing class groups. One need not be a Marxist to realize that life holds out differing possibilities for different classes. The same act or the same feeling differs according to the class or age group one happens to belong to. These in turn acquire altogether new perceptions and differing vocabulary for their appropriate description. If sex differs according to class groups it also varies according to the age group. Except perhaps in the Holy Books the context is never independent of either class or the age group. Each literary creation gets defined for its quality by the deftness of language its author employs and the appropriateness and suitability with which its words match feelings. On this count Gokhale's literary achievement is unquestionably outstanding.

Let us sample some of the love scenes that the author has presented for us to savour and try to discover in them whether or not class differential has left any imprint. One should remember that a woman has penned these scenes that are being described and then consider gender competence vis-à-vis sex and sexuality. It would make an interesting study if similar grace and the graphics produced were to be adjudged for their communicability. I have my doubts whether one could discover any or much of a difference in this regard. Similarly, I find that except in the details of the scene the class plays a very minor role, if any. Here is the real scene or the background

for the virgin encounter between Priya and B. R. The lady-love fed on Dauphne du Maurier's Rebecca approaches "spellbound by the opulence and the quietude. The azure carpeting, the dazzling white of the walls, the Ajanta fresco painted on the drawing-room wall"(5) has the additional décor of a convoluted Henry Moore impacted sculpture by Haaden standing majestically in a corner making its phallic presence felt. Having been asked if she liked classical Western composition the lady, soon to be initiated into her first experience, found her hair stroked very gently and the undoing of her plait while being caressed all the time softly with his long, slim and very white fingers. Against the backdrop of the "balcony (where) the moonlight shone on a ghost- like jungle of cacti, crotons, bougainvillea, and all kinds of plants" that she did not recognize, she got taken. "Latter he read me some poetry, which I did not understand".(5) There is not even the slightest indication that she loved the man , she had her first experience with, neither she felt remorse or guilt for having sex without love- so fornication- the greatest sin was not even noticed. Rather her feeling was of gratitude to B.R.

As against this description, we find her first experience with her husband— a virgin to boot, when she feels grateful that he didn't even notice her loss. Every time she meets B.R. she responds with the same naiveté and grateful pleasure that her class betrays in the presence of her superior. Interestingly, B.R. does not universally and uniformly exhibit his class in these encounters. For instance, when he runs into his divorced wife Paro at the Taj he appears both tactless and boorish. It is in the Taj and not in some place in the forest that her love-stricken former son-like lover, Lenin, discovers her. He is plainly aghast at the scene, He describes the action with tears streaming down his eyes as he screamed that Paro "sat up, all mussed up and disheveled, and she hadn't taken off her clothes. He was in his shirt, and he hadn't even taken off his trousers."(158) By no social



norm could this description join the ranks of the activities associated with that of any cultivated class, or poetic description, which Priya described in her encounter with the same man.

Seen in totality, sex observes no distinctions of class, age, time or place. It is the context and the feelings that really count. One might as well feel a sense of repulsion when one considers that one is a witness to a sex act being performed so clumsily by a middle-aged former couple who are apparently in such a frightful hurry that they even forget all about their own clothes they are wearing and fail to close the door that lies ajar. One must also note that his Australian child-bride accompanies this performing ex-husband of hers and *Paro* has yet another of her earlier husbands and soon-to be husband drinking in the next room.

The present work is purportedly a dream of passion. That does not mean that in reality things shouldn't look rational. The narrator describes scene after scene in a breathless haste. There is not a moment for one to stop and ponder. However, having finished reading the novel one must try to find answers to a few questions that must necessarily arise. What does the novel try to communicate? Is it meant to portray a liberated lot? Is this all about women's lib? Does this suggest that women stand empowered through their sex appeal/manipulation? Is the sex-act the totality of man-woman relationship whose achievement is coitus? In brief, what message, if any, is Namita Gokhale trying to give? Whether she uses B.R. as her mouthpiece "Men are very insecure creatures ...They need a lot of love. And they need beautiful women ...Unfortunately beautiful women are seldom designated to provide love." (38) Does it mean that through *Paro*, Gokhle is commenting on whole female sex? The interesting part of the whole tale is that no character be it male or female stands out as bold, authoritative or commanding. The narrator herself is a weakling who must go back to her husband once she finds that she

is unacceptable either to her brother's family or to her middle-aged lover? What kind of freedom has she attained by leaving her home? She soon realizes that freedom by itself is a dream therefore she stoops down to beg her husband to accept her back. Poor man! He too does not seem to have much of an alternative. "If this is how you feel, perhaps we can give it a try again." (151) This is the cool, calculated reply of a lawyer husband, whose dreams she had once tried to help fructify.

If Priya is not liberated, who is? Is Paro liberated? She is even more dependent on male company than any one else. She is prepared to go along with anyone so long as he is willing to give her company. Her liaison with one man after another is forever incomplete. If her first husband is a compulsive womanizer, the other two male companions are more feminine than male. The novel is described as being about "passion, boredom, vanity and jealousy." (60) "The narrator in the end hazards a guess about its message, which is, "liberation." (144) Indeed, this guess could as well have been anyone else's as well. Somehow this does not appear to be a reality. B.R.'s reaction is spontaneous:

Women's liberation?.... "My author friend, can you in your book liberate me from the onerous responsibility of making love to every attractive or unattractive woman who uses me like a dildo to make her husband jealous? Can you liberate me from the financial burdens of alimony? Can you free me from the jealous possessiveness of the woman I love? (144)

This sudden outburst is representative of the confusion this term "liberation" signifies. Despite all this, women in general have been the constant victim of mental torture and oppression in the novel. Their observations that women are oppressed in the male dominated society make them strive towards love, freedom and their own identity. They opt for a liberated life, refusing to accept the myths created and nourished by patriarchy. In the novel, these women characters smoke, drink and indulge in extra-marital relations. The cases of Paro and Priya clearly



show that society by victimizing women becomes a victim itself when women choose to go against its tide.

*Paro* does not stride across the stage of life either, as she appears to suggest. In fact, she being a weakling continues to stoop to conquer each time she starts suffering from want or privations. The entire novel is about indecisiveness, of uncertain individuals, hopelessly out of sync with reality and those who are certainly not sure of their own mind. In one way the novel succeeds in achieving the impossible. It successfully mirrors life, which forever remains meaningless and unsure about leaving messages. Life is what one makes of it. Similarly, literature is what we want it to be because in itself it is neither ethical nor moral. There is a thin dividing line between sexual liberation and sexual celebration and *Paro* voluntarily crosses this mark and strides towards the latter all set to shake the society by this revolutionary, frivolous, anarchic sexual celebration.

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## When Poetry Becomes Prayer: A Study of the Works of Pashupati Jha

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According to W. H. Auden, to pray is to pay attention to something or someone other than oneself. Whenever a man so concentrates his attention---on a landscape, a subject, a poem, a geometrical problem, an idol or the True God---that he completely forgets his own ego and desires, he is praying. Likewise, when a poet meditates on a subject and brings out the fleeting sense of beauty in his art of living, his poetry becomes prayer. One encounters enumerable similar instances in the poems of Pashupati Jha.

Of the many recent Indian English poets, Pashupati Jha is a poet with the most distinct voice. Though a late bloomer, Jha with his three poetry collections namely, *Cross and Creation* (2003), *Mother and Other Poems* (2005) and *All in One* (2011), has placed himself in the category of extremely accomplished poets of today. The poetry of Jha shares, on the one hand, moral attitudes and contemporary social reality that are typical of recent Indian English poets and, on the other, it bears the stamp of serious/intellectual poetry that speaks of the depth of perception and vividness of observation with which he looks at life and beyond. The poems of Jha basically deal with love, loneliness, longing, anguish, and pain that spring from his inner experiences. On the surface level, these poems reflect secular interests and carry universal appeal, but deep down they maintain a sacred dimension too.

The source of poetic inspiration in Jha is his mother. The mother-figure appears nearly in ten of his poems. Almost all these poems carry an archetypal image of a simple woman and mother who rejoices at her children's



future attainments, their health and happiness. Mother for the poet is a symbol of his aesthetic self; and also it is the poet's own sense of isolation which finds its complete expression through these mother-poems.

The poem 'Mother' embodies the spirit of motherhood in its various manifestations. Till line 49, the poem is a strong emotional account of a grieving son's search for his lost mother. The poet's mother died in early 1999. This personal loss seems to be irreparable to the poet, therefore, the appeal for connectedness and dependence. The poet says: Mother, you were/therefore we are,/and would continue to be/ till eternity. (*Mother and Other Poems*, 'Mother', p. 13)

The subjective intensity in the poem brings out its emphasis on the power of love. The mother image in Jha emerges in poem after poem and it becomes so strong and elemental, as if similar to that of divinity:

O the goddess, who is present  
as mother in all creatures

O goddess, who is present  
as compassion in all creatures

O the goddess, who is present  
as knowledge in all creatures

O the goddess, who is present  
as strength in all creatures

O the goddess, who is present  
as wealth in all the creatures

O the goddess, who is  
everything to one and all

O you eternal, omniscient, omnipresent  
and omnipotent! No death can make you die.

I bow to you and sing your praise. (*Ibid.*)

The poem is about the transcendence of the bereaved soul. The poet turns inward and in the process of in-seeing, his search gets connected to universal forces of life and order. Through this meditative exploration, a simple act of procreation is connected with creation. His loss becomes a gain. It is compensated by reposing faith

in the Cosmic Mother. Thus his individual experience becomes universal event. It is in this context that Dr Rahman points out that Pashupati Jha expresses and links "both the versions of his truth: the temporal and the transcendental" (71). The soul is healed and attains its peace of mind through prayer. The poet's evolving to the mother force can be viewed in the light of Sri Aurobindo's concept of the Divine Mother:

The one whom we adore as the Mother is the divine CONSCIOUS FORCE that dominates all existence, one and yet so many-sided that to follow her movement is impossible even for the quickest mind and for the freest and most vast intelligence. The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Supreme and far above all she creates. (25:19)

She is that is the body, but in her whole consciousness she is also identified with all the other aspects of the DIVINE. (25:49-50)

Thus in Jha, Mother is the consciousness and force of the Divine. The personal loss for the poet becomes a medium for him to go beyond the self to connect, feel, and sense the 'Other'. This transformation makes the poem beautiful, even spiritual. Moreover, the structure of the poem is that of a prayer. The vocative relation and repetition in the lines display the traits of prayer. Also, the focus-words invoke the same attitude of reverence and relaxation response that prayer awakens in a person.

Apart from the mother image, one also comes across the Father figure in Jha's poetry. In the poem 'All in One', the poet invokes the Divine Father with an uneasy sense of incompleteness:

I am jealous of you, Father  
for you are  
all in one  
and I am not  
even fully one

...  
Your ideal roles are many  
you are all in one.  
and one in all.



But why I,  
created in your own image  
fail to become fully one?

(*All in One* pp. 38-39)

The answer to the question "why I . . . fail to become fully one?" lies in the expression "I am not even fully one." There is a discordance of the body and soul as he is only a Xerox copy of the original:

Although  
conceived in His own image,  
I am not the Original  
but His Xerox copy  
with blotches left  
here and there.

(*Mother and Other Poems*, 'Xerox Copy', p.63)

The poem echoes the Biblical Psalm. It well presents the different forms of the Lord: Jesus, Krishna and Ram. Some of the poems of Jha carry a perfect tone of prayer. For instance, the poem 'Jesus':

Your picture, stuck to a wooden plank  
with drooping neck and sad eyes,  
haunts me to no end....

O Jesus, when unearned wounds  
are daily inflicted on me,  
I automatically look to you;  
do parts of past always continue? (*Cross and Creation*,  
p. 11)

In the preface to the poetry collection *All in One*, Jha says: "God is not only the first poet but also the greatest one, who originally conceived and created this vast universe with billions of beautiful things of different shape, size, colour and quality, placed harmoniously with the cosmic rhythm...He remains the only hope for the people like me when all other hopes have vanished."

According to Blake, poetry is a writer's prayer. Jha in many of his poems prays to the Divine to help him come closer to Him. The poet is aware of the worldly vices that corrupt the soul. As he says:

...what is outside  
is inside too—  
all shine without substance.

.....  
the canker visible outside  
is inside too, it can  
not be localized  
but found everywhere

almost in everyone. (*All in One*, p. 41-42)

In 'Man and man' the poet builds up a contrast between 'ego' and 'love': The poet believes that through love God can be attained. He states the nature of love thus:

Love may begin with an individual  
mother, father, brother, sister  
beloved, wife

but it soon expands to children  
and family, society, province...the world

love that limits is not love. (*All in One*, p. 36)

The body is always entrapped in the worldly quagmire and "remains immune to the enchanting silence/always tapping at our souls/for entry" (*All in One*, p. 22) Conscious of this fact, the poet in his prayer wishes to tame the tiger and encourages the lamb in him so that he can come closer to God:

I tame the tiger within  
to encourage the lamb in me,  
physical force is helpless finally  
before the sweeping power of spirit.  
Though the cunning fox may be many  
the sweet song of the nightingale  
is bound to quell the ravenous noise  
of brutes and beasts.

(*All in One* p. 36)

...The throne of God is not made of gold  
but lotus elevated above the muddy water  
of life. It is not the imperial eagle  
but the meek lamb that is close  
to the bosom of the Christ.



We study but do not understand  
the essence, the power of silence.  
It is only on the dead and the dried  
skin of the tiger that sages meditate  
to win the wisdom of life  
for life, and beyond.

(*All in One*, p. 24)

Further, the poet says, 'everything is body now/obese,  
ugly, and arrogant/covered with paint and perfume/to  
hide the stench within.' (*All in One*, p.29). He, moreover,  
does not want a 'second fall':

I do not want to wallow in mires  
beneath the earth  
is invisible darkness  
of bottomless black pit  
full of untamed desires.

(*All in One*, p. 57)

He says rather: I, by the grace of God,/ would like  
to become/a dense tree with endless/flowers and fruits/  
in my next birth./ (*All in One 'Options'*, p. 29). The  
poem 'A Small Me' is a conversation between the body  
and the soul where the soul emerges victorious:

My garden is full  
of small flowers  
and my sky  
glitters with tiny stars;  
my words too are simple  
as my actions,  
silent and satisfying—  
like the milk-fed smile  
on a baby's face;  
I would never be  
barren of His grace.

(*Mother and Other Poems*, p. 57)

The poet is hopeful, due to a flickering flame of hope  
inside him, which is stubborn and unyielding to the  
outside storm. He is sure for a union with Him: He will  
find someday for me, too;/he will fix sometime for me,  
true. (*Cross and Creation*, p. 22) One also comes across

poems with mystical undertones in Jha. The poem 'Undying Faith' is about revelation that the speaker experiences. The poem is a mystical lyric with visionary power. The soul passes through a spiritual illumination in his prayer:

Although you came to bless me  
your brightness baffled me so much  
that my words of prayer got struck in my throat;  
I could only look at you with yearning eyes  
the language of which was a little vague  
and you turned back to another admirer.

People say, it happens sometimes  
that when you need to speak most, your  
tongue gets parched and glued to your mouth  
and you look helpless waiting for another chance  
that may never come to your way again.

I looked at the sky as my final solace  
those eternally twinkling stars spurred  
my dying urge to keep on going—

May be for days, years, or births  
to meet and confront you  
...and to pray to the end to melt your heart  
... faith can move the mountains—they say.  
(All in One, p.16 )

Here, the speaker cannot withstand the cosmic luminosity; he shudders and his words of prayer get stuck as if there were some lump in his throat. 'Sky as my final solace' indicates Jha's realization of the spiritual world. Yet, in another poem the soul gleans the flash of a 'shape', whose 'soft touch flickers.'

The poem 'Reviving Touch' captures the transformation of the speaker who is no longer a man of flesh and bone. He is transformed into God's happy tool, an illumined soul:

Like a lone camel  
on a long, desert path



stretching to the horizon  
with never an end in sight,  
I was ever hunting for  
an elusive oasis where  
I could hardly hope to reach.

My body burnt by scorching sun,  
my limbs tired, dehydrated  
and dying for a drop of water,  
I was fated to drag onward  
furrowing the molten sand.

Then you touched me with a smile-  
and, after a long, long while,  
there was an untimely rain,  
and I was all poetry again.

(*Cross and Creation*, p. 14)

The speaker is lighted with the rapture and joy of the unknown and the supreme. In Jha, one finds a number of poems on poetic craft. The poet realizes the power of words that constitute meaning. For the poet, the use of words— the songs, the verbal explorations, remains the only way to approach the meaning. 'Meaning' in Jha could be interpreted as the undefinable, or the unconceivable, or a mystery that is beyond the limits of creation, or God. His poems on poetry and creative process reflect the poet's journey to the light of God. In the poem 'The Poetic Self' the poet defines the poetic self thus:

I am like the weeping sky,  
melting my body  
to sprout the world  
with green life;  
and that too  
without flooding the river.  
Feel my pulse,  
if you want to believe me,  
watch my words,  
if you want to re-live me.

(*Mother and Other Poems*, p. 16)

The poetic self is an unhappy being whose heart is torn by secret sufferings but his sorrowful songs enfold

a music that soothes the senses. The poet's craving for the 'right word' / 'suitable word' runs down from poem to poem. In the poem 'Waiting for the Lotus' the poet states the realization that the very nature of poetic form imposes restriction upon expression. He speaks about the difficulty that he faces in coining the apt/ focused words:

It is not easy at all  
to write the unwritten  
and weave a poem.  
I am not a child  
to weep out my heart;  
I would wait for the day  
when the lotus rises—  
if it rises at all—  
from my murky waters.

(Mother and Other Poems, 'Waiting for the Lotus', p.24)

Instead of babbling out like a child the poet would wait and meditate for the right expression. Here, 'child' can also be interpreted as 'innocence' which is lost. The expression, 'wait for the day when the lotus rises' is indicative of the poetic self's waiting for sublimation. In the poem 'The Only Option' one finds the poetic self waiting for words: I then only wait for words/to create afresh my very own world,/free from dirt, free from hurt./ (Mother and Other Poems, 'The Only Option', p. 53). Further, in the poem 'The Achievement' the poetic self considers the 'wealth of words'/carved on pure white' (Mother and Other Poems, p. 56) as his treasure trove 'in the last moment' of his life.

Again, in the poem 'All the Difference' the speaker searches for meaning/truth in his prayers. He finds: "words are scattered/without sequences" and thus "hardly/make any sense", but he does not give up. The quest for words ever remains: I search for words/it is time to pray.(Mother and Other Poems, p. 26). The search for the suitable words is also found in the poem 'Transformation':

Every time  
you beat me



with your bitter words  
I withdraw to the corner table  
to pick my pen  
and search for the suitable words.  
(*Mother and Other Poems*, p. 35)

The poet's undivided attention to words, poem after poem, draws the readers towards mystery, takes us out of time, and puts us in the presence of the eternal:

Then, in a flash,  
we are transported into another world,  
transformed into a different creature  
than a nagging woman  
or a short-tempered man;  
every other thing recedes into oblivion,  
even for a few moments  
we listen to a different music  
altogether,

And then if we have  
A heart that lives a little,  
poetry makes a lot to happen.  
(*Cross and Creation*, p. 10)

The transporting of the self from the relative field to the realm of cosmic consciousness is actually a state of pure transcendence. It is in this state that the meditative soul experiences blissfulness. In this state of cosmic realization, the soul can also understand the sound of silence:

The sound of silence  
the language without words  
is difficult to listen  
only one with a sensitive soul  
like an antenna open  
to the wide sky  
can capture it  
and understand.  
(*All in One*, p. 21)

The poet calls this moment as a rare moment of illumination:

... That's the way it happens  
in one moment alone

when the spark is ignited  
and thought and emotion  
transfused, ooze out of pen  
impatient to be printed.

But till that rare moment comes  
the blank space silently waits  
for words to appear.

(*Cross and Creation*, p. 12)

The quest for word(s) in Jha is not for an ordinary/literal word but for the Absolute word, the *Sabad Brahman* which is a communion of *Sabada* and *Artha*, Sound and Meaning. The concept of the word is that God created the universe as sound and that all things have sound. *Sabada* precedes creation, and is eternal, indivisible, creative and imperceptible in its subtle form. "The word was God". It is *Vak*=*Vox*=Word. 'Vak' is voice and the word in Latin is 'Vox'. Para Vak is the cosmic ideation. Vak manifests Herself in everyman. Also, 'Vak' is the Universal Mother. The poet's yearning for the suitable word/ Para Vak emanates from his cosmic consciousness. Moreover, the motif in Jha: 'Word' and 'Mother', merge in the cosmological truth— 'Vak' as the Universal Mother. In Jha the idea of cosmic ideation is brought out thus:

After scaling the Himalayan heights  
he puts his foot deep down there  
in the mounds of cold snow  
to see the world from majestic top  
and create his keen, crafted words.

Words that may enclose  
the ancient music of dance  
and drum beats of Shiva  
the expanse of the sky  
the rhythm of the river  
the serenity of the lake  
the energy of the wind  
the purity of the snow  
dazzling multi-coloured  
in the shinning sun,  
a world not narrowed by space



of close hearts, class and creed.

There, he would weave  
an enchanting song, reverberating  
with the elements of the earth  
as natural as Nature itself  
with peace and harmony all around.  
(*All in One*, p. 20)

To conclude, most of the poems of Jha are dramatic monologues where the speaker speaks / talks to some unseen/ unknown power. The speaker moves from the external to the internal, and at its dramatic peak takes off to the spiritual plane, to the point of cosmic realization, to true consciousness which is a state of freedom from all kinds of conflicts. It is at this mysterious threshold that the idea of poetry as prayer takes hold. Jha in his poems does not negate the relative field and attempts to reach the Supreme Reality through art, through senses, and through images. The noted American poet, W.S. Merwin's opinion on poetry and prayer is quite befitting in the context of Jha when he says: "Prayer is usually construed as making a connection. I don't think that connection has to be made; it's already there. Poetry usually has to do with recognizing that connection; widen the playing field a bit." (2011:29)

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## Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Music for Mohini*: An Ardent Plea for a Synthesis of Values

Sunil Kumar Jha\*

Bhattacharya's second novel, *Music for Mohini* (1952) is a novel which deals with the tensions and conflicts of Indian society at a moment of transition, of search for a true way of life. The forces of the past as well as the present strike a kind of harmony between them, which is essential for the survival and growth of India. The main story of the novel does indeed relate to Mohini and Jayadev, perhaps to Mohini alone, her sudden leap into maturity after her marriage with Jayadev, her tentative initiation into the faith of the Big House of Behula, her ordeals thereafter, her revolts against conservatism, her unwilling surrender to tradition because of her supposed barrenness, and her eventual redemption.

In this novel we find the forces of progress in an open clash with reaction and naturally show a crisis of outlook that leads to a crisis of emotion. This novel is out and out an ardent plea for a synthesis of values. With all drawbacks, the past should not be rejected wholesale as something utterly irrelevant or useless, and, likewise, with all its glamour and tempting offers, the present has not to be accepted wholesale, as and what it is. It is in a profound union of today with yesterday, of village life with city life, of the East with the West, of thought with action of contemplation with commitment, of asceticism with aestheticism, and on the cusp of which the regeneration of Indian society lies. The formation of a new society for free India is feasible only through a reorientation of values. And it is this kind of transformation that can lend real substance and meaning to social awakening, freedom and progress.

The novel *Music for Mohini* may broadly be divided into two parts, the first part keeping us around Calcutta and dealing with Mohini, her father and her grandmother, while the second part taking us to the village of Behula and presenting to us such personages as Jayadev, his mother, and once again Mohini, put this time as Jayadev's wife. These two parts of the novel, we may say, are joined together by Mohini's journey from Calcutta to Behula, whether by train, bullock cart, or palanquin. One of Bhattacharya's major concerns in this novel is the need for a change in social outlook and reorientation of social value in India. As a necessary corollary to his implied plea for change he presents to the reader a picture of society today and invites attention to many beliefs and practices which have become strongly entrenched. Among the many evils that are mentioned particularly in the novel are those of the early marriage of girls, the miserable condition of widows in our society, the affluent but old and elderly men marrying or trying to marry young girls of poor families and the stranglehold of superstitions and false ideas on the Indian rural society.

The main story of the novel does indeed relate to Mohini and Jayadev, perhaps to Mohini alone, to her adolescence, her sudden leap into maturity after her marriage with Jayadev, her tentative initiation into the faith of the big house of Behula, her ordeals thereafter, her revolt against conservatism, her unwilling surrender to tradition because of her supposed barrenness, and her eventual redemption. This thread of the story, we see, and her eventual redemption. This thread of the story, we see, is a sharp edge through the story relating to Sudha and Harindra. And yet, the story element in music for Mohini cannot be said to be strong for the reason that the ideological content or orientation of the novel, in a way, supersedes or overshadows its story elements, perhaps, that is why Dorothy B. Shimer calls *Music for Mohini* Bhattacharya's 'most light-hearted novel'. Nevertheless, it is the presence of humour and the well-



devised alternation between despair and hope, depression and exultation, cruelty and tenderness that do not allow our interest in the novel to flag. There is a lot of sentimentality in the novel, which does impair its artistic effect. The description of Mohini's inspection for the purpose of marriage is rather exaggerated; even the description of her marriage is very elaborate. The manner in which Bhabani Bhattacharya describes Mohini's departure from her home after her marriage is, no doubt, realistic, but the scene, nevertheless, is a little sloppy and the ending of the novel, irrespective of its being evocative of tender emotions, is rather unimpressive. Moreover, Jayadev's character, in spite of all his scholarship, betrays a glaring kind of deficiency. His mistake is "to assume that love on the spiritual plane and love on the physical plane can be kept apart. It takes time for him to learn that such ambivalence is not possible.....Jayadev's education is complete only when he learns.....that life cannot be postponed, even when one is engaged in the pursuit of ideals" (MfM.9).

One of the major concerns of Bhattacharya in this novel is the need for a change of social outlook and reorientation of social values in India. As a necessary corollary to his implied plea for change he presents to the reader a picture of society that has become strongly entrenched. Among the many evils that are mentioned particularly in our society, the affluent but old or elderly men marrying or trying to marry young girls of poor families and the stranglehold of superstitions and false beliefs on the Indian rural society.

Bhattacharya's second novel, *Music for Mohini* (1952), is a forward-looking novel in which the author dwells on certain sociological aspects of Indian life and suggests the direction in which we have to move if we are to fully benefit by our political freedom. It is a novel which deals with the tension, of search for a true way of life. India is now a free country, and it has to move ahead in all directions; social, economic, political and cultural—

--with hope and courage and determination to attain self-reliance and an identity of its own. There is not much of factual history in *Music for Mohini* and in yet this book Bhattacharya presents a brief glimpse of the history of Bengal and makes a reference to man's landing on the moon to drive home the point that the tussle between the traditional values and the new compulsions of our society has to be suitably resolved in the best interest of our society and country. It is then quite appropriate to find that India has been presented as a sociological battleground in which the older generation clings to traditional grounds while the intellectuals are struggling to throw away charms and bangles to open themselves and their country to western ideas. The characters and the incidents we come across in *Music for Mohini* represents the forces of the past as well as of the present, the point to the utter desirability of striking a kind of harmony between them, which is essential for the survival and growth of India. Mohini and Jayadev are two main characters in the novel, but the other characters who do also play their roles in this book are Mohini's father, her grandmother, Jayadev's mother, Harindra and Sudha. Mohini is introduced to us as a girl of seventeen, who lives with her father, grandmother and younger brother at a place near Calcutta. She loves the warmth, the colour of life and cannot bear the images of decay. With her well-shaped body, large, beautiful eyes and highly attractive face she does have a secret dream to be a cinema star. She is indeed a picture of beauty that is beyond mere prettiness. Gifted with a sweet voice, she sings for All India Radio; her songs have been duly recorded, and she has made 'a name for herself in the world of music'. She has her own dream world of romance; she looks upon as the light, the savour of life, and she imagines herself to be in love with a number of young men.

Mohini's marriage with Jayadev of the Big House of Behula village is an event of great significance. Although



Mohini is city-bred and is not used to the way of village life, she decides to reorient her ideas and her outlook as the mistress of the Big House in order to be able to lend support to her husband and to maintain the prestige of the House. However, very often she feels lonely, for she finds her husband, a very serious minded person, engaged almost all the time in his studies. And much though Mohini resolves not to get disturbed by 'discomfort and desolation', at times she revolts against a very fact of the Big House living always in 'the shadow of the family tree'. She is pained on account of the restrictions and prohibitions her mother-in-law enforces in the House; she is tossed by an inner struggle, getting depressed and angry by turns, and longs for love and love alone. Jayadev's remoteness, his seeming indifference to her is, no doubt, sickening, but one day when he reveals himself to her, wanting her to be his Maitreyi, not in the intellectual field but on the more dynamic path of action, her apprehensions melt away, and she is swept straight on to maturity. She shines, thereafter, in the radiance of faith; a truer understanding, a new, deeper relation grows between her and her husband, and she decides to be his true partner in feeling in faith, and in dream. Mohini's character is a peculiar blend of submission and revolt, humility and defiance. Much against the established practice of the Big House she escapes to the adjoining garden, climbs up trees and without any of the plumage of the rich, mixes with the women, girls and children of the village, educates them, and tells them about both science and legends, the present and the past. The new mistress of the Big House of Behula is indeed the pride and glory of the whole village.

It is indeed unfortunate and perhaps also ironic that Mohini is supposed to be a barren creature only two years after her marriage and that Jayadev's longevity is sought to be linked up with the birth of a son. And yet, it is quite understandable that she resolutely resists her mother-in-law's suggestions to undergo austerities for a

child. Mohini is restless in body and spirit, and though she wields under pressure, she is shocked to see that her mother-in law has reduced or tried to reduce her to a pet, a habit, a physical convenience, a moral obligation. However, the situation changes abruptly when Mohini is found to be carrying a child. Her mother-in-law's affection for her wells up once again, and though Mohini's painful memories still haunt her, life is all joy, all 'music' for her. Jaydev, the action of noble ancestors', is the master of the Big House of Behula. Although he is only twenty-five, he is a scholar, a thinker, a writer of distinction, and he writes specifically on the culture pattern of East and West. He is a silent, solitary man, given a long spell of reading and thinking, and though he has married Mohini in sheer deference to his mother's wishes, he is chiefly a projection of his scholarly ancestors, a continuation of their lives. He is virtually a recluse; during his boyhood days he kept on reading almost incessantly, and even during his University days his life was 'an extension of his boyhood and a strengthening of his single-minded aim. Jaydev has a definite and settled social philosophy of his own. It was his dream to re-orientate the value and patterns of Hindu life. And though he is not quite happy about his marriage, still, as he looks at and thinks of Mohini, somehow or other, she reminds him of Gargi and Maitreyi, the two great women of ancient: merchants. It is true that as he tries to educate Mohini, he gets more and more inclined toward her, and yet he does not want to get lost in his small, private world, for he has dedicated himself to the task of social reconstruction at a great moment of history when India, proud with the freedom of which he had often dreamed, must reorient her national life on a new social basis. He believes that political freedom is worth little without social upliftment, that a hungry man cannot really be free in spirit, and that what is really needed is a battle for economic freedom. He comes out of his shrine of contemplation, his sanctuary of rosy imagination and gives



a lead to the young men of Behula in their fight against such social evils as child marriage, neglect of young widows, untouchability, casteism and a tame adherence to effete traditional rites. In his own way Jayadev launches a crusade against false beliefs and superstitions; he wants the existing social values to be re-examined, and it is thus true that he tries to infuse a new spirit into his village. His angry and determined intervention on Mohini's ordeals at the temple of the Virgin Devi is a significant pointer in this very direction. Jaydev assumes this leadership by virtue of his character and intellect. He believes in 'the continuity of culture', and seeks a proper integration of values. And it is in this sense that he is concerned as much with the West as with the East, as much with the past as with the present.

At this point it is necessary to consider the case of a few other characters, such as those of Mohini's father, Hirindra and Sudha on the other hand of Mohini's grandmother, her mother-in-law and Hirandra's father on the other. Mohini's father is a college teacher. Well-educated and enlightened, he has no faith in old and irrational social or religious practices. He is board-minded enough to encourage his daughter to sing at public places and get her song duly recorded. He wants to shape his daughter and son in a modern way which has been his way. Although he respects his mother's wishes, he does not always find it possible to go by her injunctions. He is utterly opposed to the use of horoscopes for settling marriages, and, rather in a mood of annoyance, speaks out: "Horoscope! Mother! In this age of microscope, who needs a horoscope?" Mohini's father represents the modern temper, a temper that would brook no assault on human reason and scientific understanding. Hirandra is a young man of Behula, who has graduated in modern medicine from Calcutta. It certainly goes to his credit that in spite of his modern scientific education he decides to settle in village and lend support to Jayadev in his task of social reconstruction. He is strongly opposed to

social and religious taboos, and in this regard takes active part in exploding the myth of the devout crocodile. And it is quite understandable that, though a non-Brahmin, he thinks of marrying a forsaken Brahmin girl, Sudha, of Behula itself which is the very citadel of Brahminism. Although he does not dismiss Ayurveda as mere rubbish, he is of the view that modern drugs do really work wonders, and it is with these drugs that he cures his dying mother of her ailments. Harindra is the New Free India; he is the catalyst that fuses Jayadev's love of India's glorious past with a latent concern for her parent and future. Sudha is a Brahmin girl of the Behula village, who is not acceptable as a bride because she is supposed to be Saturn's Eyesore. She grows lopsidedly, scornful of human values, asocial, frigid yet darkly passionate. She hates knowledge, but love life. In her own way she works as a revolutionary force, and her affairs with a low-caste person are a manifestation of her spirit of rebellion. In his characteristic manner Harindra feels strongly for this wronged girl, and considers it as a part of his duty to rebuild her life. It is indeed pitty that Sudha is jealous of Mohini, and yet there is adequate justification for her attitude. Had she not been declared to be an unlucky girl, she might have been the new mistress of the Big House of Behula. Sudha may be virtual as the co-protagonist of the Mohini story, the dark shadow of Mohini's sun but, whatever the case, she aligns herself with those forces that are opposed to conservatism.

Mohini's grandmother symbolizes age-old values. Although she is all affection for her grandchildren, she objects to Mohini's singing at the Radio Station, and, more so, to her songs being recorded for sale. The old lady is also opposed to the very idea of Mohini being sent to an English convent school. Like a vast majority of old Indian woman, Mohini's grandmother looks upon the modern ways of life with suspicion and destruct, and regards traditional beliefs and custom as something sacrosanct. Mohini's mother-in-law is a 'stern and exacting



woman', austere and orthodox, who is firmly committed to the tradition of the Big House. Widowed at the age of twenty-five, she has been eating with her left hand for nearly twenty years because she has dedicated her right hand to Lord Shiva for the well-being of her son, Jayadev. It is because of her faith in austerities and rituals that she asks Mohini to undergo ordeals at the temple of the Virgin Devi in order to cure herself of her supposed barrenness. However, Jayadev's prompt intervention in the matter and his angry protests change the whole situation. And it is thus that Mohini's mother-in-law gets a taste of revolt against tradition. It would then not be improper to surmise that she might have had a vision—however remote—of the shape of things to come.

Hirandra's father, an iron pillar of orthodoxy, is a Kabiraj. He is a practitioner of the Indian system of medicine, Ayurveda, in its antique purity. By his very nature and training he is bitterly opposed the modern system of medical treatment and that is why he keeps his ailing wife under his own treatment. However, when he fails, he desperately asks Harindra to look after his mother. The speedy and welcome recovery of the patient thereafter is a tribute to the efficacy of the modern medical system, and the old man's surrender to Harinder is the inescapable capitulation of tradition to modernity. Nevertheless, what draws our attention at this point, and is indeed noteworthy, is the statement that Jayadev's sister, Rooplekha, married to a Calcutta doctor, makes about herself and her brother. She tells Mohini: "I must tell you my story, sister, that you may learn from my experience. You are city-bred, village-wed. I am village-bred, city-wed. We share one common lot: we have been pulled up by the roots. A city has as little mercy for an alien as the country, no more, no less. Years it was before I could fit in, Mohini, hard years" (*MfM*. 34). She goes on to tell her that uprooted women like them are perhaps destined to serve some real purpose:

"...[w]e who're sowed, serve some real purpose. It's as

though we made a bridge between two banks of a river. We connect culture with culture, Mohini, our old Eastern view of life with the new semi- Western outlook. The city absorbs a little of the barbaric village, the village absorbs a little of the West-polluted city. Both change with each other. This is more urgent than ever before. Our new India must rest on this foundation" (MfM 67).

Finally, it is evident from the entire discussion that the novel in the context is in a profound union of today with yesterday, of village life with city life, of the East with the West, of thought with action of contemplation with commitment, of asceticism with aestheticism, and on the cusp of which the regeneration of Indian society lies.

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## Linguistic Theory and Language Acquisition (Knowledge of Language) in Language Teaching

*Rajesh Kumar\**

Language is a unique human phenomenon. It plays important role in our lives; it is special to humans as all humans across cultures are genetically hardwired to acquiring language; and above all, it is the most sophisticated product of human mind. Language is a mediator that helps share our experience, knowledge, information, and many more with others. In education, language is the primary medium for the transaction of knowledge and for the articulation of innovative ideas. In fact, language turns out to be constitutive of our identity. And, since all people either utilize varieties of a language or use two or more languages to respond to a whole range of affective and interpersonal demands, language by definition must be defined as multilingualism. Language, therefore, is central to our existence. It is inconceivable to think of ourselves, our societies, our past, present and future and our ideas, culture and knowledge without language. Language is a primary means of a child's socialization. It structures our thought processes. It interacts with the social, political and economic power structures.

The aim of this paper is to outline the role of linguistic theory in general and the idea of 'knowledge of language' in particular in language teaching. First, we discuss the process of language acquisition and the concept of Universal Grammar (Chomsky 1965). We move on to discussing how the idea of language as multilinguality is embedded in the process of language acquisition and

the concept of knowledge of language. And, finally we conclude by analyzing implications of our understanding of the fundamentals of the linguistic theory for effective classroom instructions.

### Language Acquisition and Linguistic Theory

Language and mind have been two of the premier research areas in the 20th century. Each has been studied independently of the other, with the philosophy of language dominating the first half of the century and the philosophy of mind surging in the second half. One of common goals of both the areas has been to understand the nature and design of human mind. Both the areas have contributed to our understanding of human mind immensely. The philosophy of language does not study particular human languages. Rather, it focuses on more abstract questions of language itself. Over a long period of time, researchers believed that language is human behavior and kids learn language by imitation and practice. Chomsky (1965) brings a revolutionary paradigm shift in our understanding of how children acquire language by introducing the idea of language as an innate human capacity and denying idea of language as behavior. Consider the following for illustrating the acquisition of language. Every normal human child is born (biologically equipped) with the ability to learn language. This ability is called language acquisition device (LAD). LAD receives input from immediate society. This input is *fuzzy* and *inadequate* in its quality and quantity for the kind of output it results into. In other words, human mind does not receive input that looks like a nice and neat looking sentence. LAD is a hypothetical device which has blue print of all the nuances of language of the world. This blue print is referred to as Universal Grammar (UG). This *fuzzy* input activates language specific rules in the UG which, again, is an inbuilt capability of human mind and thus, a normal human child acquires a language of the immediate society. The input may be poor, but the output



is huge and immeasurable. This is what enables us to produce novel sentence of our language that we may not have heard before. This is what makes us capable for identifying whether or not a lexicon belongs to our language. This capacity is known as 'Knowledge of Language'. The 'knowledge of language' is a special kind of knowledge in the sense that it constitutes the kinds of things about our own language that we know but we do not know that we know them. Let's consider a piece of evidence that may help us understand language as an innate capacity and not as a behaviour. Children often say incorrect things such as *goed, tooths, more pretty*, and many more like these. It is highly unlikely that they could have heard such incorrect forms. The question is if they did not hear such forms, how do they use them? Thus, learning by imitation is ruled out right away. A closer analysis of the use of such incorrect forms reveals that they are making use of the acquired system and it is that system which helps them overgeneralize such forms in their use of language. To summarize, the process of language acquisition results into development of a system that is responsible for deriving abstract rules from the input that it receives. Understanding the fundamentals of language acquisition helps us understand the nature of language; this helps us understand the structure of the language that a native speaker generates; and this helps us understand the philosophy of language that how does it happen that given so little input a native speaker knows so much about her language.

The *fuzzy* nature of input is responsible for triggering language acquisition resulting in multilingualism too. This, in a way, answers part of the question raised in the cognitive science about quantification of acquisition and learnability of language. An effort to understand the relationship between the tenets of language acquisition and multilingualism will complete the circle of linguistic theory. Let's try to straighten it out what looks like a circular question. We know that 'an ideal speaker and

hearer' does not exist in society. It employs that we do not find good looking and pure language in society i.e. in real world. It takes us to the next level that language in the real world is *impure*; in other words too much mixed with *a lot of things* — which is multilingualism. This is what we mean when one says the following: no one speaks just one language; the concept of 'a language' is an artifact; and the idea of *purity in language* is not a viable concept. Of course, the input from the society helps human mind develop a system that generates language (a highly rule governed system), however, once the system develops the language as output is multilingualism. In short, language (in mind) is a generative system; input from immediate society plays a huge role in learning/acquisition of language; and language (in real world) must be defined as multilingualism.

Theoretically speaking, there are two parts of language; namely — form and function. Form is referred to as 'linguistic competence' and function as 'linguistic performance'. It is believed that the process of language acquisition is concerned with competence alone; and it is unlikely to be related to performance. We suggest that the rules of language use (performance) are part of the knowledge of language. And, therefore, performance is part of the knowledge of language in the same way as the competence is part of the knowledge of language. Let's us turn to understand the common ground between the function of language and language acquisition.

Children learn very early that that they are not supposed to speak certain things; they learn very early that they are not supposed to be too informal (linguistically) with several kinds of individuals; they learn very early that they are not supposed to say several things to certain kinds of people. This 'knowledge' pops up in children without specific instructions and without them being aware of such type of 'knowledge'. The question is how would that take place? The only idea



that we can rely upon for an answer is children must be learning such things by extracting rules based on little or too little input from the Universal Grammar of language use. Let's examine the following. The use of *please* in imperative constructions is a marker of higher degree of formality. Such a lexicon adds explicit 'request' for a lot of speakers of English of India. The lack of the word *please* for the speakers of English of India adds a sense of 'order' and/or 'impoliteness' to the construction. Now consider the following example; when someone says *ek kalam diijiye* 'Give me a pen', one clearly knows that he is not either ordering for a pen or being impolite. The marker of formality for such a speaker is embedded in the predicate of the language Hindi, and thus is transferred to English (a second language for them) as a null element. The use of a lexicon *please* would add redundancy to the language. It is evident from the above explanation and the examples that such kind of knowledge about the use of language is not instruction dependent. Neither this is available as specific input. Rather, they have to extract such knowledge of language use. Therefore, the knowledge of the proper use of language is part of the 'Knowledge of Language'.

To conclude the section, we have looked at the following; language is an innate capacity of humans; it is a generative and highly rule governed system; and it is unlikely to be learned through imitation. Fuzzy and inadequate input from the immediate society helps build 'knowledge of language'. Input helps develop the generative system and output, which is language in the real world, can be defined as multilingualism. Both linguistic competence and performance (knowledge of the use of language) are part of 'knowledge of language.'

### Language in Education

Having established multilingualism as part of innate human capability and both linguistic competence and performance as part of the 'knowledge of language', this

paper would now discuss the significance of language in education and the role of 'knowledge of language' for language teaching. Language appears to be the only medium for mediating all constructions of knowledge. The scientific analysis of language shows that all languages are equal and unique. The scientific analysis of multilingualism shows how we learn to mean in socio-cultural context (Agnihotri 2007). A carefully crafted combination of insights from both the analyses and an equally careful use will probably warrant multilinguality as resource and strategy in the classroom, and in different domains of knowledge too. Philosophies of language and mind have also enjoyed a fruitful liaison, as much of the technical apparatus of the philosophy of language has been used to illuminate the mind. The other side of this coin is that language is fairly obviously something that minds achieve, and some prominent theories of linguistic meaning have emphasized psychological elements of language use.

The choice of language has been one of the questions of concern for educationists. A UNESCO report in 2003 outlines the problem. It summarizes the problem as follows: "the choice of the language...is a recurrent challenge in the development of quality education... Speakers of mother tongues, which are not the same as the national...language, are often at a considerable disadvantage in the educational system..." Similar worries echoes in an interesting paper arguing for multilingual education. Malone (2007) examines the difficulties of children for whom language at home (*or in their immediate society*) is different from that of school. She explains that "their language skills do not serve them because their language has no place in the classroom. Instead, textbooks and teaching are in a language they neither speak nor understand. Their learning and problem-solving experiences and their knowledge of "how things work" in their own culture and social setting do not serve them because the culture of the classroom, the teachers, and



the textbooks is that of the dominant society." Cummins (2001) blames education in 'a language' for the loss of confidence in children as learners; "...when students' language, culture and experiences are ignored or excluded in classroom interactions, students are immediately starting from a disadvantage. Everything they have learned about life and the world up to this point is being dismissed as irrelevant to school learning; there are few points of connection to curriculum materials or instruction and so students are expected to learn in an experiential vacuum." On a similar note a World Bank report of 2005 holds forced monolingual education policy responsible for dropouts at schools; "fifty percent of the world's out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever, used at home. This underscores the biggest challenge to achieving Education for All (EFA): a legacy of nonproductive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels of dropout and repetition."

This is the scenario of language in education. The question that we try to answer is the following; what should be the language for education; how do we approach this question? The list of questions continues. Some questions arise in the adult minds being nostalgic about school days — who should decide about my choice of language for my education? Some questions may come to the mind of a child — why should I not get education in school in my language? Similarly, on the basis of above discussions in the reports of UNESCO and the World Bank, some questions concern education planners — why do children feel insulted and neglected in schools when they do not find their language around; why do they not like to spend time in school and opt out; and why do we need to challenge children for negotiating the difference between language at home and language at school? Let's consider a more nuanced look at the issue which will lead to a working solution.

There are two folds of the problem. First, the

understanding about the nature and structure of language, functioning of language in social contexts in a scientific fashion, and interrelationship between language and education appears to receive no so much priority in educational domains in India. Second, the lack of consensus or agreement on above discussed understanding forces education planners to keep on believing and implementing the idea of 'a language'. Let's look at the following situation. In most parts of India in the domains of elementary education, children use their 'first' language in schools for education and interactions. In many cases those languages are called vernacular in a derogatory sense. The second language that is taught in schools is one of the languages (in most cases Hindi) from the list of languages in the 8th Schedule of our constitution as modern Indian language as part of the curriculum. English comes in play and is partially taught in schools. English instruction begins from grade 5th to 6th depending upon schools and availability of teachers. It is significant to mention and underline that in most of the schools of India - at least in rural schools, English remains a *foreign* language and the instruction begins after or around the completion of the *critical period*. Soon after the completion of elementary and secondary education when students reach colleges, universities, and/or some other institutions of higher education, the language situation is exactly opposite as mirror image. English becomes the dominant language of instruction and interactions and the first language of every student receives back bench with no priority at all. Hindi still exists in the middles and probably this is what saves students from breakdowns. In short, for lots of students, the language that was not that important for them in schools, becomes the language they are expected to perform in inside and outside the classroom; and the language they used in all possible domains in schools becomes invisible all of a sudden. This is a big time shock for students. In many schools, this happens right at the beginning of elementary schools. This is what turns out as a fatal situation in schools.



In the light of the above discussions about language learning, use of language, and the role of language in education, I would examine the question of choice of language in Education. The question of choice of language in education and particularly for instruction arises when we want to look at language in terms of 'a language' such as Hindi, English, etc. The fact that we find the choice of language for education as challenge and we try to find an answer only when we want to see language as Hindi, English, and Urdu, etc. A careful examination reveals that what people speak is not Hindi, English, and Urdu; they speak a continuum of repertoire/language. An answer to the question of choice of language in education is located in what people speak. The natural answer in terms of clear and only choice is - the appropriate choice of education will be the language that people speak and grow up with. This will probably resolve all the findings of national or international agencies such as UNICEF or the World Bank. This will be an answer to the problem of why kinds face linguistic challenges in schools. This will make them feel accommodated and not insulted when they find themselves respected and represented inside and outside the classroom. What people speak is defined as multilinguality and that is the natural choice. To repeat, the choice is multilinguality (that people speak) and not 'a language' (that is an artifact).

Multilinguality as a choice for education naturally raises a lot of questions about study materials, examinations, and singularity of teachers etc. Again, multilinguality is a quick response to all these questions. Difficulties remain not in practicing multilinguality for the simple reason that multilinguality does not require practice; rather difficulties remain in liberating ourselves from beliefs about 'a language'. Multilinguality, i.e. the language that people speak will be accepted by all. This is an outcome of the technical understanding of language with the help of linguistic theory that helps us understand the nature and structure of language embedded in the

social settings. 'Knowledge of language' as a tool supports the idea of multilinguality as a choice for language in education.

Underlining the role of the study of language (linguistics) in education a famous educational anthropologist, Shirley Brice Heath (1984) writes - 'The boundaries of the discipline of linguistics have been largely broken. - Today the root ideas in such diverse areas as cognitive science, literary theory, language planning, and communication theory carry basic information contributed by linguistics. - Language increasingly will be a natural part of the research domain of the fields ranging from computer science to industrial sociology. - In the decades ahead the functional knowledge of language that has come from linguistics will be like certain principles of mathematics, physics, and biology, basic knowledge for other disciplines as well as for practical domain such as teacher training, legal and medical education, and computer software production. (Heath, 1984, pp.268-269)'

### Conclusion

I have made an attempt to investigate the question of choice of language in education. The natural choice that emerges with consensus among scholars and in consistence with the problems outlined in the reports of international agencies is - multilinguality i.e. the language that people speak. A forceful choice of 'a language' does not appear to work and hence the difficulties. In this paper I have tried to demonstrate that the acquisition of language and the role of 'knowledge of language' in developing our understanding of the nature and structure of language. Such a scientific understanding leads us to the same conclusion that we need to abandon the construct of 'a language' that does not appear to exist and hence the problem. This shows that the choice of multilinguality will work in many ways and will solve multiple questions in education.



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## The Art of Teaching Poetry

Saryug Yadav\*

Poetry is very old, as old as human language. When man had a considerable number of words at his command, he tried to arrange them in such a way as to create the maximum appeal. He listened to the song of the birds, whistling in the wind and the rippling sound of the rivulets, and tried to catch the music and the rhythm, and created them through his words, and thus poetry was born. Poetry is a thing of beauty, because it has the beauty of language, beauty of form, beauty of thoughts and beauty of feelings. Poetry is a specialized use of language of unusual collocation. Poetry is a superior kind of amusement. The present paper attempts to understand poetry in a broader perspective with its humanistic role along with some pragmatic pedagogy to make the teaching learning of poetry a joyful experience in actual classroom situation.

There is a love for poetry in every heart. Poetry comes out of pain, says Goethe. Without pain there can be no poetry. Poetry is nurtured at the cost of tears. It is believed that the first verse of the world '*mâ nicâda praticmhâA tvamagamahî ûûvatîh samâh/Yat krauñcamithunâdekam avadhîh kâmamohitam.*' (O hunter! Since you killed one of the pair of Kraunch birds in love, you shall not live for long with dignity) came out from the throat of Valmiki when he saw the widow bird crying in pain after her beloved mate was killed by a hunter. So, poetry has its roots in pain, and pain is congenital to man, because in every heart there is a dream of harvest of tragedy. In every heart there is a hankering after what is lost. The heaven is lost; paradise is lost. In every heart there is a perpetual dream of regaining paradise. It is not despair but it is creative pain out of which poetry is born.

## Elements of Poetry

Despite its indefinable nature, poetry has always some important and permanent elements by which it can be recognized. The fundamental elements of poetry include thoughts/feelings (substance/content/subject matter), beauty of language (poetic diction), rhyme/rhythm, music and stanzas. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge; it is as immortal as the heart of man. In a good piece of poetry there are three Ms (metaphor, muse and message). Dhawani is the essence of poetry. Poetry is composed of beauty and bliss. *Rasa* is the life and soul of poetry.

Poetry is the language of the human heart. It must have the elements of music, vision (imagination), imagery and emotion. The emotions and feelings, which inspire poetry, are generally those of joy and sorrow, love and hatred, hope and despair, jealousy and anger. Eyes of poet's are different from a common man. William Shakespeare in his play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* says about the extraordinary creative capability of a poet in these lines:

The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact;  
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,  
That is, the madman; the lover, all as frantic  
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt;  
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to  
heaven;

And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shape and give to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

The humming of a bee and the sight of a flower may affect a common person just in an ordinary way. But a poet becomes a different being when he is in the midst of natural surrounding. His eyes flash, his cheek glows and his mouth quivers when he is in the midst of natural surroundings. According to Wordsworth - 'To



me the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that do often lie too far for tears.'

Poetry is considered to be one of the most creative forms of art much in consonance with music and painting. Ordinary humans, too, believe poets to have been born with the third eye which sparks of diversity. It, then, should not appear hyperbolic to say that poets represent the voice that goes unheard and the sensibility that goes unfelt as well as uncared. There is no denying the fact that poets are alone in a crowd and crowded even in isolation. The most celebrated poets namely, S.T. Coleridge could travel 'far off lands and seas' in *Kubla Khan*, Eliot could foresee 'London bridge falling down' in *The Waste Land* and Milton in *Paradise Lost* could imagine the decadence of mankind in the uncontrollable temptation shown by Adam and Eve in the kingdom of God. Poets, thus, through their 'viewless wings of poesy' have shown the world not only 'weariness, fever and fret' (*Ode To A Nightingale*) but also the happiness oozing from 'green thought in a green shades' (*Thoughts in A Garden*)

### Why Poetry?

The world we are living in is a world of business and industry and money-making. There is no doubt about the fact that money has become the crux of the situation today, and that money can be earned through various sources where poetry, perhaps, does not figure. Then, it is worthwhile to ponder for a few moments on the issues and concerns with reference to the existence and relevance of poetry. Do we need poetry? Is poetry relevant for us today? Can we survive without poetry? Does poetry make any difference in our life? This relevance must be understood because most of us today think that these things such as poetry, drama, novels are unnecessary. But, then, we are reminded of E.M. Forster who says that there is a tremendous responsibility on us today. We have to ferry the cultural stuff to the other side of the river, to the other bank, otherwise our grandchildren will not

forgive us because a world may come without a Dante, without a Shakespeare. We, perhaps, don't teach poetry, we don't like to teach them, perhaps, because they don't like to appreciate it. But we can't imagine a world, a desert-like world where there is no Shakespeare, no Dante, no Tulsidas, Valmiki lost forever, Vyas not figuring anywhere in our almirah, and we are ushering ourselves to that dreary world. So, poetry becomes necessary because it is a responsibility. Poetry stands for culture, poetry is not just versification; it is our cultural experience and we have come down through ages. We can well realize how in our country particularly the poets have created religion even. Religion is stored in poetry, in no other country this has happened because the *Ramayana* is poetry; we have made it a religion. The *Mahabharata* is poetry basically; it is literature we have made it our religion. In England, we find Shakespeare somewhere and the Bible somewhere else. So the Bible is a different stream altogether, we have made it possible in our country that literature has become religion. How developed those people were who made culture their religion, literature their religion and these are called religious books. Even *Gita* is placed in the *Mahabharata*. The *Gita* is not only a poem but also the holiest of holy books in our country. So, poetry has its role, very important role. If we don't want to be a man; if we give up all human qualities, then, poetry is not necessary for us. But if we want to have all the human elements in us, then the greatest human element is love. If we want to have love in ourselves, then poetry is necessary. Poetry has bad times for itself, a time Keats calls "hungry generation". To Keats, nightingale is poetry; the nightingale thinks, the poet thinks. So, he says, "Thou wast not born for death - immortal bird". Poetry can never die. Nightingale is an immortal bird. "No hungry generation can tread thee down".

When we teach poetry to those students who are expecting teaching of poetry from us, we must tell them



that poetry is not just passing knowledge of idioms and phrases and some knowledge of sonnet and epic, this and that, but it is for the spread of culture. Its purpose is to make them better men and, therefore, poetry is necessary. Poetry is needed because we want to be 'men' not 'animals'. We want to be better men, not worse men. So, we discover poetry wherever it is available. Surprisingly, the great religions are written in poetry. When we read such lines as, "In the beginning there was darkness and void, and darkness and the deep, and God said, Let there be light and light was there. And one light He called the sun and the other light He called the Moon", we go through poetry, we have not, at least, seen till now any religious work devoid of poetry. Poetry is at its root very sacred. Not only Valmiki, the first poet of India, but wherever we get a religious book, we find poetic qualities in it. Therefore, this perfect sacredness for this holy quality, for that which 'holds' us because religion means in our language 'dharma'. 'Dharma' is from "dhree" dhatu, which means 'to hold'. Therefore, in Wordsworth's 'Behold rainbow in the sky', the word 'behold' is important because it becomes a religious word, because that holds us; that is not just I am very happy to see a rainbow; that holds me that is my identity because without that my basic identity is lost. So, poetry is a culture, poetry is that on which we have been depending for ages. We have depended on it for ages and we can go to a fertile age for poetry which we should call the flower of humanity. A good piece of poetry is capable of thrilling and inspiring people of all ages. Ancient religious and philosophical books are all written in poetry. The *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, The *Vedas*, the *Bhagwad Gita*, the *Holy Bible*, the *Quoran* etc. are all poetical compositions. The main reason, why these literary compositions are living till the present day, is their being written in excellent poetry and verse. Had they been expressed in prose they might have died out one or two generations after their creation.

### **Objectives of Teaching Poetry**

Poetry gives pleasure and is read for pleasure mainly. It increases student's sensitiveness to beauty, and especially the beauty of language. The chief aim of teaching poetry is not to improve student's knowledge of language, rather it is to add to his joy and increase the power of appreciation of beauty. The fact that makes the task even more challenging is that poetry is not just all about poet's colouring it with his imagination as T.S. Eliot has rightly pointed out that "it is the unification of sensibilities, blending of emotion and imagination." So there is bound to be 'a difference between the language of prose and metrical composition' and thus a greater responsibility on the teacher to help the students appreciate and enjoy poetry. However, this great responsibility may be turned into an enjoyable and fruitful experience if the objectives of teaching poetry are kept in mind while taking up a poem in the class.

The aims and objectives of teaching poetry may be put under the following heads:

- To help the students learn, how to read a poem with its correct intonation, proper pauses and catch its rhythm.
- To help the students derive aesthetic pleasure.
- To enhance their organic sensibility by helping them understand different expression, imageries, symbols etc, related to the experiences that come to us through our different sense organs.
- To help them learn appreciation of language, form or stylistic devices like rhythm, simile, metaphor, alliteration, pun and repetition etc, and the purpose for which they are used in poetry.
- To help them attain the sublimation of their feelings and avoid the crude expressions of emotions.
- Enjoy the musical appeal of poetry as manifested through its rhyme and rhythm which are particularly typical of poems.



- Develop a taste for the creative, the imaginative and the aesthetic qualities of literature and use these qualities for their intellectual and emotional enhancement.
- Sensitize themselves to various kinds of literary themes such as; love, humanity, peace, patriotism and communal harmony.
- Acquaint themselves, as and when needed (particularly in higher classes), with literary and linguistic techniques such as meter, rhyme, rhythm, figures of speech and the like.
- To help them understand the theme.

### How to Teach Poetry

Poetry is a dynamic and multimode form of expression which can be immensely pleasurable to teach. However, it is also a genre which seems to present a great many challenges for students and teachers, connected both with subject and pedagogical knowledge. It is also a medium through which the simplest yet the most complex feelings and ideas are conveyed in "the best words put in the best order". Since the emotions expressed are easy to feel but difficult to explain and analyze, it becomes a bit difficult for the teacher to put the meaning, contained in the poem, before the students in the best possible way.

The best way of studying poetry is to derive pleasure from it. To read it simply for memorizing its meaning and explain in a lifeless and mechanical manner is no good. We must have, first of all, a quiet mind, deep enthusiasm and peaceful atmosphere for the pleasurable study of poetry. The onerous task of teaching poetry can be made easy if the teacher makes a judicious use of some activities involving pair work, group work and whole class discussion according to the demand of the theme. In stead of explaining each and every line of the poem to the students the teacher should discuss the theme with the students after a suitable warm up activity and then help them discover the symbols and understand the

meanings attached to the symbols. The teacher may also ask some questions of extrapolatory nature for encouraging the students to go beyond the set parameters of the poem. This, in turn, will improve their thinking ability and power of imagination. The teacher may also discuss the relevance of the poem in context of the contemporary world. The discussion on the theme of the poem or appreciation can be made even more interesting if any highly imaginative student is made to play the role of the poet and answer the questions posed to him by the students. If the poem is long and involves many characters, even role-play may be conducted. Transforming a poem into story form can be taken up for bright students. The poem should be taken as a whole, not the combinations of various parts. The students should be allowed to see things in their own eyes with a feeling of pleasant surprise to know how the eyes can see many interesting things at various places in various directions. There is no single approach, method or technique to teach poetry. Every poem is different and the teacher should adopt an eclectic approach (taking the best from each approach) -the approach that works in a given situation.

### **Steps of Teaching Poetry**

- Warm up activity with the help of thought-provoking questions or brainstorming
- Discussion on the theme of the poem
- Loud reading by the teacher or by some students with proper intonation, stress, rhyme and rhythm.
- Silent reading by the whole class for a better understanding of the poem.
- Comprehension questions-local comprehension-(through different activities, like one group preparing questions on the poem and the other one answering them) meant to elicit the meaning of the difficult words, expressions, complex ideas etc. from the students.
- Appreciation of the poem (a writing assignment to be given to the students for the purpose).



- Home work (a few short answer type questions)
- Debate/elocution on the main theme of the poem may be explored.

### **How to Critically Appreciate Poetry**

The best way of studying poetry is to derive pleasure from it. To read it simply for memorizing its meaning and explaining in a lifeless and mechanical manner is not good. The task of teaching poetry is, undoubtedly, challenging and difficult one but this may be turned into an enjoyable and fruitful experience if the objectives of teaching poetry are kept in mind while taking up a poem in the class. There is no single approach, method or technique for teaching poetry. Every poem is different and the teacher should adopt an approach keeping in view of the demands of the situation and the level of the students. The onerous task of teaching poetry can be made easy if the teacher makes a judicious use of some activities involving pair work, group work and whole class discussion according to the demand of the theme. In stead of explaining each and every line of the poem to the students the teacher should discuss the theme with the students after a suitable warm up activity and then help them discover the symbols and understand the meanings attached to the symbols. The teacher may also ask some questions of extrapolatory nature for encouraging the students to go beyond the set parameters of the poem. This, in turn, will improve their thinking ability and power of imagination. The teacher may also discuss the relevance of the poem in context of the contemporary world. The discussion on the theme of the poem or appreciation can be made even more interesting if any highly imaginative student is made to play the role of the poet and answer the questions posed to him by the students. If the poem is long and involves many characters, even role-play may be conducted. Transforming a poem into story form can be taken up for bright students. The poem should be taken as a whole, not the combinations of various parts.

Example is better than precept. If we wish to understand a poem, it seems sensible to begin by examining some poems. The poems which have been selected for illustration include William Wordsworth's *A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal* and Thomas Hardy's *Only a Man Harrowing Clods*.

**A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal**  
—William Wordsworth

A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal;  
I had no human fears;  
She seem'd a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;  
She neither hears nor sees;  
Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course  
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

The first stanza is written in past tense and the second in present. This means that in the first stanza the poet says something about his past experiences and in the second stanza something about his present experiences. In first stanza he remembers his past and in the second he records his present. On reading the poem we find that the first stanza describes a happy mood and the second describes a corpse which naturally arouses sorrow. Obviously, some dear one is dead. The poet does not say how and why she dies. We have to place her death between the two stanzas. The silence of the poet suggests the hush of a great shock.

When the girl was alive, she was so beautiful and lively that the poet on seeing her could not bring the thought of death to his mind. He forgets the simple fact that death can touch anybody at any time. He thought that she would never die. Her beauty had charmed his mind. It was a kind of mental inertia which the poet calls *slumber*. Now she is dead. The poet is so much shocked that he can not speak much. He simply says that



the girl has lost her independent motion. She can neither hear nor see. This statement becomes more painful when we remember that she was so lively when alive. The poet says that she has become so static as a rock or a stone or a tree. Her body, which lies in the grave, moves with the movement of the earth. Diurnal course is a geographical imagery. It means the movement of the earth around its axis, which causes day and night.

The poem is written in a very simple language. The first stanza describes a mood. The second stanza describes a corpse. So it is objective. The first stanza, being the expression of a joyous mood, is fluid and musical in movement. The second stanza, being an expression of sorrow, moves haltingly. The emotion of the poem is powerful. The elegiac note affects the reader. The poet has wonderful control on his emotion.

Only a man harrowing clods

—Thomas Hardy

Only a man harrowing clods  
In a slow silent walk  
With an old horse that stumbles and nods  
Half asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame  
From the heaps of couch-grass;  
Yet this will go onward the same  
Through Dynasties pass.

Yonder a maid and her Wight  
Come whispering by;  
War's annals will cloud into night  
Ere their story die.

The three stanzas- remarkable economy of language -make a wonderful poetry. The gist of the poem is in the last two lines. The stories of war will be forgotten but the stories of domestic life, his day-today work for

existence, will live for ever. These simple scenes of human life are more important than big events; human history through ages is more evident in them.

Earlier in the poem, the poet illustrates the common and changeless pattern of human life. The archetypal images are artifacts of human existence. There are three such pictures. The first picture is of a farmer returning from his field after the day's labour. Slowly and silently he walks on the field full of dry lumps of earth. His old horse, half asleep, stumbles and nods, while walking by him. The second picture is of thin smoke rising upward "from the heaps of couch grass." Apparently an insignificant sight, it brings into our mind the well-known atmosphere of a village evening in winter. Dynasties will pass but this picture will ever be there in the village. The third picture is of a maid and a man in love. They are whispering to each other. Wars may come wars may go, but such sights will always be seen in the world.

As a great painter creates the different but desired effect with the light but sure touch of his brush on the canvas, so does the poet express a world of things just by a few word-pictures drawn almost casually. Each such picture we come across every moment in life but it becomes vastly meaningful when a poet makes it significant by just mentioning them. The casualness of tone is the poem's beauty but behind this casualness there is a deliberate choice of imagery and in its exclusiveness we recognize a taste which is nothing but classical.

### Conclusion

On the basis of the discussion, deliberation and critical scrutiny pertaining to different dimensions and aspects of poetry along with the illustration of a couple of poems by Wordsworth and Thomas Hardy, we have understood that a poem is a living organism which contains the necessary elements of its own life. If a poem means the sum of everything which it is, we must not only understand everything in the poem: we must be aware



of all its parts as they work together to make the total meaning of the poem. And we have learnt that a poem possesses a concentration and intensity which help to make it memorable. The right word in the right place, the intimate fusion of sound and sense, and the economy of rich suggestion are virtues of the structure of most poetry. We have understood further that a poem has at least two levels of meaning: the literal level and the figurative-symbolic level. We have seen that a poem suggests much more than it says literally: 'like lovers' conversation, a poem gives out hints of extensive meaning along the way'.

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## How to Reduce Mother Tongue Influence in English Pronunciation

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English plays an important role in the domains of education, administration, business and political relations, judiciary, industry, etc. and is, therefore, a passport to social mobility, higher education, and better job opportunities. In some important domains of activity, it has become an integral part of the Indian multilingual repertoire. In a variety of ways, it has enriched Indian languages, which, in turn, have made significant contributions to English in India. The attitudes of the contemporary Indians towards English are significantly more positive than before. In urban India, it is very common to see young people code-mixing and code-switching between English and Indian languages. It is now useless to say that English is associated only with the rich, elite or upper middle class. It should be the effort of the Indian educational system to teach English to every Indian and to ensure that she/he gains a sufficiently high level of proficiency in it. For the majority of learners, what is needed is a basic or fundamental competence in the target language. There is substantial evidence available now to show that Indian English as used by fluent educated Indian speakers does not differ in any significant way from standard varieties of English in U.K. or U.S.A. There is no doubt that there are significant differences at the phonological and lexical levels. But that is also true of British and American English within those countries. Indian English, no doubt, is considered a distinct variety with an identity and status of its own. However, we need to focus on the spoken aspect of English, where the influence of mother tongue is quite obvious and very often we have to face



embarrassing moments. This paper will focus on some important steps to reduce the influence of mother tongue in English pronunciation.

### **English in India**

Language is like a living organism, which grows, develops and changes according to its own compulsions. This process of evolution can neither be tampered with nor can its pace be accelerated. All human languages keep on modernizing their lexical, registral, stylistic and discourse mechanisms. Modernization is a cluster concept. It represents a multi-dimensional and interlocking network of processes and mechanisms by which language augment their repertoire of registers to cope up with the changing social, cultural, economic, industrial and political needs of the people. At the conceptual level modernization represents our interactions with new ideas, new attitudes and new interpretation. At the formal level it represents those linguistic strategies, which languages use to express new meanings and new modes of communication. At the educational level, the introduction of regional languages as official state languages and as medium of instruction represents a marked move in the direction of modernization.

Indian English (I.E.) means that variety of English, which is learnt and is used by a large number of educated Indians as a second or third language. It is a non-native variety and has a complex network of features contributed by the mother tongue of its speakers and by their cultures and also by intra-language analogical process. It is used by people and institution in India for interpersonal and inter-institutional communication in a wide range of contexts. Indian English cannot be grouped with any other varieties like American English, Canadian English, and British English (Received Pronunciation) etc. Indian English is a non-native variety of English used by a vast majority of people as their second or third language. There are several varieties of English, spoken in India

and each variety has been strongly coloured by the speakers' first language or Mother Tongue (MT), their geographical origin, social and educational backgrounds. The use of English by a large number of Indians, hailing from diverse linguistic backgrounds, has also resulted in the emergence of regional varieties of English. These regional varieties of English are used in different parts of the India.

Keeping in view the social stratification, we can divide Indian English into three types:

- (i) **Elite variety:** a few Indians who get much exposure to English use this variety of English. It has a close approximation to Standard English (R.P.).
- (ii) **Educated variety:** It is used by the mass, who use it for specific purposes. Their speech is closer to some extent to R.P.
- (iii) **Colloquial Variety:** Common people use it for their daily purposes. The regional features influence this variety. It is called as Pidgin English.

## 1.1. Some remarkable differences in RP and Indian English:

### 1.1. a. Consonantal System

(i). In R.P., voiceless plosives (/p/, /t/, /k/) are aspirated when they occur initial and stressed position. In Indian English (I.E.), they are unaspirated voiceless plosives because most of the Indian languages are having neutral stress. For examples-

	R.P.	I.E.
Table	/t <sup>h</sup> eɪbl/	/teb <sup>h</sup> l/
Paper	/p <sup>h</sup> eɪp <sup>h</sup> r/	/pep <sup>h</sup> r/
Cast	/k <sup>h</sup> a:st/	/ka:st/

(ii). In I.E. phoneme /K/ does not occur word-finally, the word final /K/ is represented by the sound /ng/ whereas in R.P. /K/ phonemes can occur finally only.



For example

	R.P.	I.E.
Sing	/siK/	/siKg/
Young	/jĒK/	/jĒKg/
Diphthong	/difēOK/	/dif <sup>h</sup> ĒKg/

(iii) In R.P. phoneme /r/ has different phonetic realizations. The sound /r/ is not pronounced if it is followed by a consonantal sound or if it occurs finally and it is pronounced if it is followed by a vowel sound. But in I.E., /r/ is pronounced invariably in all positions. For example-

	R.P.	I.E.
Large	/la:dç/	/la:rdç/
Father	/fa:ð"/	/fa:d"r/
Horror	/hOr"r/	/hOr"r/

(iv) In R.P., /è/ and /ð/ are dental fricatives but in I.E. these are alveolar plosives as /t<sup>h</sup>/, /d/

	R.P.	I.E.
Thank	/èæKk/	/t <sup>h</sup> æKk/
Then	/ðen/	/den/

(v) Most of the Indian languages have a one to one correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. We tend to pronounce word with medial doubled consonant letters. It is generally prolonged. For example-

	R.P.	I.E.
Upper	/Ēp"r/	/Ēpp"r/
Utter	/Ēt"r/	/Ētt"r/
Summer	/sĒm"r/	/sĒmm"r/

### 1.1. b.Vowel and Diphthong System

(i) I.E. generally vary in length. While the R.P. has two different phonemes /u/ and /u:/, where as in I.E. they are in free variations. For example-

	R.P.	I.E.
University	/ju:nivç:3/4"ti/	/juniv"rsiti/
Value	/væljʊ:/	/væljʊ/&/b <sup>h</sup> æljʊ/

(ii) R.P. has /i/ and /i:/ as distinct phonemes but in I.E., they generally occur in free variations. For example-

	R.P.	I.E.
Economics	/i:k"nOmiks/	/ikonamiks/
These	/ði:z/	/diz/
Geography	/dʒiOgr"fi:/	/dʒa:gr"fi/

(iii) I.E. has /e/ and /æ/ generally occur in free variation whereas in R.P. they function as two distinct phonemes. For example

	R.P.	I.E.
Hello	/hel"u/	/hælo/
Process	/pr"uses/	/pra:sæs/
Professor	/pr"fes"r/	/profæs"r/

(iv) R.P. has diphthong /"u/ which in I.E. becomes /o/ in almost all positions. For example-

	R.P.	I.E.
Hope	/h"up/	/hop/
Ghost	/g"ust/	/gost/
Hotel	/h"ut"l/	/hot"l/

(v) I.E. has the vowel sound /e/ in place of R.P. Diphthong /ei/. For example:

	R.P.	I.E.
Waiter	/weit"r/	/wet"r/
Wave	/weiv/	/wev/

(vi) R.P. has three phoneme /Ē/, /" /, /ý: / which vary according to their length whereas in I.E., there is only one /" / Corresponding to all these three phoneme. For example-

	R.P.	I.E.
Worse	/wç:s/	/v"rs/
Worry	/wĒri/	/w"ri/
Prefer	/prifç:r/	/prif"r/

(vii) In R.P. /" / and /æ/ are distinct phonemes whereas in IE, they sometimes occur in free variations. For example-

	R.P.	I.E.
Affect	/ "fækt/	/æfekt/    /æp <sup>h</sup> ekt/
Assume	/ "sju:m/	/æzjum/    /æzjum/



Abondon	/"bæ"n/	/æb"nd"n/	/æb"nd"n/
Advance	/"dva:nts/	/ædva:ns/	/æb"nd"n/
Salien	/seili"nt/	/sailænt/	/ædb <sup>h</sup> a:ns/
			/sailænt/

## 2. Steps to reduce Mother Tongue Influence (MTI):

MTI is an inability of a person to pronounce certain words as a native speaker. However, many people misinterpret this definition of MTI with inability to speak good English. These are two different things. Learning English language is easy but at the same time it takes a lifetime to learn a language, and then another lifetime to master it. When we learn English at schools some of us get lucky and have very good English teachers which make our base strong but at the same time the teachers themselves are suffering from the impact of MTI.

One cannot completely overcome MTI anyhow; however, one can minimize it up to 98%, if one works hard on communication skills. The basic difference between an Indian speaking English and Americans and Brit's is the fact that the latter drops their lower jaws while they speak, they open up their mouth more and therefore, the sound is more crispy and clear. Indian tendency of not opening the mouth hampers the correct mouth formation necessary for the sounds. One can surmount the barrier of MTI only when he or she practices reading English loudly in front of a mirror. Once one see one's may mouth formation, it will help one a lot in mouth formation. Another important aspect is voice modulation and intonation. That is the speech must not be flat at all. It should be rhythmic. One must understand where the stress must be added in a sentence. It adds resonance to the tone that carries emotions and expressions. An Indian cannot acquire American accent in two weeks or two months training, just as an American cannot speak Hindi without MTI after same duration training. What we can actually do is to reduce the MTI from the English pronunciation and make the tone rhythmic and crispy.

The first step that we can take is to prepare the phonology of our Mother Tongue. The second step is to compare it with the phonology of English (RP). For instance let me give you the example of Varanasi:

## 2.1. Specific features of English Spoken at Varanasi (VE):

### 2.1. a. Vowel and Diphthong System:

Apart from the features that VE share with IE, VE has certain specific striking features. It is observed that speakers generally have a tendency to replace /O/ by /a:/ in all positions of the words I.E. initially, medially and finally because Banarsi Bhojpuri does not contain /O/ phoneme. This replacement occurs due to the productiveness of /a:/ in Banarsi Bhojpuri and looking at this feature we can say Banarsi Bhojpuri an a:-ful language. For example-

	R.P.	V.E.
Fault	fO:lt/	/fa:lt/
Law	/lO: /	/la: /
Hall	/hO:l/	/ha:l/
Knowledge	/nO:lIdʒ/	/na:ledʒ/
Call	/kO:l/	/ka:l/
Model	mO:d"l/	/ma:del/
Logic	/lO:dʒik/	/la:dʒik/
Drawing	/drO:iK/	/dra:iKg/
Hostel	/hO:st"l/	/ha:st"l/
Offer	/O:f"r/	/a:p"r/
Cloth	/klO:è/	/kla:t"l/
Jogging	/dʒO:giK/	/dʒa:giK/
Concept	/kO:nsept/	/ka:nsæpt/
Water	/wO:t"r/	/wa:t"r/
Economics	/i:k"nOmiks/	/ika:na:miks/
Inkpot	/iKkpO:t/	/inkpa:t/

(ii) In V.E. /" / insertion and deletion is normal without affecting its meaning. For example



	R.P.	V.E.
Family	/fæm"li/	/p <sup>h</sup> æmli/
Visible	/viz"bl/	/vizib"l/
Global	/gl"ubl/	/glob"l/
Couple	/kĕpl/	/kĕp"l/
Fable	/feibl/	/feb"l/
Able	/eibl/	/eb"l/
Specific	/sp"sifik/	/spæsiph <sup>h</sup> ik/

These features generally occur because Banarsi Bhojpuri has inherent /"/ in all phonemes.

(iii) In V.E. /"u/ is sometimes replaced by /a:/ It is not quite productive. For example

	R.P.	V.E.
Job	/dʒ"ub/	/dʒa:b/
Progress	/pr"ugres/	/pra:græs/
Process	/pr"uses/	/pra:ses/

## 2.1. b. Consonantal System

(i) In V.E. labio-dental fricative /v/ is generally replaced by bilabial plosive /b<sup>h</sup>/. This feature of replacement generally occurs in initial position. For example-

	R.P.	V.E.
Vocal	/v"uk"l/	/b <sup>h</sup> ok"l/
Value	/væljʊ:/	/b <sup>h</sup> æljʊ/
Vary	/ve"ri/	/b <sup>h</sup> æri/
Visit	/vizit/	/b <sup>h</sup> idʒit/
Victory	/vikt"ri/	/b <sup>h</sup> ikt"ri/
Vanish	/væniʃ/	/b <sup>h</sup> æni/

R.P. has labio-dental fricative /f/ but in V.E. it is generally pronounced as bilabial plosive because Banarsi Bhojpuri has bilabial /p<sup>h</sup>/. For example.

	R.P.	V.E.
Fault	/fOlt/	/p <sup>h</sup> a:lt/
Fruit	/fru:t/	/p <sup>h</sup> rut/
Fellow	/f"l"u/	/p <sup>h</sup> ælo/

First	/fɜːst/	/p <sup>h</sup> st/
Offer	/Of <sup>h</sup> r/	/a:p <sup>h</sup> r/

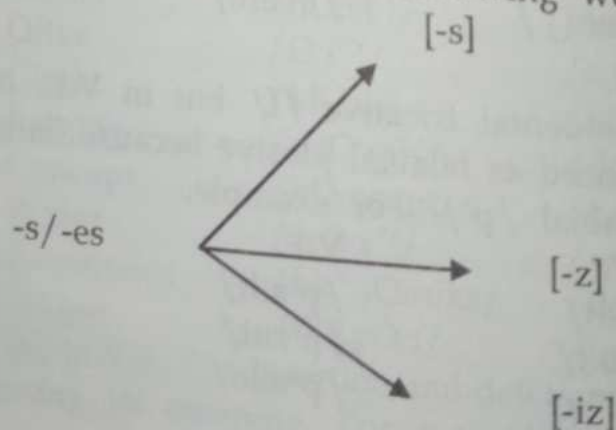
(iii) There are other features, which normally occur due to the regional varieties or mother tongue influence. R.P. has two phoneme /dʒ/ & /z/ but in V.E. it is generally interchangeable. For example-

	R.P.	V.E.
His	/hiz/	/hidʒ/
Was	/wOz/	/wadʒ/
Measure	/meɜ <sup>h</sup> r/	/meidʒ <sup>h</sup> r/
Because	/bikOz/	/bika:udʒ/
Please	/pli:z/	/pli:dʒ/

English spoken at Varanasi is strongly coloured by local flavour. Features which are productive and predominate in English of Varanasi show an impact of Banarasi Bhojpuri. These features also show the influence of speakers' own mother tongue. English is in the process of localization in Varanasi. Being an educated mass if we concentrate on the striking phonological differences, we can overcome the impact of MTI to certain extent.

Apart from the striking phonological differences, if we concentrate on phonological conditioning that will also help substantially to reduce MTI because phonological conditioning is regular in nature in any language.

For instance let us take the example of English number system: in English, generally, a singular countable noun is made plural by adding a morphological suffix *-s/-es*. But this morphological suffix is realized (pronounced) as [-s], [-z] and [-iz] in the following words:





<u>Singular</u>		-	<u>Plural</u>	
Cat	/kæt/	-	Cat-s	/kæt -s/
Dog	/dɒ g/	-	Dog-s	/dɒ g -z/
Box	/b ɒks/	-	Box-es	/bɒ ks -iz/

Is there any pattern working behind it? Yes.

We will try to explore the reasons behind the above and similar variations like past tense marker '-ed' is realized as /-t/, /-d/ and /-id/. These simple but effective steps will definitely improve our English pronunciation.

Everyone is facing this kind of problem, and we shouldn't think that we are the only one suffering; of course our MTI will take precedence over our second language. You would be able to pin-point your mistakes in a period of time and will be able to correct yourself. If we really need to work upon our MTI, we should be conscious while speaking. And sometimes the problem arises when we are not aware whether we are speaking the right/wrong pronunciation. I can give you a suggestion: just make it a habit of voice-recording of your two minutes article daily. After recording, listen to it again and again, then you would come to know your problem and try speaking that word again and again. One day you'll be able to improve.

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## Literary Translation in English as an Emerging Trend

Mahjabeen Neshat Anjum\*

Translation Studies and most specifically 'Literary Translation' in English language have gradually evolved itself as a genre. In a multi-lingual and pluri-lingual nation like India, literary translation has emerged as the most essential trend to make the regional literature or the Bhasha literature widely accessible to the national and international audience. In the post-colonial India, with the formation of a separate category of writing, *The Indo-English* or the *Indian English Literature*, literary translations got momentum, which ushered into a multi-lingual literary Renaissance. Moreover, it was realized that diverse languages and variety of languages can be linked in various ways and one of the most effective ways is translation. In Indian conditions, translation is 'ineluctable'. English has gained universality and strength as a link-language, interlinking the different regions of the country linguistically. The position of English as a language of power endowed it with extra-ordinary mileage in literary translation. In multi-lingual India, literary translation between English and a vernacular e.g. Bengali became celebrated measures of linguistic proficiency. Keeping all these facts in mind, this paper focuses broadly on the relevance of literary translation in giving an identity to the Indian English writing within and across the national boundaries as well a source of cultural exchange.

Before going further in my deliberation, I would like to clarify in the beginning that by 'literary translation' into English what I mean specifically is the translation of 'Indian Literature into English'. From the historical perspective, English language has been acknowledged as a foreign language, imposed and thrust upon by the British

Empire on the Indians. And hence, it has always been treated as a language of colonial power, a language of British ruling class assertive and dominant, accused of the marginalization of the other vernacular languages of the country. Despite all the allegations of supremacy over other indigenous Indian languages, English has been unequivocally regarded as the most powerful by the linguists and the scholars. When we talk of literary translation and when we talk of literary translation into English, certain questions emerge: Why literary translation? Why English for Literary translations? What brought this literary Renaissance in the form of literary translation in the post-colonial India? What were the precipitating factors behind this emergence of English as trend? To get an answer, we have to look into literary happenings in both the colonial and the post-colonial periods in our country. To begin with: Why literary translation? In this context, I would like to quote from S.D.Thirumala Rao, who regards translation as a 'great necessity' and very beautifully delineates his thoughts: '...every language might not have a Valmiki, a Vayasa, a Homer, a Rumi, a Dante, a Shakespeare, a Hugo, a Tolstoy and a Dickens. Their writings have become a part of the world literary ethos. Thanks to the translation of their work in different languages....If Schopenhaur declared the Upanishads to be his solace in life it was only after reading the translations of those books.<sup>1</sup>

I would like to further enquire: What were the precipitating factors in imparting a realization among the Indian literary figures towards the necessity of Indian literature in English and giving this idea a momentum? Going back to the colonial period, we find that the early seeds of this literary renaissance were sown by the honour bestowed on Rabindra Nath Tagore in the form of the Nobel Prize in literature for his own translated version of his poetical work "Gitanjali" as early as in the year 1913. The appreciation and acclamation reached such a height that an English poet of W.B. Yeats' stature lauded the inclusion of Tagore's poetical composition in the *Oxford*



*Book of Modern Verse: 1892-1935* as a notable translator of the period. It might be taken as the beginning of a new era in the domain (sphere) of literary translation into English. A strong affirmative support in favour of English swayed over the literary scenario among Indians. In the same year, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the great social reformer wrote to Lord Amherst against the Sanskritic system of education and recommended the use of English in India. In fact, many Indians themselves started pleading for English Education and found Orientalism and Anglicism parallel and not Conflicting forces, both largely supporting English.

The Nobel Prize awarded to Tagore for his English translation of *Gitanjali* 'afforded non-English writers a level of visibility and circulation', and the awareness generated by this helped in the globalization of the Indian literary scene. 'It was only in the early decades of the twentieth century that Indian translators began to go beyond, behind and around texts from English literature in order to reach out to texts from other languages.'<sup>2</sup> In the post-colonial period, the facts and figures of the multilingual Literary translation got transformed with the establishment of a central Academy of letters like Sahitya Academy 'whose function is to work actively for the development of Indian letters and to set high literary standards to foster and co-ordinate literary activities in all the Indian languages to promote through them all the cultural unity of the country.'<sup>3</sup> Their publications make a particular work in one language available through translation in several other languages. That all the reference volumes published by the Sahitya Academy have been in English and that its literary Periodical 'Indian Literature' is also in English establishes the fact that English continues to be the medium of the widest literary exchange among the Indians. In order to deliberate on the question: Why literary translation into English? The ideas and opinions of the Indian and Western scholars are needed to be focused.

In his book *Indian Writing in English*, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar locates: "If English is admittedly a link language in India today, Indian writing in English, besides being a distinctive literature in its own right, is also a link literature in the context of India's Pluralistic landscape."<sup>4</sup> He asserted the truth that 'the base for Indian Writing in English is much wider and stronger today than at the time of independence.' Because 'English makes communication possible within a multi-lingual country like India, between the different commonwealth countries and between the commonwealth and the rest of the world.'<sup>5</sup> Srinivasa Iyengar's further pontifications in this regard is worth mentioning here:

English literature has continued to provide an impetus and an inspiration to writers, whether they write in English or one of the indigenous languages. Commonwealth literature today is thus spearheaded by literature in English, and the literature in the indigenous languages is also influenced by English literature and by western literature accessible through translations in English. English makes communication possible within a multi-lingual country like India, between the different commonwealth countries, and between the commonwealth and rest of the world.<sup>6</sup>

Translation in English emerged as an essential requirement and subsequently a component of Indian English literature. Indo-English literature refers to 'translation into English from literature in the Indian languages'. Sri. V. K. Gokak applies the term Indo-English literature to the works of "translations by Indians from Indian literature into English." Gokak stated categorically that Tagore's *Gitanjali*, the only Asian book, which has been awarded the Nobel prize in literature—is a contribution, not to Indo-Anglian, but to Indo- English literature.<sup>7</sup> In order to recognise and to establish a separate identity of Indian English literature, Gokak expressed his view by saying that "one can not help thinking that one of the befitting ways of honouring the message and significance of *Gitanjali* is to create a body of Indo-English writing, which will wear *Gitanjali* as a jewel



in its crown."<sup>8</sup> Another Indian scholar, M. K. Naik expresses almost the same point of view, when he says: The Indo-English writer can turn his situation to a great advantage by drawing more actively from the rich reservoir of the Indian languages and literatures. At the same time, he may use his inwardness with English to create a common pool of Indian literatures in English translation, from which Indian writers from various reasons may draw free in search of meaningful connections in theme and technique."<sup>9</sup>

Vijay Dharwakar's views too in this regard are worth mentioning:

Indian English literature by itself is inadequate to represent who we are to the rest of the world. Only a broad representation of the full range of Indian literatures, translated in a world language such as English can do what is needed. The quality translations into English can enrich Indian literature. Good English translations of the works of the regional writers would enrich not only India's but also contribute substantially to world literature.<sup>10</sup>

Also the Western scholars of Indian writing in English have expressed their positive outlook on the translation of Indian literature into English. Regarding the legitimacy and utility of English as a language of creativity and translation for the Indians, Dr. Ludmila Volna rightly expresses her views: "English language is not alien to the Indian. It ceased to be alien ... Indians have appropriated it in the same way (and perhaps even more so) as anyone else who is not a native speaker of English and has come to work with/in English. I am persuaded that a second language can become a means of expression for emotion."<sup>11</sup>

Another Western scholar in Indian literature Dr. Christopher Rollason points out the fact that many Indian writers who have had all of their education in English and who describe English as coming more naturally to them than their native language. In this connection, he cites the example of Jayant Mahapatra, who is bilingual and having a proficiency in both the English and Oriya, has published in both the languages. He emphatically

speaks in favour of the "translation of the works form Indian languages including Hindi into English: The more the better"<sup>12</sup> In a multi-lingual and pluralistic nation like India, translation emerged as a unifying force to resolve the conflicting issues associated with the diversity of languages. The empowerment of the certain languages and the marginalization of others often 'unleash diversive and disruptive forces and turns languages from a socio-cultural reservoir and communicative force into a political issue.'<sup>13</sup>

There has been a remarkable shift of focus by translators from the colonial period to the present time. In that period, behind the translation of the Indian classical literature, there was an element of exoticism. But it has shifted to the pragmatic aspect of translation. It can be found that the interest of the Indian translators has been to explore the ways in which the English language can be stretched to carry some authentic Indian expresses. At the same time, there has been an attempt to view the English language as one of the Indian languages. It is for this reason that many Indian writers in English have also taken to translating from Indian languages. In view of the tradition of multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism, translation becomes very important for us for negotiating social tensions, language conflicts, and social transition and for identifying a puerility of linguistic expressions and cultural experience and cultural experience as also for understanding the remarkable unity underlying there. Moreover, in a multi-lingual and pluralistic Indian nation 'translation' emerged as a unifying force to resolve the conflicting issues associated with the diversity of languages. The reconciliatory role of translation and more so into a link language like English in resolving the inter language conflict assigned a new significance to translation.

Another important aspect of literary translation is its cultural transmission and interchange. Translations have helped in the evolution of languages and culture. It has



been looked from the perspective of a bridge for carrying across values between cultures. A good translator is not only a bilingual but bi-cultural. Regarding the function and utility of translation, we need to consider "not only the way in which translation creates the original texts, but also that such transcreation in a sense have their own lives and lead to different cultural and literary traditions."

The critics and scholars acknowledge unanimously that literary translation provides a synergy to biculturalism and inter-cultural dialogue. Prof. Amiya Dev has tried to look at literary translation as a 'cultural phenomenon' in the sense that the work of translation 'creates ripples in the culture of the target language.' A translator in the process of making a direct linguistic and cultural transfer is at the same time writing in the sense of an author writing.<sup>14</sup> It has been found that "Whenever a language or a culture has been perceived as being rich and dominant, and as a repository of ideas aesthetics and parties, there has been a rush to translate from it into other 'receptor' languages and cultures"<sup>15</sup>.

Pluri-lingual or Multi-lingual literary translations explore the cultural identities in the contemporary world. 'Multi-cultural writers are in the best position to seek out the parallels of excellence in the culture they know and show the relative quality contained in them for the other cultures concerned. In the process, they may discover universal qualities in very diverse cultures and on these an international culture could grow.'<sup>16</sup> Having been recognized as a substantial component of Indian English writing, literary translation is confronted with challenges - challenges related to the issues of fidelity and equivalence. Why it poses a challenge? Because: A translated text needs to strike a balance between fidelity to the original and culture and accessibility to the host culture. Almost the same view point has been expressed by Qurratulain Hyder, the great Urdu fiction writer. She says:

Translation requires both skill and creativity. The translation has a disciplined and responsible role. She has to be faithful to text and at the same time interpret the original text in a way to render the translation as readable as the original. She has to find the way to make the literal translation also convey the translation of the spirit of the text.<sup>17</sup>

As literary translation plays stupendous role, "it has to be looked upon as a reconstruction device, as sort of recasting exercise, transferring from one language tradition to another. A language tradition does not merely confine itself to core grammar in the conventional sense i.e. Phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon of a given code, but it covers the entire gamut of cultural and communication ethos."<sup>18</sup> (including rhetorical systems)

Whatever said and done, the literary translation has played a magnanimous role in the resurgence and the renaissance of the Indian literary scene. It has to be re-asserted and re-affirmed that in the slow emergence of national identity and growth of the Indo-English literature literary translation has contributed a lot. What is required now is to accelerate the pace of translation of the modern Indian literature into English and make it accessible globally. I would like to conclude my deliberation by supporting with the following words of Thirumala Rao:

Let us build a new tower of Babel based on mutual understanding of each other's language through translations. The new tower of Babel might not reach heaven but it would certainly reach people's hearts. Earlier, one language was torn asunder into diverse speeches. Now, let the different language be united through translations. This perhaps is the path that God always intended mankind to follow.<sup>19</sup>

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## [Be]ing, Aesthetics, and Epiphany in the Exploration of *To the Lighthouse* as a Modernist Bildungsroman

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"'About life, about death; about Mrs. Ramsay'-no, she thought, one could say nothing to nobody' (*To the Lighthouse* 1927:132-133)".

"...[I]t is more than an aesthetic exercise proposing art as an alternative to rational thought in investigating life (*To the Lighthouse* 1927:XIV)".

"With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the center. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision (*To the Lighthouse* 1927:154)".

Literary theory, literary criticism and literature with its different genera, on the one hand, have candidly endeavored to identify and to explicate the Platonic 'Truth', Lacanian 'Real', Heideggerian 'Aletheia' and Derridian 'Logos', but on the other, they with all complexity and circumspection have also tried to probe the meaning of life or in other words they have plunged deeper into the uncanny and mysterious fathom of life, which may allow them to understand the complex which forms life. The aforesaid propositions of literary theory, criticism and different forms of literary genre exemplify that they if intend to examine the nature of Reality and Truth: they are equally subsumed into the process of unraveling the phenomenological and hermeneutic understanding of the nature, form and meaning of life. The philosophical underpinnings of the structuralists' model of looking at the reality and the meaning of life, propose the basic topoi of the opposition between the

*ousia* and the *eidos*. *Ousia* refers to the ontological essence whereas the *eidos* represents the observable forms of *Ousia*. In other words, *ousia* represents the ontological reality of the human existence, which is realized in the form of [be]; whereas *eidos* connotes the processes of the formation of the being or the self and subjectivity through the complex detour of žižekian subjectivization or through the uncanny methods of the formation of the consciousness with the help of unconscious and subconscious layers of human mind. Hence, it refers to the ontological realities and epistemological processes which are inextricably intertwined into the complex textures of economic, political, social, linguistic, and cultural complexities. [Be]-ing thus refers to the ontological realities and epistemological processes which are inextricably intertwined into the complex textures of economic, political, social, linguistic, and cultural complexities which also address the inevitable questions of life and death. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) addresses the question of life and death and the location of meaning with the existence of being. The novel in question recounts for the ontological existence of human life which can effectively be seen in the state of [be], however the suffix [-ing] refers to the progressive action and the state of the epistemological construction of the self, consciousness, ideology and identity which compositionally define and characterize the life of the human. It further explicates the poststructuralists' apodosis that there is a continuum between life and death.

*To the Lighthouse* is one of his most personal and hence autobiographical novels in which she probes her past by recounting her father, Leslie Stephen, in the character of Mr. Ramsay and her mother in the character of Mrs. Ramsay. Virginia idealizes her mother and represents her for everything that is beautiful, life-giving, spontaneous, intuitive, loving, and natural but she hates her father in the same way as little James does in the novel which describes their family life together. However, she



profoundly loves and admires him for his benevolence and intellectual capacities but hates him for his unmanly and despotic imposition and misogynistic attitude. The novel allows her to investigate and to examine what life is and how it is constituted and how life and death are inextricably intertwined with each other and how the existence of one implies another. Therefore, Woolf through the character of Lily Briscoe, in part-III of the novel asks:

What is the meaning of life? That was all a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one. This, that and the other; herself and Charles Tansley and the breaking wave; Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together; Mrs. Ramsay saying 'Life stand still here'; Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent( as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent) - this was of the nature of revelation (*To the Lighthouse* 1927:120).

Virginia Woolf covers the entire journey of life and death through all parts of the novel namely 'The Window', 'Time Passes', and 'The Lighthouse'. 'The Window' represents the division between the external and the internal world, of the family and of the self. It reflects upon the complex texture of relationship among Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay and all other children and characters in the novel. The novelist experiences the oasis like situation when she says:....[H]ere, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished, waterily (P 42). Further, the first part of the novel irresolutely oscillates between the dolorous demise of life and the celebration of happiness in life. Mrs. Ramsay who is the choreographer of the lives of others once feels that 'There were central problems; suffering; death; the poor (P 43); but she also enjoys the moment of happiness when Paul and Minta comes to marry each other. 'Time Passes' records the

death of Mrs. Ramsay and many characters of the novel. The inception of the second part of the novel deals with the 'down-pouring of immense darkness (93)' as it expresses the death of the central character who has been trying to create an order from the existing chaos and disorder. It in fact establishes the ontological reality of time which is ubiquitous and yet momentary and can only be realized through the psychological reality of *dûree*. Similarly, 'The Lighthouse' represents the predicament of flux and insubstantiality. Thus, the entire novel revolves around the contest between death and life, order and flux, creative imagination and the scraps, and fragments of ordinary life recounts Daniel R. Schwarz in his *The Transformation of the English Novel, 1890-1930*, 1989: 293.

*To the Lighthouse* charts the growth and development of the character of Lily Briscoe who crosses several wanton ways of the mysterious maze of the luminous halo of life from 'The Window' to 'The Lighthouse' where she divulges the basic characteristics of the female *Bildungsroman*, which espouses the cardinal propositions of Elizabeth Abel and her colleagues what they have proposed in their *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* (1980). It exhibits the fact that the female *Bildungsroman* does not necessarily follow the trajectory of the male *Bildungsroman* or the thematics of Goethean *Bildungsroman* which is rooted in the concept of autonomous subjectivity and in the harmonious and dialectical integration of that subjectivity with the external world. *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* (1980) identifies two prominent forms of female *Bildungsroman*: the first is the narrative of apprenticeship which echoes the model of male *Bildungsroman*; the second is the narrative of awakening which portrays a break from marital authority and which may be compressed into brief epiphanic moments. However, the term *Female Bildungsroman* is itself quite problematic has been espoused by Susan Fraiman. Similarly, Gregory Castel in his *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (2006) argues that:



...[W]hat is often referred to as the "female Bildungsroman" constitute a unique movement within literary history that can be understood either as a creative and critical reaction to the male -oriented discourse of Bildung, which can be traced to the late eighteenth century and writers like Mary Wollstonecraft, or as a tradition that has no substantial relation, reactive or other forms of auto/biographical or confessional discourses written by women in tradition extending back at least to the medieval period and the mystical of St. Theresa and Julian of Norwich. (2006:214)

Virginia Woolf through her novels does not only explore a separate space of female self-development but discovers a common space which is commonly shared by the male as well as the female. It is this common space that the present paper seeks to explore with regard to understanding Woolf's critical modernist *Bildungsroman*. Woolf represents a deconstructive form of phallogocentric identity, subjectivity, and authority. The paper may also argue that her work is perhaps the most compelling evidence in support of the claim that the modernist's strategy of re-inhibiting the *Bildungsroman* form and destabilizing its dialectical structure is the ideal condition for the progressive and critical instauration of Bildung. Woolf's modernist *Bildungsroman* brings our attention to the fact that the female *Bildungsroman* defies both major forms of Bildung formation: the aesthetic-spiritual form in her *The Voyage Out* and the socio-pragmatic form in her *Mrs. Dalloway*. The aforementioned forms of *Bildungsromane* emphasize upon the complexity of interiority and exteriority of the reality, complexity of time and space and the co-existence of memory and the present. All this compositionally questions the syntagmatic growth of the Bildung. Further, they also bring question of gender and sex into the complex web of the growth of the character as Woolf writes in her *Three Guineas* "it was with a view to marriage that her body was educated...all that was enforced upon her in order that she might preserve her body intact for her husband" (156-157). Similarly, in *A Room of One's Own* Woolf states

"women have served for centuries as looking glasses positioning the magic and delicious power reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. Without that power probably the earth would still swamp" (60). Moreover, if a woman "begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished. How is he to go on giving judgment, civilizing natives, making laws, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and at dinner at least twice the size he really is" (60). Luce Irigaray in her *The Speculum* critiques the role played by woman in the constitution of male subjectivity which indeed lights upon Woolf's insight about instrumentality of the woman. She says "Is woman the reverse of the coin of man's ability to act and to move around the physical world we are calling 'place'? Is she unnecessary in and of herself, but essential as the non-subjective subjectum? As that which can never achieve the status of the subject, at least for/by herself? Is she this indispensable condition where by the living entity retains and maintains and perfect himself in his self-likeness?" (165). Woolf in her *To The Lighthouse* like D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* and many other novels emphasizes upon relationship between man and woman as in woman, man finds the ideal speculum: smooth silent space on which his own image can be created. In this entire process woman becomes an inevitable part of the complex matrix of human relationship as the woman is herself is an essence. This relationship in which the implicit objective of the subject or the non-subject is towards the attainment of truth, meaning or reality, is highly debated and discussed in almost all novels of Virginia Woolf. She has brought out the thematics of human relationship through marriage because it is a motive of marriage that she believes may provide meaning to one's existence.

One of the themes which is quite common in the novels of Virginia Woolf, beginning from *Voyage Out* to *To The Lighthouse* is the celebration of marriage what



Franco Moretti calls "the aesthetic dimension of everyday life" (*The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* 81). Marriage is always a positive move for the man as well as the woman in order to actualize and to achieve the *Bildung*. It is through the motive of marriage the individual gets the imprints of social and cultural realities. In other words, the social and cultural apparatuses through the emotive of marriage intrudes deeper into the psychological reality of the individual and with great astuteness subjectivises the identity of the character. Gregory Castle (2006) reinstates that "for in the bildungsroman tradition, marriage is always a positive move for men, and enduring symbol of successful achievement of *Bildung*. In the modernist *Bildungsroman* of Lawrence and Hardy, as we have seen, marriage is a predominant issue" (238). The novelistic firmament of Virginia Woolf represents an irreconcilable world of ambivalence and ambiguity which is primarily guided by the *pharmakon* of fragmentation, frigidity, fright and flux and hence it makes an implicit attempt to identify and to establish at least a seeming order which can infuse at least a temporary or momentary meaningfulness. This realization of temporary meaningfulness allows her to engrave deeply upon marriage, dinner party, aesthetics and epiphany.

Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* strongly avers for the institution called marriage because she understands that the contingency and the indeterminateness of life can, if not in all, but at least in some, may provide meaning to life. It is something which may integrate the physical and the spiritual and may also inculcate a sense of spiritual life which may consequently allow the individual to lead a meaningful life in a community. The novel in its opening section elaborately presents different pairs who according to Mrs. Ramsay should marry in order to attain at least seeming order in life and hence she is propelled to articulate that "...[P]eople must marry; people must have children" (44). Further she says

"Marriage needed—oh all sorts of qualities; one—she need not name it—that was essential" (44). Her constant deliberation and contemplative mood in the novel reflects that she espouses the institution called marriage because it provides a fertile ground to the feminine intuition, art, aesthetics and a music of life which is completely in opposition to the sterile, objective logic of a patriarchal world which aims at asserting the self rather than identifying the cusp of meaning which may make life meaningful. Mrs. Ramsay collects several individuals in the novel and bring them into a pair so that they may marry which may allow them to attain the truth of life and hence, she says "Smiling for an admirable idea that had flashed upon her this very second—William and Lily should marry—she took the heather—mixture stocking, with its criss-cross steel needles at the mouth of it, and measured it against James's leg" (19). Similarly, she also proposes the pair of Prue and Tansely, Paul and Minta and, of course, of Lily and William Bankes. Finally, their marriage "...[H]ad made her to feel happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness and it silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as day light faded, and the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled and broke upon the beach of the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, it is enough! It is enough!" (47).

The novel in the context is a veritable attempt by Virginia Woolf not only to expound the complex web of social relationship but also to delineate the basic philosophy of life and its truth. The novel has been plotted and structured with a remarkable *fabula* to understand the form and the nature of truth. For Woolf truth of life cannot be understood in totality only by looking at just one hemisphere of the universal phenomenon rather it can be attained by integrating or by establishing a continuum between those polemics which the structurelists have believed to be completely unbridgeable and



irreconcilable. The scene of the dinner party is an attempt by Woolf which portrays the complexity of the world and its objects but it also reinstates the possibilities of attaining meaning or truth. The location and the placement of dining table and the arrangement of objects on the table with the proper placement of family members represents the reality that the proper arrangements of the objects along with people in a social space cannot only add aesthetics to the life but may also amplify the possibilities of attaining meaning or truth. But the absence of the aforementioned situation may impel one to ask "...[W]hat does one live for? Why, one asked oneself, does one take all these pains for human race to go on? Is it so very desirable? Are we attractive a species?" (64).

The dinner scene in *To the Lighthouse* represents the syntagmatic and paradigmatic association of objects and the persons in the family or the geo-space which brings one closer to reality. Amid the contingent and fleeting nature of reality which is not less than a chaos gives rise to the situation of multiplicity and fragmentation. The process of fragmentation amid the complex phenomenon of contingency and fluxity has allowed several characters in the novels to experience the process of self-amelioration and maturation but most prominently the character of Lily which is an omniscient one in the novel. Lily moves from the first of the novel to the last sentence of the novel and in between she hoes under some remarkable metamorphosis by experiencing the crude realities of the physical world. Her initial participation in the novels begins with her engagement with art and aesthetics in the form of painting. She experiences a chain of epiphanies or the spot of time or the sudden revelations which brings her closer to the ethereal aspects of the truth along with the earthly disposition of objects. On the one hand Lily is observed to be engrossly involved into the world of prosaic realities which brings her closer to the socio-pragmatic model of understanding the meaning of life but on the other her experienced epiphanies make

her to understand the complexity of aesthetic-spiritual model of understanding the truth of life. Briscoe very deftly integrates the world of life with a world of art or in other words, the socio-pragmatic realities are integrated with the world of aesthetic realities. The integration of these two worlds along with her epiphanies allows her to understand the meaning of life. Lily Briscoe accordingly attains truth, *aletheia* or *logos* or the essence of life. Finally, she says "[i]t was done: it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue I have had vision" (154). Gregory Castle in his *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (2006) articulates the similar concern when he says "What we want is something spiritual added to life. Nothing is so ignoble that art cannot sanctify."

In sum, the synchronic realities and the dichromic imposition of the *Bildungsroman* genre of the novel represent the fact that the growth, education and apprenticeship of a character is guided by the historical, economic, cultural, linguistic and social realities. The formation of the *Bildung* is the consequence of the integration of [be] which is ontological in nature and the suffix [-ing] which is the epistemological construction hence, the construction of the subject out of the embryo of the self is the consequence of the complex process of subjectivization which results into the objectification of the subject. The objectification of the subject through the subjectivization is the integration of ontological realities and the process of epistemological constructions. Further, the study emphasizes upon the fact that the Aristotelian *substance* and Hiedeggrian *Aletheia* can be attained through aesthetics because it contains the *Quidditas*, *Claritas*, and *interitas*. These all compositionally attribute meaning not only to the work of art but also to life in general. The attainment of the aesthetic experience is the result of the series of epiphanies that one experience while undertaking the odyssey of life. The growth and development of Lily Briscoe's character is the result of all above mentioned factors.



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## Folk Drama as "Cultural Media": Reading North Indian Folk Drama *Nautanki*

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The Synchronic and diachronic discourse on Culture establishes it as a transmissible entity. It has a remarkable ability to communicate itself in various ways, most notably through tradition. Like culture, Raymond Williams argues, tradition is also a difficult word. By tradition, Williams generally means "a general process of handing down (319 Keywords)." Similarly, Steve Tellis in an attempt to define tradition, which he builds on "seven semantic strands" of Dan Ben Amos, takes a comprehensive approach and sees tradition as "cannon", "process", "mass", "culture", "langue", and "performance". He further adds that "[i]n each of them tradition is seen as something that might be termed as a pre-existing superorganic entity that has no tangible existence in itself, but that somehow finds its expression in specific activity of one kind or another (*Rethinking Folk Drama* 53)." Therefore, for the purpose of the study, it can be inferred from the above deliberations that culture of any nation can be seen by the *performance of its tradition*. And folk drama is one such medium through which tradition performs culture. In fact, folk drama has always been a very powerful medium and site, particularly, in India to analyse and study its culture. It is a very rich medium as it involves an audio-visual mode to convey its message. In order to further emphasise and ascertain the previous deliberation Steve Tellis is indeed essential to quote:

Folk drama is a theatrical performance, within a frame of make believe action shared by performers and its audience, that is not fixed by authority but is based in *living tradition* and displays greater or lesser variation in its *repetition of this tradition*; its performance, enacted over time and space



with practices of design, movement, speech, and/or music, engenders and/or enhances a sense of communal identity among those who participate in its delivery and reception." (*Rethinking Folk Drama* 140, *italics added*)

The above definition propounds the idea that folk drama is essentially based on the living tradition of its community. Simply put, it is a purveyor of the tradition of its existence and can be seen as a cultural repertoire of the region. Moreover, it works as a media, more so as a *cultural media* through which the culture of the region communicates through the medium of tradition. The concept of cultural media has been borrowed from Milton Singer's *The Cultural Pattern of Indian Civilization: A preliminary report of a methodological field study*. He basically studies the south Indian villages and their culture and its relation to the total culture of India. For the purpose of studying the Indian culture, Singer believes that "cultural performances" is one such area through which an understanding of a particular culture, in his case Indian, can be acquired. To find out these cultural performances as a site of culture, he says, one has to observe the cultural stage which includes family, temples, and more secular performances of the popular culture. Folk drama, for instance, falls under the third category, which is secular in nature, and can be observed in the house of patrons or some common site such as schools or village temples. This secular space is basically non-institutionalized. Furthermore, he notices that to understand the cultural continuum of India, the study of "cultural media" is imperative.

In the continuation of the above proposition, he says that in India people largely acquire the knowledge of their culture not through the printed text but through the oral medium. "[t]hese modes of communication—the cultural media" he says are "worthy of study" because "these forms and not printed books" transmit "the content of belief and practice expressing the living outlook of the majority of the population (32)." Additionally, they

are cultural in the sense that in their very form they comprise culture, such as folk culture in the case of Nautanki. Therefore, without a proper study of the cultural media, it is impossible to gauge the culture of a country.

He puts:

Song, dance, acting out, graphic and plastic art combined in many ways to express and communicate the content of Indian culture. A study of these different forms of cultural media in their social and cultural contexts would, I believe, reveal them as important links in that cultural continuum which includes village and town, Brahman and non-Brahman, north and south, the modern mass media culture and traditional folk and classical cultures, the little and the great traditions.(33)

The above paragraph divulges a significant aspect to understand the Indian culture which manifests in various ways. Basically, to understand the Indian culture one has to make a close scrutiny of the "cultural media". Here, it would be justifiable to discuss William O. Beeman who in his article "The Anthropology of theatre and Spectacle argues that "[a]nthropologists have studied performance largely for what it can show about other human institutions.... [l]ess study has been devoted to performance per se: its structure, its cultural meaning apart from other institutions, the conditions under which it occurs, and its place within the broad patterns of community life (370)." Further he argues that it has happened due to the fact that scholars have largely focused more on the performative aspects.

Further, to understand the cultural meaning of folk drama as a media, it needs to be understood as an environment. Since, in the process of performance it creates a distinct environment which infuses the audience completely during the performance. Parenthetically, this distinct quality of media has been studied separately by scholars, most notably by Marshal McLuhan. McLuhan in his *the Medium is the Message* (1967) argues that "[a]ll media work us over completely", and they are so powerful



in their approach that "they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered (26)." He further argues that media not only works as a medium but as an environment. This environment, in fact, has a deep aesthetic and psychological effect on human being. Therefore, to understand the culture of a society one has to understand the medium through which it communicates itself. This understanding can be developed by studying the way media works in an environment. In the light of aforementioned proposition, the present paper is an endeavour to study the north Indian folk drama, Nautanki as a cultural media. Though McLuhan has neither studies folk culture nor has he done any analysis of the Indian folk drama as a media, this paper attempts to locate his idea in the realms of folk culture of India in particular and folk drama Nautanki, as a media, in general. Additionally, this paper will further the idea of Milton Singer and makes a modest attempt to study Nautanki, a north Indian folk drama, as a "cultural media" to understand the Indian culture.

Nautanki, a north Indian operatic folk drama, is "first and foremost an entertainment medium", which employs "lively dancing, pulsating drumbeats, and full-throat singing (Grounds for Play 38)." It draws its material from Hindu and Muslim cultural traditions. As a cultural media Nautanki comes under both the linguistic and the non-linguistic media due to its performative nature which involves dance, songs, acting, along with the costumes. A close examination of the thematic patterns of Nautanki plays reveals a wide compass which borrows the material from mythology to folklore and also trespasses into the socio-political and socio-economic issues. Though the thematic patterns of Nautanki have always been open for reception of novel patterns, the attempt has been made to fix and to consolidate it by bringing about the printed text which has been called *Saangits*. These *Saangits* which are also termed as Chapbooks have survived in North India "...against the hazards of time, despite their fragile

form and lowly status" (*Grounds for Play* 86) which is exemplified by Hansen when she has explained that Nautanki "repertoire" contains "over four hundred" stories. In addition the printing of the Nautanki text also provides "...an exceptional opportunity to study a single folk genre in rich detail" (*Grounds for Play* 86). Another remarkable feature of the genre is that it has outsourced the stories from all the available sources from the region and culture of its belonging which have further been appropriated into the form of Nautanki. Hansen proposes that because of the wide range of the thematic of Nautanki, it may serve as "...a fascinating source of lore to those interested in the popular culture of North India" that "...embodies the taste and values of the ordinary person" which "...are concerned with central issues of Indian culture" (*Grounds for Play* 117). Similarly, Darius L. Swan reiterates the ongoing discourse of thematic of Nautanki when he explains that "[n]autanki has gathered its material from many sources: the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat*, Rajput stories, *Puranic* and other Indian legends, Arabic and Persian tales, historical incidents and characters, and movies and fictional materials" (258). The suitable representation of the issues in the form of the thematic from different geographical and cultural locations in Nautanki symbolically represents the association and incorporation of the masses from the varied regions of North India. Nemichandra Jain clearly explicates the said phenomenon of the folk plays in the following lines:

The performances were based on myths and legends which were already well known to the people and with which they were easily able to identify themselves. Thus, the theatre became once again, besides the source of entertainment and relaxation after a day's hard work, an occasion for participation in a shared experience of the community (*Indian Theatre* 50).

The above proposition discusses that the themes of Nautanki are derived from the rich cultural source of mythology and folklore which have been the unending



source of the entertainment for the rural masses who find it relaxing and relieving moments after the humdrum of the mundane world. M.L. Varadpande places a special emphasis on mythology as an integral part of the rural Indian culture that has also been the reason of the association of the people with the genre:

Mythology is still a part of the living culture of India, particularly of rural India. Deities of Indian pantheon are deeply rooted in day-to-day life of the people and due to their close association; they are more a fact than a fiction. Indian folk theatre is mythological in character, borrowing themes and conventions liberally from its repertory. Character from epic, puranas, religious books appear as living reality on the stage of folk theatre (*History of Indian Theatre* 7)

Badri Narayan has also reasserted the role of mythology in the lives of the rural masses in his article "Honour, Violence and Conflicting Narratives." He points out that for the rural masses, "...apart from its entertainment value, folklore also acts as a record of social events and processes. Myths thus act as a social texts which record the various kind of conflict, negotiation, and human and social relations that take place in society. This folklore carries with it social memory, but it also creates memory for the people" (8-9). Narayan further establishes that "...the folk theatre or *nautankis* are a true cultural representation of the people and play a significant role in shaping the social memory of the society" (12). The world of Nautanki "appeals to a wide-cross section of Indian people" (Mehrotra 98). The aforementioned discussion places Nautanki beyond the rubric of time which is attributed to the deep-rooted association of Nautanki into the mythological patterns. However, the Nautanki reiterates the fact that the masses are in advance aware of the enriched values and potentiality of its inherent entertainment which further reveals that the thematic patterns of Nautanki exist in the unconscious

of the masses which is exemplary in the fact that even the repetition of the same story in the performance over and over again may not lose its mass appeal. Nautanki themes have maintained its fervour due to the shared cultural and social values embedded into the texture which is realised through the mythological and social thematic concerns. In addition, for the rural masses folk theatres have also been a continuous source of knowledge by imparting the social and value-based moral awareness which has further shaped their collective unconscious. Similarly, Deepti Priya Mehrotra observes the same phenomenon of folk theatres "[t]ravelling theatre communicated ancient messages as well as contemporary ones, and helped create a network of shared cultural, political and moral values" (98). The inherent cultural values into the performance of Nautanki, which is shared by the audience through the enactment of thematic patterns, ascribes it the status of the cultural media. Moreover, the audiences' familiarity with the story and simplicity of its rendition in the performance makes Nautanki comprehensible to the folk masses. The yet another fact of the Nautanki audience is that they do not belong to any so called trained 'interpretive community' as Stanley Fish puts it rather they belong to the common masses, however, the comprehensive ability of the Indian audience stems from the historical sedimentation of the mythology and social practices that are being performed in the form of the folk plays. These stories have been an integral part of their tradition which has been transmitted to them through generations. Nautanki stories transcend, in this way, the boundary of a mere story and hence become the part of their collective unconscious which has a symbolic significance. Story of Raja Harischandra, for instance, exemplifies the acceptance and celebration of the repeated performance of one of the regular thematic patterns which is a part of the value system and hence an integral element of the unconscious of the masses. Its popularity is due to the fact that it



deals with the basic principle of Indian culture such as truth, simplicity, and spiritual enlightenment. In a similar fashion, Kathryn Hansen attributes the Nautanki's association with the unconscious of the masses to the commonness which it depicts. She argues that rather than depicting the "culturally sanctioned divinity of kings in India", Nautanki plays portray the "royal office proceeds not from a king's godliness but from his simplicity and willingness to pursue virtue—especially by living among poor" (118) which further suggests that the kings represent the extension of the collective self of the common masses as they suffer and undergo the same mundane realities that a common man encounters in his day-to-day life. It can be inferred from the above argument that whatever may be the origin of the story, Nautanki alters them according to the taste of the ordinary people. This alteration and accommodation allow the theme to approach the common masses in their own world which further through historical sedimentation becomes the part of their unconsciousness.

Apart from dealing with the traditional subjects matters which are predominantly Hindu in theme, Nautanki also addresses concerns of Arabic, Persian traditions. For instance, stories of Laila-Majanu, Shirin-Farhad, Khudadost are tales from Arabic and Persian culture which have become a part of Indian cultural repertoire. Bhishma Sahani in his paper "Contours of our Composite Culture" reiterates the same fact "[o]f course, our history has been such that, since time immemorial, traders, travellers, invaders, pilgrims, darvishes have been coming far and near, and many of them chose to make India their home, and in course of time, merged their identities with the overall identities of the Indian people" (37). Sahani sees the composite culture as an integral part of Indian cultural heritage "[i]t is not languages alone that have come down to us as our rich cultural heritage, it is the entire body of values, values of a rich, composite culture that we have inherited from our past and that

forms the sheer-anchor of our life" (36). The aforementioned discourse reaffirms the idea that in spite of the foreign origins Persian and Arabic themes have located itself in the nucleus of a common Indian psyche. For the common mass these tales are a matter of tradition rather than a mere foreign story. Further, Deepti Priya Mehrotra refers the composite culture as a part of popular theatre:

Hindu and Muslim folk cultures blended within the world of popular theatre.... [n]autanki language, music costumes and characters reflected a mixed social set-up. Muslim who settled in India from the eleventh century onwards adopted some practices of local Hindus, while Hindus gradually accepted Muslim influences....[t]he arts reflected a synthesis of cultures....[r]ajput miniature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries expressed the gilded refinements of Mughal courts as well as Hindu myths and legends. Nautanki too inherited the vitality of both cultural streams (165).

The above observations suggest that Nautanki themes of Arabic-Persian are actually the part of the folk culture of India which position itself as a cultural artefact which has further ensured its vitality and survival. Darilius L. Swan, too, observes this phenomenon "[t]he malleability of *nautanki* is an important factor in its continued vitality. All through its history it has shown a great capacity for borrowing and absorbing foreign elements to its particular needs and style...; it has made use of stories of romance and heroism from the Arabic-Persian.... (273). In a parallel fashion Mehrotra points out:

Nautanki drew from a mixed heritage, including Persian epic romances and Puranic stories. The language used has a sprinkling of Persianized Urdu, Hindi and local dialects. Even when the communal rift between Hindu and Muslims deepened all around, local traditions survived. Nautankiwalas were closely integrated within these local traditions (164).

The Arabic-Persian tales, particularly romantic love stories have been very popular among the rural masses. Scholars of Nautanki believe that popularity of love stories



are due to the absence of the notion of romantic love among rural masses (Hansen, Swann). Whatever may be the reason of its popularity, Arabic-Persian themes are part of the folk culture, and have become a part of collective unconsciousness of the rural folk of North India. Love story of Laila Majanu, Heer Ranjha and Sohni Mahiwal are some of the frequently performed plays in Nautanki. Themes in Nautanki are not only confined to the religious, moral and love stories but at the same time it also include the subjects of husband-wife relationship, matters of national importance and exploitation of farmers by landlords; bandits and *virangnas* (valour women) also constitute another important segment of the thematics. However, in traditional societies the relationship between men and women has always been a subject of concern. In Nautanki plays the subject of "...the erring husband and the faithful, forgiving wife" (Swann 259) have been very popular. The relationship between husband and wife in North India is a cultural phenomenon which has been constructed by the social institution of marriage. Again, Darius L. Swann has observed the same:

Likewise in *The Devoted Wife* the wife saves the husband by taking the blame for a murder of which he is wrongly accused. Her innocence is proved at the last minute and the repentant husband is restored to his wife. Thus the marriage bond is upheld and prostitution is condemned, not because of its effect upon the women who serves in the brothels, but because it is threat to the institution of marriage (260).

The above observation and analysis clearly propounds the general belief of the common masses about marriage in rural society. Marriage in Indian culture "...symbolizes both the restoration of society's law and taming of unruly womanhood" (Hansen 31). This fact has been dealt in Nautanki with sophistication, for instance, *Bhikharin*, *Bagum*, *Sati Bindiya* are some of the finest example of this sort.

These are some thematic concerns of Nautanki plays

which represent Indian culture. Apart from Nautanki as a "linguistic media", it also represents culture in its non-linguistic aspect—through acting, attire, music and spectacle. "[t]hese supportive mechanism of theatre and spectral", Beeman believes "not only fulfil the poetic function posited by Jakobson; they also fulfil a phatic function." This phatic function which Beeman has borrowed from Jakobson is "the aspect of interaction that keeps all parties engaged during the duration of communication (*Theatre and Spectacle* 386)."

The noted Nautanki scholar, Kathryn Hansen too reiterates the idea that "...as a form of communication, Nautanki operated as a mediated agency, crossing over several significant boundaries to transmit ideas back and forth" (258). She further argues that as a cultural media "theatre as a traditional medium of communication played a constitutive part in the production and preservation of North Indian culture" (258). Moreover, Nautanki works as a "two way cultural flow" between city and rural area. This "oral transmission of the learned or literate culture" (*Grounds for Play* 258) has always worked as a cultural flyover between urban and rural. Similarly, Devendra Sharma in his doctoral thesis *Performing Nautanki: Popular community folk Performances as sites of Dialogue and Social Change* (2006) too discovers that "Nautanki is used by its audiences as a medium to connect with their cultural roots. Nautanki itself was perceived by many audience members as an important part of their cultural heritage (146)."

From the above analysis it has been observed that Nautanki is a cultural media which transmits the Indian culture from one generation to other; from one region to other. In fact, it truly reflects the McLuhanin idea of medium as the message. For instance, to understand Indian culture proper study of Nautanki itself can serve the purpose as it represents a microcosm of Indian culture.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

Chopra, Vikram. Ed. *Shakespeare: The Indian Icon*.  
Delhi: The Readers Paradise, 2011. Pp.xvii+832. 194, Rs.  
1995.00

At first sight, the volume may appear to be either another coffee-table book or a dictionary-like compilation or another complete Shakespeare bound. But the book is none of this kind. It is, in fact, a collection of examples, prodigious in its dimensions, relating to the various kinds and modes of response to Shakespeare's plays, which India has registered in the last hundred years and longer. The result is that the book takes on an iconic or monumental quality. It is indeed *multum in parvo* in the sense that all this material is made available within two covers, though inevitably, those of a huge tome; it is all culled from various sources by Vikram Chopra, an energetic and enthusiastic cultivator in the field of Shakespeare, with love's labour certainly won. In a sense, the book is large-hearted in spirit appropriately for the large hearted nature, in many ways, of Indian culture.

The rich and varied mass of material is sensibly and conveniently classified into sections. We get to consult samples of what the Indian greats in the different fields of the life have felt and said about Shakespeare's plays. Among those represented are Gandhi, Nehru, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, and many such. It gives an idea of the impact of Shakespeare on the makers of modern Indian thought, literature and politics. There is a considerable deal of accounts of Shakespeare performance in India; productions in Indian styles of theatrical presentations are described by those such as Alkazi and John Russell Brown who oversaw them. Such productions, as well as those of translations and Indianised adaptations of the plays, are, no doubt, an important part

of the active currency of Shakespeare in India. Nowhere also could we come across such a collection which bears ample testimony about the deep influence of Shakespeare's works on the formation to the modern Indian mind.

Section 3, the largest and the longest section of the book, provides a generous range of essays, mostly already published, fittingly for a collection which brings together samples of what has been produced by Indian scholars on Shakespeare and the plays in general and of particular plays or their combinations. Scholars of at least three generations are represented, thus giving us an idea of shifts in critical sensibility and writing styles. It is not surprising that many essays in their preoccupation and involvement with ideas or poetry show little sense of the dramatic life, let alone the theatrical and stage dimensions of the plays. It has been so with scholarly-critical writing, generally, elsewhere, in the West, for example. In a cosmopolitan collection like the present one it is only to be expected that among the essays there are variations in standard. We should also remember that many of these writers here have not actually written much on Shakespeare, while there are quite a few who have done considerable work on him. But amidst all this, we should not miss the historical fact, that many teachers of English, in high schools and colleges, taught Shakespeare with passion and gusto, and several of them acquired their reputation as Shakespeare-wallah, though they hardly put pen to paper on Shakespeare except for paper setting. Of course, there has also been a long tradition of British men who worked with distinctions and scholarly-minded Indians who brought out editions of solid worth.

All this and the present book especially, show what a live institution and presence Shakespeare has been in our country. Curiously, Vikram Chopra has sandwiched the essays between quotations from multiple source, as if meant as epigraph and epilogue to each essay. However interesting these may be, they do not exactly match the contents of the essay concerned in all places. Chopra's introduction has much to commend it. It argues forcibly



for the relevance of Shakespeare, estimates his impact on India, and serves to navigate the reader through the book.

The book is handsomely got up, an example of good production. Given the formidable amount of material, it is laid out and presented well enough. An attraction is the considerable numbers of plates, photographs, etc. it carries. Vikram Chopra has taken pains to secure several of this kind, and the blocks of paintings which appear in the book are eye-catchers.

The real virtue of the book is that it makes available, all in one place, so many specimens of the Indian reader, and perhaps much more so those from abroad interested in knowing about it can conveniently refer to this volume. It is in this sense a valuable reference tool. If the book does not consider examples of how Shakespeare has influenced in several ways our language literatures that may be because this topic is not quite tractable in a collection of this kind. In sum, the book reiterates with illustration the fact of the currency of Shakespeare in India.

All said, Vikram Chopra has truly earned the permanent gratitude of Shakespearians all over the globe who will greet the opportunity the volume provides to have a glimpse of the panorama of the long-standing Indian reception of Shakespeare. The book has an enduring value. Furthermore, it is very tastefully and handsomely produced.

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Rajnath. *Criticism and Culture*. Delhi: Doaba Publications, 2011, Pp. 194, Rs. 150.00

Rajnath's *Criticism and Culture* claims to be imbued with his pluralistic critical attitude that he holds towards both criticism and culture. The cover page, displaying the faces of Shklovsky, Derrida, Eliot and Said, tends to attract the attention of any lover of literature. It is for the readers to decide the extent of conformity between the face value and the real value of the book.

*Criticism and Culture* is a collection of essays written and published separately over a stretch of twelve years except the essay on Eliot which came out in 1979. The book is divided into five sections. The first three sections make the theory part and the fourth section is a demonstration of practical criticism. The fifth section with two essays on literary criticism in India and an appendix gives the book a wider dimension.

The first section opens with the essay, "Russian Formalism and Its Relevance" where the author emphasizes the subtle distinctions between Russian Formalism and Anglo-American Criticism which have been overlooked by critics. Russian Formalists set an example of critical pluralism with a sense of discrimination based on generic differences. The second essay, "From Image to Idea: A Re-examination of T.S. Eliot's Unification of Sensibility" deals with Eliot's development as he moves from "sensuous apprehension of thought" to "philosophical thought", from Donne to Dante and from metaphysical technique (conceit or image) to metaphysical idea. Here, Rajnath takes pains to explain terms like emotion, feeling and thought in different shades of meaning, the way Eliot uses in various contexts. The author's in-depth study of Eliot corrects the sweeping generalizations that critics have made. In the next essay, "Edward Said and Postcolonial Theory" Rajnath emphasizes Said's greatest contribution to literary criticism that is affiliation of text with world and culture. The author accentuates Said's cosmopolitanism and pluralistic vision of the world juxtaposed with fundamentalism, insularity and nativism. He is not blind to Said's limitations either. Another essay on Said, "Edward Said: Resistance and Reconciliation" hails Said as an epitome of cultural pluralism and a staunch supporter of harmony between the West and the East. It also embodies the essence of Said's musings on literature, culture, identity and knowledge. However, repetition of certain ideas makes this essay sluggish at some points.



The fulcrum of the book, Section - II, comprises two essays based on critical and cultural pluralism. In the essay, "Monism Versus Pluralism in Criticism and Culture" the arguments crystallize around a set of oppositions: pluralism and monism. Rajnath's ideal, a blend of critical pluralism and cultural pluralism, does not exist in the twentieth century literary criticism. In the next essay entitled, "A Note on critical Pluralism" Rajnath talks about the feasibility and viability of critical pluralism of the ideal kind and concludes that pluralism is essential in criticism and culture but without monism it may lead to anarchy. Rajnath's microscopic technique enables him to cover a wide spectrum of the twentieth century literary criticism through the lenses of monism and pluralism.

The third section opens with the essay, "The Personal and the Impersonal in the Modern Thought" where Rajnath explores the dialectic of personal and impersonal in Marx and Engels, Freud and Jung, Husserl and Saussure on social, psychological and linguistic levels respectively. Extra-literary dimension of this essay testifies to Rajnath's development. The next essay, "Poetry and Morality: Some Notes on Wordsworth and New Critics" seeks to establish a parallel between New critics and Wordsworth regarding their views on poetry and morality, and poetry and science. Rajnath argues that when New critics talk about "literature as knowledge" their criticism goes beyond "words on the page", and the dimensions of reader and morality creep into their musings. This essay contains many clues to the question- What is the use of literature in human life? The last essay of this section, "Victor Shklovsky, Jacques Derrida and Metaphor" throws light on the nature of language as it originated in metaphors. Shklovsky and Derrida hold similar opinion about metaphor and while doing so they are toeing the line with the romantics and Rousseau. Going beyond literary arguments Rajnath states, "So metaphor is not merely a literary device but also a way of life" (122).

The fourth section begins with the essay, "John Keats and Deconstruction: The Example of *Ode on a Grecian Urn*." Rajnath commendably cudgels his brains to demonstrate 'aporia' in the poem. The next essay on "Deconstruction, Dialogism and Drama: A Reading of *Murder in the Cathedral*" is a fine example of pluralistic criticism. Rajnath's innovation and originality lie in applying dialogism to poetic drama. It also suggests that Derrida and Bakhtin can supplement each other. The third essay, "T. S. Eliot and Postcolonialism: A Reading of *The Cocktail Party*" highlights Eliot's Eurocentricism and his derogatory attitude towards modern Hindu culture and religion in the play.

The fifth section of the book focuses on literary criticism in India. In the essay, "Literary Criticism in the New Millennium" Rajnath speculates about the future of literary criticism and maintains that Indian/Sanskrit poetics can play an instrumental role in enriching literary criticism, provided nativism is curbed. Though the title seems hyperbolic, the content is very insightful. The concluding essay, "Nation and Indian Criticism in English" contends that literature and culture cannot be confined to geographical boundaries. e.g. "Indian response". The "otherworldliness" of western criticism and the "literariness" of Sanskrit poetics can supplement each other. Rajnath time and again opposes an insular view of criticism and believes in a productive wedding of western and Sanskrit poetics.

Thus, lucidity of language and clarity of ideas, save a few typographical errors, make the book reader- friendly and it can be placed in the category of books to be "chewed and digested".

Reviewer: Ashish Kumar Pathak, Assistant Professor,  
Central University of Bihar, Patna.

Boyt, Susie. *The Small Hours*. Virago, 2012, pp.224  
pp, Rs.1108.00 (Hb)Rs. 699.00(Pb).

Susie Boyt is the great-granddaughter of Sigmund Freud, which makes it quite apt that her fifth novel *The*



*Small Hours* begins with the central character taking leave of her therapist. Harriet Goodman, 38 and single, with flaming red hair and freakishly large feet, has undergone seven years in analysis trying to pinpoint where her life ran off track. But she thinks she has the solution, which is to establish a private nursery school for girls.

Harriet's mission is to "give the children who come to me a really, really joyful and idyllic start that will set them up for life". The double "really" indicates that Harriet has a tendency to become over-emphatic: "I think I'm going to make the school almost too lovely," she tells her therapist. "She saw a cluster of girls, mini-heroines all, transporting berries in the lifted skirts of their checked pinafores ... She saw cranes and cormorants and the bright chipped paintwork of a gypsy wagonette ... It might be possible to keep a Shetland pony ..."

As the novel opens, Harriet is on the threshold of major changes. Her years of psychoanalysis are drawing to a close and she is about to open her nursery school, 'a community based on great and mindful larks'. Might this place, with its Architectural Digest-level interior design - 'the rose-coloured linen play house, the play café where on small round tables lay menus and bud vases and small waiters' pads: sweets, sundries, fish, roll and butter' - be some (over-)compensation for Harriet's own early years, lived with a busily absent banker father, a disapproving mother and a beloved brother who has now severed all contact?

For a while, the school and its pupils offer a degree of self-determined bliss, although storm clouds start to gather in the form of parents with strong senses of entitlement. But what really begins to undermine Harriet is the reappearance of her mother and then her brother. Endlessly apologetic, doing her best, being brave, Harriet is not looking to blame; all she wants is acceptance. What she gets is infinitely more surprising.

Heartbreak humour is one of Boyt's specialities and her evocation of Harriet's bruised interior, her library of

imaginary self-penned self-help books - *Staying Reasonably Cheerful*, or *Putting Up with Stuff* - and jaunty dialogue capture just the right note of papered-over fragility. Harriet's yearning for the unattainable, the very ordinariness of her tragedy, the squandering of her love and generosity are rendered all the more unbearable by her galumphing sweetness and comic absurdity.

In psychoanalytic terms, Harriet's twee house might be construed as a form of over-compensation for the attentive childhood she feels herself to have been denied. Her financier father, now deceased, showed a greater passion for his bank than his daughter; her mother is so determined to put distance between them that she has chosen to live in Paris. And her elder brother is described as being "excruciated by the merest thing about her".

To give her credit, Harriet is not unaware that she has this kind of effect on people. "I'm a sort of caricature," she admits. "I'm big, garish, overt. When I'm in a car with people, they wind their windows down to let a bit of me out!"

Still, the qualities that prove grating among adults make her a hit with pre-school children and initially the school seems to be a roaring success. Some of the parents voice concerns over Harriet's unorthodox and apparently unregulated teaching methods, which include inviting a homeless alcoholic to come and lecture the children on the *Odyssey* (whether the classically schooled alcoholic has been CRB-checked is not explained, though it seems unlikely). Yet it does appear for a while that Harriet's school might achieve its super-objective of winning her mother's approval: "An inspired idea," she imagines her mother saying. "It's your vocation, like that woman in the book, the Brussels one."

The reference to Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* is telling; that being a similar story of a woman who attempts to instil meaning to her life through education but suffers an emotional collapse. Yet Harriet is a much brasher, gung-ho character than the quiet and introverted Lucy



Snowe. In that regard she has more in common with another self-determined classroom icon, Miss Jean Brodie. Harriet, like Brodie, preaches freedom of expression while moulding her charges to a prescriptive philosophy of her own devising. Boyt also shares Muriel Spark's penchant for prolepsis – the narrative frequently leaps ahead to a point in the future in which it is clear that Harriet's experiment has failed, with the school's fixtures and fittings being sold off at auction.

In Spark's novel, the time-shifts are a fundamental aspect of the narrative – Miss Brodie has been betrayed by one of her girls; the suspense lies in identifying the perpetrator. The chronological leaps in Boyt's story are confusing and curiously self-defeating, confirming from the outset the reader's suspicion that Harriet's pedagogical experiment is doomed to failure. There's even a short, isolated scene without any clear purpose or connection, in which two of the former pupils bump into each other as adults on a maternity ward and begin to reminisce about the bizarre, red-headed pre-school teacher they used to know.

It could be that the fractured, unsettled aspect of the narrative is intended to reflect the precarious mental state of the central character – an extended flashback recalls a period Harriet spent in hospital following a breakdown. Yet the revelation of the root cause of the family's emotional paralysis, rather cursorily delivered in the final pages by email, feels as contrived as Harriet's textbook Freudian nightmares: "Sometimes she dreamed that her mother and brother lay side by side in her parents' bed ... It was a passionless, laughable scene. Even their incest was petty and banal."

Boyt has set herself the challenge of creating a complex, boisterous and emotionally damaged character: in the end Harriet's shrill eccentricity and emphatic mode of speech ("Harvest Festival! How very lovely!") become simply overbearing. But it puts forward, in no uncertain terms, the idea that an idyllic childhood is the key to an equable

life. In that respect, she's done her great-grandfather proud.

Red-haired Harriet is adored by children. Using an inheritance to open a nursery school for girls, Harriet hopes to give them the kind of heavenly childhood she was not lucky enough to enjoy herself. Running the school will also give her the chance to move on, to put into practice all the skills for self-reliance she has acquired after seven years of three-times-a-week therapy with the enigmatic Miss McGee. And who knows, her mother and brother might even, finally, find it in their hearts to be warm to Harriet.

For those unafraid to read about the long shadow cast by inadequate parenting, *The Small Hours* excites with refined delights. Some of the characters suffer casual neglect, others abuse and violence, yet Boyt's economical prose remains elegantly polished, her descriptions of the subtleties of psychotherapy spine-tingling: "The shifts came gradually and beautifully, the levers making infinitesimal movements and improvements, the gears caressed back into new alignments over years and years and years." She also has a light comic touch, as in her observations of the school-run dress code of women with "Hellmann's-coloured hair". Boyt has the compassion to see the gold parquet under the lino. Former boyfriends may have misunderstood Harriet (one likened her to a serrated bread knife, another to a colonel in drag), but to us she is a valiant survivor, someone doing the best she can with less-than-perfect resources.

Boyt is always good on families and *The Small Hours* raises interesting questions about the different merits of forgiveness versus self-protection. When Harriet's mother is taken ill, and a thaw takes place in their relationship, Harriet advises herself to enjoy the moment, but not to "take it for more than it is". There is a danger, Boyt warns, in clinging to the hope that other people might be capable of change. Almost Beckettian in its conclusion, this novel is another deft accomplishment by Boyt who



has a notable talent for capturing the vertiginous lurches of everyday emotional seesaws. Her canvas is small in scale but has a fine-tuned breadth. And that voice of hers, hectic, sometimes overwhelming in its middle-class obsessions, nevertheless emanates from a special corner of left field and speaks a truth all of its own.

The occasional leaps forward in the narrative to show events unravelling are overdone. But at the same time this style hints at the fragile mental states of several characters, not just Harriet's. As one might hope from the great-granddaughter of Sigmund Freud, this is a meaty yet accessible novel possessing great psychological rigour.

Reviewer: Dr. Sanjeev Kr. Mishra, L. S. College, Muzaffarpur (Bihar)

Jha, Pashupati. *All in One*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers, 2011, Pp. 64+vii, Price (Hard Cover): Rs. 125.

*All in One*, Pashupati Jha's third collection of poems, opens with a thought provoking and motivational poem, 'Move On,' which also becomes a metaphor for life and creativity. The secret of the eternal youth of the sun, the moon and the stars lies in their regular movement. The poet says: "If you want to be young and active," move on. Achievement is stagnating and stagnation is death. The poet rejects a static life. His persona appears Sisyphus-like, always rolling the stone uphill despite set-backs. The poem quietly makes an existential statement which is an indication that one can certainly look for philosophical undertones in his other poems.

Each poem opens up new and remarkable images of life in its commonplace, everyday aspects—

love, life, death, dream, frustration, beauty, optimism, and finally confusion also. The poet confesses that he wants to write a great poem on the theme of love. His dream is all-engulfing and his concept of love is universal—love between children and parents, between religions and races, between eagle and dove when they

sit together and sing. But unfortunately, this is an illusion and his poem is never written. Very skillfully he expresses his disappointment:

Every night  
when I go to bed  
I dream of my daytime promise  
of writing a great poem  
on love and living  
with one and all. ('A Great Poem,' p. 5)

Another poem 'History Will Not Repeat' repudiates the oft-quoted maxim and reiterates that those who kill and vanquish will not be heroes forever. Their place will soon be given to those who "live and die for love alone." One of the pithy lines I liked the most says history sings praise of the generals/kings and: "For the laurel of one/ none cares for the wounds/ of millions" (p.4). How true! The poem forewarns the megalomaniacs of dire consequences and like Rabindranath's poem on history and conquerors, avers that glory is temporary while love for mankind is permanent.

Some of the poems are poignant and touch the heart as much by their personal and intimate moments as by the use of apt imagery. 'Ma' can be marked for its emotional appeal. Death may be understood in terms of life; it can be explained philosophically and accepted stoically; but how can one ever console a child for whom the loss of that 'two-lettered word-Ma' is irreplaceable? This is an existential question put forth in the simplest idiom. Some other poems that raise philosophical speculations are 'Death and Life', 'Man and man', 'Death, I Fear You Not!' A la John Donne mode!

The poet shows deep sense of values—personal, familial and cultural. He attacks those who talk of social-political evils but do nothing, or those who fill their coffers while they shed tears for the deprived and the poor; or those who talk of social ills and indulge in them at night. Confused by such charade, the poet asserts:



A bit confused whom to follow  
 I finally follow my own conscience  
 and despite their appealing words  
 I remain I. ('I am I', p.50)

Similarly, in 'Taming the Tiger' Jha hits the nail on the head: 'I tame the tiger within/ to encourage the lamb in me.' Lamb, the symbol of innocence, becomes the poet. Obviously, he is a votary of innocence, values, power of spirit and simplicity. The title poem 'All in One' is addressed to Father, the God. The persona accepts his failure to emulate God in whose image man is made. Man falls short of God's expectations. Read closely, the poem seems to have a wider reach indicative of the collapse of human values of love, peace and brotherhood. Some of the poems are addressed to nature, city life, modern man and socio-cultural changes. Some have autobiographical elements; of these the last poem of the collection 'Autobiography: Short and Simple' is sweet and direct. It portrays a simple man's everyday life: undemanding, contented and blissful. Like Shakespeare's seven stages of man, the poet has lived life as a child, boy, youth, householder, husband and father, and is now waiting for the grand finale.

Pashupati Jha has evolved a style of his own—uncomplicated, direct yet profound. One marvels at his accurate use of language and economy of idiom. He is a keen observer but he is never angry at things going awry. There is quiet rejection and a philosophical query. Significantly, the cover design shows the sun out of the clouds and the clouds have a silver lining—that says it all.

Reviewer: Usha Bande, Former Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla

Naik, Vihang A. *Poetry Manifesto (New & Selected Poems)*. New Delhi: Indialog Publications Pvt. Ltd India. 2010. 119 pp. ISBN 81-8443-033-7. US\$3.75 ; Rs. 135.

Following on *City Times and Other Poems*, which appeared in 1993, his Gujarati collection of poems *Jeevangeet* (2001) and *Making A Poem* (2004), comes this collection of Vihang A. Naik's poetry from 1993 to 2009. Born in Surat, Gujarat in 1969, Vihang A. Naik's work is widely published and anthologies. This collection contains 72 poems divided into 11 sections. Naik enables his readers to eavesdrop on the casual throwaway vernacular of the shorter poems and the more tightly wrapped language and energy of the longer poems. For Naik, his native country is well-mapped in literary terms. In the first poem "Indian Summer" he takes his readers to India and thus achieves the aim of integrating his work as a private memorialist with an impulse to express collective memory: The map of India burns/with flames of passion/when fire is set/ against mid-day. You search/ the city, lost/in a mirage. The sun fumes. /There is only heat and dust.

For Naik, the countryside is a powerful prism, and gives him the freedom to explore his whole culture through his poetry. "Summer Hill Devdars" (Shimla, 19 June, 2001) is an enlightening experience to read. In it the poet focuses on the stories which only the hills could tell, except that they remain mute: They stand./Tall/Mute./ Now/since hundred years/bearing witness/with silent hills/that will not speak. In the prose poem "Platform" Naik once again manifests his strong sense of landscape, community and selfhood as the "triangulation" of his work: Travelers come and go./ People meet and depart: squeezed passengers,/ beggars, coolies, news hawkers, tea stalls/ and littered tracks make up the scene. His concerns are also global. In the strong poem "The Final Act" Naik relates to one of poetry's oldest functions which is not just to memorialise, but to translate into language so that it can be not only an archive in itself but also a measuring stick for the future.

His persona uses a style that in its diction, rhythm and phonological quality, remind the reader that poetry



can have several qualities: something "silly. / A nightmare or a dream" as he says in the title poem "Poetry Manifesto." Naik admits the impossibility of the poet's task to capture the truth of words:

Reading Naik's poems with the care they deserve gives an intimation of what it is like to write poems at an early age, as we see in "At Seventeen": At seventeen you write a poem -/ You've lost your/ *su'arg*. Discover the *narg*/. Within yourself. At thirty/ You practice/ *moksha* making a poem. Naik combines a fairy tale quality in his poems "A Play," "A Story" and "The Poet as a Young Man" - "He saw an animal in front / of mirror. A portrait / of the poet as a young man." A discomfoting atmosphere is produced by "A blank stare / against the page / of time." Central to Naik's collection is the sequence of poems entitled "Making a Poem." Here the poet writes about love as well as the act of writing. In "A Matter of Life," for example, we see how the poet meshes his love poem between the first two lines and the last one to make his poem within a poem:

How about making a poem within  
a poem? You smell the Ocean and  
the sand. A life within a poem.  
She composed herself from the surf.  
The night lamp burns  
at the corner of the desk  
life is a philosophy  
book with pencil marks,  
wounds and comments. A poem  
you cancelled at the end.  
You think of splashing waves and horses  
without reins. She turned away. I smell  
the rose. Her odhani stuck to my pen.

In "the End of the Affair" he tells us - "I felt love as short as haiku." The first poem "The Pen" in the section "A Poem Comes Alive" begins : These days the pen/ is at the end/ of making words/ that would be/ a poem for you,/ and wittily alludes to the image of the struggling poet of cliché on his troubled quest, before concluding

-You search your poem/in the silence of death.

It is not dreams, but reality that pervades this collection, and keeps it on track. Naik's tone, observant and self-appraising, is clear-sighted and without illusion, but strangely reassuring in its ability to state things as they are, and to place them so tangibly in among so much that is unknown.

Here is a real man, as we see in the poem "WANTED" in the section entitled "A Poet." This is a persona with attitude, who accepts the uncertainty of producing poems, and has a sure grasp on the familiar tasks which face every writer: tonight I am awake/with the paper/and pen/words hit/me back in anger/that formed from this same ink/themselves/a guilt-point/searching the lost face/WANTED/by the reader.

The quiet aspect of his life as a poet is recorded, its troubles and its small triumphs. The enduring presence of the writer himself, with his take on life, both recording and questioning, as if commuting between different impulses, in a life of constant passing through, pausing, consolidating, moving on. It's a life in which the poet hides behind his words as Naik says in poem "V" from "Mirrored Men"

he is different behind  
his words of cream  
and butter, it serves  
his purpose. His language  
curves like dark night  
of desire, takes turns  
with ambiguous intent.  
The diabolic tongue  
holds fate, as it were,  
on the tip  
of its tail.

He talks about what he knows, ranging from his youthful beginnings as a poet to poems about his desires. Often, these more tender poems inspire some of his most striking images -

the octopus/of desire/stirs/arteries and veins/tears



flesh apart/feeding upon fire/swallowing air/("desire").

Always there's the awareness of the bigger picture, ranged against the contingencies of daily life, often with ironic humour as from "after innocence": fold all/old calendars/and smoke the time/away/what you get/is ashes in return/the shell breaks open/crossed teens/innocence/massacred.

Naik's usual free-verse style, of continuous down-paging in a rush of short lines, suits the vernacular of his vision. Naik is a poet who knows the real world of the writer and its downside, but is still on top of it. On top of it with his use of words, his techniques and with his native resilience. Through it all, he smiles as though he has the knowledge of the unknowable.

Reviewer: Patricia Prime is co-editor of the haiku magazine *Kokako* and reviews editor of the Australian online magazine *Stylus*.

Sharma, Susheel Kumar *The Door is Half Open*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors. 2012. ISBN: 978-81-8435-341-9. Pages 141,150.00/ US \$ 10.00 /UK £ 15.00

The collection of poems *The Door is Half Open* by is amazingly intricate and intimate in approach. The length of the poems in the collection varies from short, very short to lengthy, so does the mood of the poet. The silence of thirteen years on the part of the poet has resulted into a variety of subjects which might have been his concern through all those years. There is an unusual mix of ecology, mythology, social concerns, personal notes and human interaction. The poems reflect the metaphor of self and it never misses from any of them. The tone touches instantly, since the matter raises common questions in monologues.

Many poems are marked by psychological undertones. In others the logical environment is created. An effluent use of Sanskrit and Indian words and sentences has

increased the depth of thought. A few lines like the following have turned out to be the voice of the poet:

I have seen her hiding  
Under the plate full of edibles in a party  
And under the lavish dress at a wedding  
And under the plastic paint  
In the newly constructed house.  
There is a ball  
Thrown by my boss  
In my honour  
For getting an international recognition.  
But, the uninvited guest  
Has been staring at me and  
Has some difficult questions  
On her face and

Does not leave my sight. ("Poverty: Some Scenes", p. 36 )

Social concerns as reflected in "Nithari and Beyond" and "Democracy: Old and New" reflect the poet's sensitiveness towards the society.

Written in a simple language the book evokes both anxiety and thoughts. The poems could have been assembled in order of time or theme to create a lineage, which drives continuity from one end to other otherwise. The poems can be offered as personal readings among friends and students, who might personally know the poet for better understanding. The grammar and metaphors are inviting and correct, but the conjunctions disturb at places. It is an enjoyable collection overall and reflects familiarity with the softer content of head and heart.

**Reviewer:** Dr Neerja Arun, Principal, Bhavan's Arts and Commerce College, Khanpur, Ahmedabad

Arora, Sudhir K. *Multicultural Consciousness in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2012. ISBN: 978-81-7273-601-9 Price: Rs. 550 Pages: 210

Sudhir K. Arora, who has already produced a candid creative-criticism *Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger a Freakish*



Booker here in *Multicultural Consciousness in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya* explores the fictional world of Kamala Markandaya both thematically and technically. The title is baffling and misleading because Kamala Markandaya's multicultural consciousness is not explored as much as the book discusses her narrative techniques, social considerations, feminine issues, and postcolonial concerns at length. It consists of ten chapters which explore the influence including the snapshot of Kamala Markandaya, 'First Person Narrative Technique' in *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Some Inner Fury*, 'Third Person Narrative Technique' in *Silence of Desire*, *Possession*, *A Handful of Rice*, *The Coffin Dams*, *The Nowhere Man*, *Two Virgins*, *The Golden Honeycomb* and *Pleasure City*, 'Male Narration Technique' that presents male characters' attitude towards women, 'Bed Narration Technique' that talks of the forbidden landscapes of sex, other techniques that include 'Dreams', 'Remembrances', 'Stream of Consciousness', 'Dialogues', 'Monologues', 'Camera Scene' and 'Movie Scene' which throw light on the feminine sensibility and provide space to women for articulation.

With the purpose of exploring the feminine sensibility, 'First Person Narrative Technique' reveals inner self of the protagonists along with that of the novelist's pent up feelings. In spite of a few demerits, the employment of this technique is successful. 'Third Person Narrative Technique' of Kamala Markandaya demonstrates liberty in expression and lack in emotions because unlike 'First Person Narrative Technique', it fails in providing an outlet to the novelist for the projection of her own personality. 'Male Narration Technique' is the discovery of the writer himself. He deserves appreciation for his original search and his viewpoint regarding this technique which is of utmost help in tracing out the forms of the image of women. No doubt, this is a new approach as well as equally valid. Another technique, named as 'Bed Narration' decodes the forbidden landscapes and reveals that Kamala Markandaya has offered the Eastern food mixed with the

Western spicy nudity but the writer opines that she disfavours vulgarity and artistically presents love and sex in her novels.

Besides these technique, the synthesis out of encounter between the East and the West is subject of 'The Orient and the Occident in the *Pleasure City*' while her posthumous novel *Bombay Tiger* is analyzed in detail from different angles. The writer has tried to show that on the whole *Bombay Tiger* is an interesting novel as it provides entertainment to the readers by the presentation of "magical feats by Ganguli, the tiger whose roaring does not frighten rather makes them spell bound." In the chapter, 'Social Consciousness through Postcolonial Lenses', the critic has made a laborious effort to trace out the image of social consciousness in the novels of Kamala Markandaya through the post-colonial lenses. The critic, being gifted with keen observing power and deep thinking, picks up all the novels and deconstructs them one by one to find how the novelist by her psychoanalytic approach and postcolonial lenses displays the naked reality of the society. In the last chapter, 'Kamala Markandaya in the Postcolonial Space', he searches out the postcolonial ingredients in her novels and places her at the first place among postcolonial women novelists.

No doubt, while writing she keeps the Western reader in her mind and, sometimes, she deviates from the Indian ethos and values. But, even then, she occupies a prominent place among the women novelists of the postcolonial period. Some of her lacunas cannot prohibit her from attaining the height of name and fame. She is such a star in the galaxy of Indian women novelists and its lustre will never be diminished or faded.

As far as the critic of the book is concerned, he has done his best in exhibiting his talent in his criticism on Kamala Markandaya. He is gifted with the keen insight and inventive skill. His findings of new narrative techniques particularly 'Male Narration Technique' and 'Bed Narration Technique' are samples of his inventive



and discovering mind. His command over language to treat the subject taken in hand is noteworthy. The writer by his inventive and imaginative mind, creates a space and prepares a spacecraft for Kamala Markandaya's fictional world in which he makes his readers fly and explore the novelist's art and technique to assign her place in spite of being decorated with figures and symbols. The style suits to the subject. The book is readable and interesting. When a reader starts reading it, he does not leave it without completing it.

The basic importance of the book lies in the fact that it gives an adequate understanding of the narrative techniques—traditional as well as innovative and social, psychological and postcolonial consciousness treated in the fictional works of Kamala Markandaya. The book will be of much help to the general readers, researches scholars and teachers who want to work on Kamala Markandaya. I strongly recommend this book to those who are eager to be acquainted with the women sensibility in the novels of Kamala Markandaya and who want to cultivate their own style for the creative purpose. Indeed, Sudhir K. Arora deserves kudos for bringing out a fresh interpretation of Kamala Markandaya's novels.

**Reviewer:** Dr. Madhubala Saxena, Head and Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Maharaja Harishchandra P. G. College, Moradabad.

Mahadevan, Usha and Amar Nath Prasad. Eds. *Kamala Das: The Writer Extraordinary*. New Delhi: Doaba House. ISBN- 2012, pages-166, Price-INR-175, 166,

The entire firmament of Indian English poetry may appear incomplete without the remarkable presence of Kamala Das (Madhavikutty), born in Malabar in 1934, one of the most important luminaries of Indian English poetry and who is also known as a confessional and an autobiographical poet of the mid twentieth century in

India.. The gamut of her literary corpus is an autobiography, an articulate voice of her ethnic identity, her Dravidian culture. Her poetic corpus configures an inner voyage, awareness beyond skin's lazy hungers to the hidden soul. It enacts her quest, an exploration into herself and seeking of her identity. It also traces the genesis of self and its gradual growth in spatial and temporal realities. The gradual growth of the self is inextricably intertwined into the linguistic, historical, political and cultural realities of the society.

The present edited book has explored the genesis of the self and its gradual growth in Kamala Das' poetry and it has also traced the location of desire that indeed triggers the growth of self. A psychoanalytic, feminist and Marxist reading of the entire gamut of her poetry has brought out some remarkable facts and issues that Kamala Das address in her poems of all volumes. The book is the collection of fifteen articles which are exhaustive and analytical explorations of various thematic and stylistic aspects of Kamala Das' literary corpus.

A close and a critical analysis of her poetry exemplifies the role of language, history, politics and economics in the construction of the self. It further adumbrates the issue of desire and its location. Desire, a psychosomatic reality, is generally motivated by the condition of lack or the absence, motivates a self to attain love and sexuality (Freud: 1900). Her literary corpus also describes the fact that the growth of an individual takes place through three orders or states of mental dispositions: the imaginary order, symbolic order, and the real order (Jacques Lacan: 1966). Apart from the linguistic reality, her poetic creation also affirms the role of social, political and economic reality to construct the body and the consciousness of an individual. Further, her poetry addresses the theme of desire and woman's body. Helen Cixous in her *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), writes, "Woman must write herself...Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into the history-by her own movement". Thus, the book in the context with its articles by Tasneem Anjum



## Book Review

titled 'Tradition, Teen and Tranquility in the Poetry of Kamala Das', 'Kamala Das' "Composition": The Confluence of Truth and Beauty' by Amar Nath Prasad, 'The Harvest of a Child's Eye: A Study of Kamala Das' Childhood Experiences' by Usha Mahadevan etc has truthfully portrayed the pathetic plight of miserable women and the articles have proved that the woman is not born but one becomes a woman because she is controlled by the questions of existential concerns rather than by essential phenomenological qualities. Some other articles of the book have also focused upon the spiritual and aesthetic quality of Das' works.

**Reviewer: Veerendra Kumar Mishra, Research Scholar, Dept. of HSS, IIT Roorkee**

**Bala, Shail. *The Fiction of Toni Morrison : Narrating Black Women's Experience*. New Delhi: Prestige Books. 2012. PP. 176. Rs. 700.00**

*The Fiction of Toni Morrison ...* by Shail Bala is a meaningful addition to the study and analysis of Morrison's fictive universe. Amazingly, the publisher has provided a catchy and mind-stirring get-up that also arouses intellectual curiosity to go deeper into the body of the book. The book has been divided into seven chapters apart from exhaustive *Introduction* brief *Preface* and precise *Foreword* by Dr. R.K. Dhawan.

Moreover, the author shows her keen intellectual ability and critical perception in the thorough presentation of Toni Morrison as a novelist in the very chapter *Introduction*. Honestly speaking, even the cursory glance of the chapter enables the readers to have a lot of suggestive ideas and critical opinions about the novelist Toni Morrison. In the proposition of thoughtful exploration of the novels, the factual socio-cultural background of the novels and novelist has been wittingly presented. It is worthwhile to say that the chapterization of the novels has been done with the help of keynote phrases which

make and motivate the readers for further study and analysis.

The book covers the wide range of the novelist by analyzing most of her novels from *The Bluest Eye* to *Jazz*. Not merely, that the author very painstakingly takes up other novels like *Paradise*, *Love* as well for making her critical enterprise exact and needful. It is point to be noted here that Toni Morrison's narrative world offers a threadbare analysis of the social reality in which she was born and bred up. The close reading of the novel makes me clear that the contemporary sociological condition shapes the human psychology. It is academically fanciful to believe that woman psyche is always instrumental in every kind of action that flares up the creative imagination. In order to justify her study, Shail Bala has proved this fact that Toni Morrison's literary domain is quite fascinating for social, cultural, racial and economic documentation of the contemporary reality. At her best, she has applied almost all the conventional and contemporary literary theories to the understanding and analysis of the novels.

In the last chapter, the author has made a criss-cross as well as pinpointed remark that Toni Morrison makes a unique and wonderful experiment with language, syntactical structure, image and metaphor. In her probing and finding Morrison's texts are not only contextualized study rather a complete and comprehensive critique of thought and theory. No doubt, this book will prove to a new landmark for the students, readers and scholars who are willing to make a serious study on black women's writing. Hence, I like to offer my thanks to Dr. Shail Bala for such a magnificent contribution to the study of Afro-American literature in general and the fiction of Toni Morrison in particular.

Reviewer: S.S. Kanade, Asst. Professor, Dept. Of English, S.M.P. Mahavidayalya, Murum (M.S)



# CREATIVE WRITING

Savitri

\*Charusheel Singh

Nobody marries death as  
Savitri did. Satyavan was  
Neither a piece of gold nor  
Of wood but a man of nerves,  
arteries and bones.

Savitri's search for Satyavan  
lineaments of her definition drove  
her into jingle bells of  
madness. Love subsumes death  
and annuls it for a transcendental  
form only Savitri could apprehend.

Lord Yama was weather-betaken  
by the scorpion truths Savitri  
materialised. Sanctities are  
greater than banal nunsof  
conscience. The cosmos stood  
loaded within itself as Satyavan  
rose from the Rock of Ages.

There is sternity in time shrouded  
all over into the perfidy of details.  
Satyavans are stolen monuments and  
Savitris sparrows of beaming gold.

\*Charusheel Singh, Professor of English, Mahatma  
Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi.

A Poem for Rabindranath Tagore

\*Murali Sivaramakrishnan

What is it that threw you into our midst—  
A rawness that thawed in the wild winds of a nation's  
breath,

Almost stillborn, nursed in the aftermath of an affected  
continent of sighs and sorrows,  
Trying to stretch itself on an uncurling map, spreading  
From west to east—you touched it to the quick  
And a whole people started breathing easy, as one?

What is it that you read backwards from the saltiness  
of the sea breeze,

From the silent moon forcing its gentle way between  
the dark boughs,

From the reluctant peacock's drooping tail enfolding  
a million eyes,

From the sturdy hills striving to reach the bluey-  
blueness of a stilled sky,

From the half closed lids of the travel-worn minstrel's  
distant looks,

From the drying river-bed and its hungry stones,

From the drying land's long cherished deep-nourished  
desires?

What is it that made you turn away from a tormented  
nation's silent throes,

And bear your mind and body beyond the rough sea  
shores?

You were never content to sit and stare at the stone  
and gravel

At the sky and star, but always the lonely traveller  
on the unlevelled road.

Forever in search of something never received, never  
relished.

Condemned forever to be unhappy and happy at the  
same time,

Gathering flowers and songs. Here unworn garlands  
wither in the dust.

Poet, you walk among us still—a silent pilgrim for  
all eternity

Bound for the stars and the nebulae of a lost time.  
Your songs

Have kept us awake all through these tempestuous  
times



Breathing in beauty, truth, and valour. You never gave up

In the face of darkness and servitude. You sing to us even today.

And some among us keep up your vigil still, praying,  
Blooming like windswept flowers in the gathering  
darkness, all eyes and ears

Straining to heed the vanishing music of the spheres.

**\*Murali Sivaramakrishnan is currently Professor in the  
Department of English, Pondicherry Central University.**

### Sita, The Quintessential

**\*Prabhanjan K. Mishra.**

What a pity, this Ravan,  
the mighty demon king, playing a ruse  
and kidnapping me, a damsel in distress!  
Which ascetic can be trusted hereafter?

But a platonic lover and a brave-heart,  
he excelled himself, caring and solicitous  
and ever refraining from usurpation  
of my youth and womb.

Later a myth alerted me:

Ravan was my secret sire. Could be a canard;  
't was neither written on our faces.

His restraint had saved us from possible incest.  
Ram, my love and my husband,

used to puzzle me; ever suspicious

and never trusting me, his wedded wife.

Ha! his inquisitions after his Lankan victory.  
And my test by fire! Would I ever know

whose sleight of hand saved me from the burns,  
the political labyrinth unpeeling like a cabbage.

And then came my husband's masterstroke deceit:  
Poor pregnant me, sluggish bodied

carrying the weight of two embryonic twins  
and a craving mind, wanting to breathe

the fresh forest air and see its green ions;

and his obedient sibling Lakshman left me in forest  
 when my tired flesh was having its forty winks,  
 undefended, without transport, food or water,  
 to die starving or devoured by hungry predators.  
 My protector and adopted father Valmiki  
 from the jungle's hermitage brought up us, me  
 and my new-borns; later would bring us to Ram's  
 palace

where years ago Ram had buried justice alive.

Ghosts of doubts and devils of aspersions  
 would again haunt my purity and Ram's senility.  
 Miasma of another fire-test would asphyxiate my sanity  
 pushing me to seek refuge in Mother Earth's arms.

Never knew: I would be deified in households  
 as the chest and martyred icon of epic glory  
 but a resenting womb ever cursing my choice  
 of spineless Ram over brave-heart Ravan.

\*Prabhanjan K. Mishra lives in Goregaon, Mumbai.

### Each Eve

\*Pashupati Jha

The moon is  
 waning and gaining  
 shape, guided  
 by the natural cycle.

Our love too  
 has become like that  
 of the moon's fate  
 amid the rapid change of seasons.

Each eve under  
 the silent shadow of the moon



we talk to each other  
not through the mouth but eyes  
the language that talks less  
and tells a whole lot more  
of our frustrations and fulfilments  
of thirty three years  
together, tossing  
on the stormy waves of life  
at times beyond  
our control, like two flood-  
washed bodies clutching  
to each other for  
sheer survival, no wave  
big enough to tear us  
apart.

When the strife of the day is over  
each night we talk of  
our children and their  
children thereafter  
and the silent cycle  
of birth, death... and rebirth.

**\*Pashupati Jha, Indian Institute of Technology,  
Roorkee, Uttarakhand.**

### Jhumka Fell in the Bareilly Market

**\*Rajendra Singh**

I used to hear a song  
Sometimes ago Jhumka fell down  
in the Bareilly market.

But now only frost is falling.  
And I fear, this falling frost  
May not transform my faithful friend.

This unkind conference

Separated me from my vowed love.  
I, craving for love and warmth  
in this unnatural nature.  
Once I crept to an unknown warmth;  
But that warmth was too much cold.

Being disappointed, I remembered  
My love, usual and old;  
In need, in rain, in bitter cold  
I seek that warmth,  
But in vain  
I fell amongst frost  
Once again.

\* Rajendra Singh, Associate Professor, Department  
of English, S.S. College, Jehanabad, Bihar.

May Ganga Cleanse Our Sins!

\*P.Gopichand

Marks mar our studies  
Kids are forced to win races  
Eyes on earning kill our learning  
May Ganga cleanse our sins!

Education— a commodity  
Tailored speeches make modern robots  
They harvest money in future  
May Ganga cleanse our sins!

Youth— a victim to lust and liquor  
All is lost in this world  
Experience remains a mist  
May Ganga cleanse our sins!

Flirting — a fashion  
Virtues are mirages  
Bargaining fills our life  
May Ganga cleanse our sins!



Fine arts are ignored  
No time to stand and stare  
Life is seen in saloon mirrors  
May Ganga cleanse our sins!

Trade has crept into our cells  
We are ready to sell organs and embryos  
Life is bought with paper currency  
May Ganga rid our sins!

Hospitals have no pity  
Disease is a source of income  
Doctors treat us beyond all logical factors  
May Ganga cleanse us of our sins!

Blood banks groan ghastly tales  
We boldly trade with blood sachets  
Demons are afraid of us  
May Ganga cleanse our sins!

At festivals balloons replace flowers  
Money spills make ceremonies  
All smiles are artificial  
May Ganga cleanse our sins!

Ramp shows boost our beauties  
Scanty clothes reveal our lifestyle  
We aim at glitter  
May Ganga cleanse our sins!

Malls are halls of fame  
Flaming souls long to roam around  
Offers consume our credit cards  
May Ganga cleanse our sins!

\*P.Gopichand, Dept of English, J.K.C.College,  
Guntur, A.P, India

**Subjugation**

\* Punita Jha

Roaming here,  
Between bare rocks, tardy sands,  
My eyelids,  
On my high stilettos treading I sigh,  
Tonight I have,  
Walked upon the elusive ephemeral bonds,  
With fate,  
Abstruse Collapsing down to high ways swoop  
The stars,  
Move round me and bow supine,  
I was content,  
Drawing a colourful portrait alone,  
But you came,  
On the broken outline of my crooning heart.  
Erected a dam,  
To contain the flow of a riotous urge,  
Taught me,  
How to laugh and traverse the  
Untread Paths,  
It's to him I have,  
Subjugated,  
My life within.

\* Punita Jha, Dept. of English, M.R.M.College,  
Darbhanga, Bihar

**Things Fall Apart**

\*P.Nagasuseela

Schools clip the wings of freedom,  
Where learning is thrust upon tender brains;  
Things of wonder and mystery are crushed;  
Pains remain fresh till the last breath;  
Things fall apart.

Tears shed go deep in tender hearts;



Bashings and thrashings echo in the ears for years;  
Sunrises and sunsets are reminders of work to be  
done;

Tender hearts shiver more at progress reports than  
at death;  
Things fall apart.

Wading through dull learning for twelve long years,  
Young hearts fall upon the thorns of 'Intermediate';  
Countless sighs and moans fill the 'two years';  
EAMCET, AIEEE, IIT are ghosts haunting tender  
minds;

Things fall apart.

Like butterflies flapping their wings of delight;  
Every glance at the world sends up vows of wonder;  
Young hearts flutter to the vibes of love;  
World seems to lie curled at their feet;  
Things fall apart.

I- pods, cell phones and laptops;  
Hike restlessness among youngsters;  
Face-books and e-mails trace young passions;  
These fashions make the young choose their partners;  
Things fall apart.

Coffee-houses, pubs and bars  
Are hubs for youngsters to gather;  
Yells , cries and vulgar laughter rend the air;  
Soon all are lost in the sands of time;  
Things fall apart.

Quest for lots of money;  
Bid to hoard gadgets of comfort;  
But seeds of happiness never sprout;  
Life is the dull decadent note of a sad song;  
Things fall apart.

Anguish rises like a topless Mountain;  
 Frustration quakes the family life;  
 Anger, like active volcano, emits lava;  
 Near and dear—all are caught in a catastrophe;  
 Things fall apart.

Jobs in America seize the young fancy;  
 Grey old heads in India bear their sorrows;  
 Every dollar is spent in buying plots and flats;  
 The old long to see their young before they depart;  
 Things fall apart.

Humans are transformed into Mints;  
 Heart-throbs are all forgotten;  
 Dollar relations dominate blood relations;  
 Birth and death are just dates in the calendar;  
 Things fall apart.

O Lord! to think of God there is no time;  
 We forgot to turn to you in our jobs and riches;  
 The cycles of twenty centuries have made you 'mortal';  
 Madmen made the world sad, bad and mad;  
 Things fall apart.

\*P.Nagasuseela, Dept. of English, J.K.C.College,  
 Guntur, A.P, India.

### Let Me Become A Child Again

\*R.C.Shukla

Cares and apprehensions have been kept  
 Not for animals but for men  
 Whom nature has blessed with intellect  
 Available with no other creature in the world  
 United with wisdom  
 Intellect performs wonders  
 But those really dear to nature  
 Are men quipped with innocence  
 Only such men safeguard Truth and charity  
 the two things which in the terribly opulent society



have become a rarity.  
 Children and small birds represent innocence  
 And both of them are beautiful indeed  
 Youth is a tricky and old age selfish  
 Hence I pray God  
 To make me a child once more

So that I may play  
 Not with toys wooden or of tin  
 But with things  
 Which the so-called advanced people call wild  
 Rustic -folk, mango trees in an orchard  
 Water of a lake, green grass  
 Grandma's affection and the soil brown  
 These things endear children  
 They never frown.

\*R.C.Shukla, a retired Professor of English, lives at  
 Moradabad.

### Scholar

\*Naveen Kumar Jha

With a poor background, talented boy  
 In dire need of help  
 To take an erudite advice  
 I went to a scholar.  
 He called me in a go-down like study room  
 Full with heaps of books  
 That he swallowed  
 For his skills of oratory.  
 Equality, fraternity and untouchability  
 Were spiced with verses of  
 Rahim, Kabir and Romanticists  
 To make a bid for Wah! Wah!  
 "The boy is not of our caste  
 Nor can he pay for  
 His history is dubious  
 And impudent to know me\_" he scolded.

The scholar had been acclaimed  
Of his nice ideas  
Floating in his mind  
But hardly rooted in his heart.

Naveen Kumar Jha, Assistant Professor in English,  
R.A.G.S. College, Ahalyasthan, K.S.D.S.U., Darbhanga,  
Bihar.

### Co-Existence

\*Sudershan Sharma

Agony and ecstasy  
Can exist side by side.  
Though opposites and diverse,  
They complement each other against the divide.  
Love and romance  
Can create an emotional blast  
Though thrilling and exciting,  
They can arouse painful thoughts.  
Bitter sweet are the pangs of love,  
They lead to apprehensions galore.  
The beloved pines for her lover  
And prays for happy times to restore.  
She died a thousand deaths  
Before her lover she could espy.  
Can you imagine her ecstasy  
When she did catch his eye?  
They live for each other  
Though are ready with daggers drawn.  
Their love for each other is limitless,  
Despite tiffs on each other they fawn.  
Think not of the suffering,  
It leads only to joy divine.  
True love doesn't need  
To be always superfine.

\*Sudershan Sharma, Gurgaon.