THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Vol.XXXVIII 2000-2001

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ENGLISH STUDIES

The Indian Journal of English Studies

Shiv

Volume XXXVIII

2000-2001

The Official Organ

of

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ENGLISH STUDIES

The Indian Journal of English Studies

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Price: Rs. 100, $ 12, £ 8

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Rest and Unrest: Edward Thomas's Pilgrimage to Nature

N.K. GHOSH

"I rose up, and knew that I was tired, and continued my journey." This self-description of Edward Thomas (1878-1917) that was later chosen by R.L. Watson to be engraved on his memorial stone characterizes Thomas quite well. Edward Thomas knew by heart two thirds of England. He loved best the great streets as well as the unfrequented by-ways. He loved to walk, wherever his wanderlust took him and his travel accounts are records of literary journeys thickly peopled with tales and conversations. A large share of his poetic output records his wanderings, his moods being coloured with the people he met and the places he visited. Thomas had a passion for the countryside, a passion which got transcribed into beautiful nature poems reflecting profoundly and intimately those peculiar emotions which nature alone can inspire. Thomas's contemplation of nature is unique in the sense that he never cared to philosophize the emotions he felt in the presence of nature and its beauty. Instead of rationalizing the emotion, he presents it for what it is. Though he is normally clubbed with Georgians, his poetry says what Georgian poetry never cared to admit—that man in a landscape is never alone. Again Thomas's poetry is not an escape-verse like Georgian poetry, rather it is an expression of himself in which he not only displays his deep love of the countryside but his suffering, his pessimism, his melancholy:

> The rain and wind, the rain and wind, raved endlessly
> On me the summer storm, and fever, and melancholy
> Wrought magic, so that if I feared the solitude
> Far more I feared all company: too sharp, too rude,

Had been the wisest or the dearest human voice.[1]

Thomas prefers the short and simple annals of common day-to-day experiences to the rare, exalted, chosen moments, of fleeting inexplicable intuitions. The poem "Fifty Faggots" is woven around a bundle of twigs. "Two Houses" provides a picture of two houses that lie between a farmhouse and the sun while "The Penny Whistle" narrates the poet's intimate experience of listening to a sweet nursery rhyme played by a boy on his whistle. The "Cock Crow" portrays the morning scene heralded by the crowing of the cock amidst the backdrop of milkers lacing their boots up at the farms as they get ready to start their daily routine.

Edward Thomas's nature poems spring from his close observation of the various aspects of nature which attracted his attention during the course of his ceaseless wanderings. Bushes, plants and trees find adequate place in his poetry as do a wide variety of flowers. There are also frequent references to all seasons. His sensibility to seasons and flowers is best recorded by his friend Eleanor Farjeon: "Edward lived thirty-nine years. In all of them he kept his senses fresh, and he liked what he saw. He saw more than anybody else I ever knew, and he saw it day and night. The seasons and the weather never failed him. He could not live a day in the open air without being given something to enjoy enormously—clear weather, flat shingle, a line of trees, the tallness of a church tower on a marsh, even a row of huts—he liked what he saw. And he knew nobody else liked it as much as he did."[2]

Thomas, the enthusiastic literary pilgrim, was a great traveller and most of his poetry is a result of his wanderings in the countryside. As he suffered from bouts of depression on account of financial worries and excessive work piled on him by publishers, he preferred to go out for long walks to find solace in nature. What made him travel from place to place was his ceaseless quest for joy, happiness and tranquillity. He is a wanderer who looks towards nature sometimes with a feeling of awe and fear and sometimes with happiness. His poetry is a record of his ob-

servations of the natural world he watched, as well as the people he came across during his travels. No other writer of his time had walked so much around the country as Thomas. His wanderings and travels were activated by his adulation of other poets and writers. His critical works *A Literary Pilgrim in England* and *Richard Jefferies* as well as his poetic output provide enough evidence as to how extensively he had travelled in his short life span and how keenly he had observed the natural world and the human beings around him.

Edward Thomas's observations during his travels cover not only the lonely and beautiful aspects of nature but also its destructive aspects. In the poem "The Source," the dumb source of the river breaks and drowns rain and wind. It makes a loud sound and declares its triumph over earth. In "Birds's Nests," he talks about the birds's nests which have been destroyed by autumn winds. He laments why the destructive forces of nature have played havoc with the nests of birds. In "The Mountain Chapel," the everlasting wind blowing hard proclaims that man is mortal and the wind is immortal. One can see here undertones of the pessimism and melancholy of Thomas Hardy although Edward Thomas never circumscribed himself to any particular regional landscape as the Wessex of Hardy. Akin to many romantic poets, Thomas could discover in nature a retreat from the oppressiveness of the world of men.

Edward Thomas's earliest poems bear the influence of Robert Frost in the simplicity of style with which he depicts nature. These poems suggest how Thomas followed Frost's advice of changing into verse many passages from his prose which were essentially embryonic poems. "Up in the Wind," "The Sign Post," "The Mountain Chapel," "The Manor Farm," "Man and Dog," "The Gypsy," "House and Man," "The Path," "Wind and Mist," "A Gentleman"—all these resemble, to a large extent, the poems of Frost in North of Boston. Later, as Edward Thomas discovers his own unique voice, the Frostean element begins to recede. Edward Thomas drew greatly from the tradition of narrative ballads, folk songs, nursery rhymes and carols. He believed that folk tradition expressed man's most fundamental

feelings. His love of the folk tradition is revealed in the ballad form chosen by him in many of his poems. "The Penny Whistle," "Home," "I Built Myself a House of Glass," "The Gallows," "The Dark Forest" and many other poems are written in sensitive adaptation of ballad metre. In fact, a third of Thomas's 144 poems show evidence of the influence of ballad tradition in the adoption of the four-line ballad stanza pattern.

During his travels Edward Thomas not only observed the natural world closely but also took note of the people inhabiting it. In his poem "Women He Liked," he writes about a man called Bob and about the women, horses and plants he liked. "The Hunter," "The Gentlemen" and "The Watchers" are poems located in the experiences of people in a natural world. His verse abounds in references to such inns, houses and places which were once inhabited by people but are now deserted. The poet's desire is not for houses or gardens but for contentment in life: "For these I ask not, but, neither too late/Nor yet too early, for what men call content,/And also that something may be sent/To be contented with, I ask of Fate." (*CP* 121)

The extracts from Thomas's rural books—*The South Country*, *The Icknield Way*, *In Pursuit of Spring*, illustrate the philosophy of nature and the countryside which later formed his poetry. These extracts speak for the romantic relation between man and nature. His nature study shows us our position, responsibilities and debt among the other inhabitants of the earth, just as his love of folk culture paves the way for understanding of human species which have so far been suppressed. In *The South Country*, Thomas deals at length with his views on nature-study. He says that literature sends us to nature principally for joy, science sends us to nature for knowledge and industrialism sends us to nature for health. But joy, knowledge and health cannot be separated and in nature we cannot overlook. For Thomas, all great poetry is associated with the study of nature. As Longley writes: "The reading of poetry might well be associated with the study of Nature, since there is no great poetry which can be dissevered from Nature. . . . Modern poets have all dipped their pens in the sunlight and wind and great waters, and appeal most to those

who most resemble them in their loves. The great religious books, handed down to us by people who lived in closer intercourse with Nature than many of us, cannot be understood by indoor children and adults. Whether connected with this or that form of religion or not, whether taken as 'intimations of immortality' or not, the most profound and longest remembered feelings are often those derived from the contact of Nature with the child's mind."[3]

Even in his mystical reflections on the circumstances of life, Edward Thomas could not distance himself from his ties with nature. Vagabond solitaries, gamekeeper's larders, hay-making and other such rural scenes abound in his poetry. In his life as in his writing, his method was to feel his way forward and to be certain of his destination only when he had touched it. In the poem "I never saw the land before," he says:

> I never expected anything
> Nor yet remembered: but some goal
> I touched then; and if I could sing
> What would not my soul whisper
> As I went on journeying. (*CP* 100)

Thomas is a traveller always in search of beauty. But he is never content with whatever beauty he finds. He must go on and on to find more. Thomas's poetry is a quest for ideals of love, truth and beauty. In "Chalk-pit," he declares: "I should prefer truth or nothing." (*CP* 166) Likewise, in "Sedge Warblers," the beauty of the summertime river suggests to the poet an ideal beauty "divine and feminine/Child of the sun, whose happy soul unstained/Could love all day, and never hate or tire/Lover of mortal or immortal kin." (*CP* 113) The beauty of the river seems ideal as it has affinity with not only human beings on earth but also the immortal ones in heaven.

Ideals of love find expression in poems like "Tonight," "Will You Come," "Lovers," and "The Unknown." In "The Unknown," the poet is in search of a perfect woman who is an embodiment of love. In "Tonight," he calls upon his beloved to

come to castle summer valley where they will sit close to each other, away from the sight of the world. His ideal of love is such that it requires no light of sun or lamp. It had immense light and power of its own. Love of humanity and prayer for others characterize Thomas's poetry. In spite of his brooding discontentment with the present, a basic humanity prevails in his verse. His poem "For These" shows how he doesn't ask for an acre of land or a garden but only prays for contentment in life:

> For these I ask not, but, neither too late
> Nor yet too early, for what men call content
> And also that something may be sent
> To be contented with, I ask of fate. (*CP* 121)

Since Thomas's emphasis was on human emotions and intensity of mood in poetry, he also discussed the relationship between love and poetry. According to him: "The love-poem is not for the beloved, for it is not worthy, as it is the least thing that is given to her, and none knows this better than she unless it be the lover. It is written in solitude, is spent in silence and the night like a sign with an unknown object. It may open with desire of woman, but it ends with unexpected consolation or with another desire not of woman. Love poetry, like all other lyric poetry, is in a sense, unintentionally overheard, and only by accident and in part understood, since it is written not for anyone, far less for the public but for the understanding spirit that is in the air round about or in the sky or somewhere."[4]

Edward Thomas's critical work on his mentor Richard Jefferies portrays the mind and work of Jefferies and can be ranked with Jefferies's own beautiful work *The Story of My Heart*. Jefferies is described by Thomas as a true country child who robbed nests and smashed toads. His classroom was a large pond, his desk a stile and his test-tube later on a shot gun. He lived whole days in the garden and read Scott, Shakespeare, *The Odyssey*, and Don Quixote in the arms of the walnut tree. While writing about Jefferies's love of the countryside, Thomas quotes copiously from his works. As a critic, Thomas knew full well the

limitations of a prose writer in portraying nature which is different from the way a poet can look at nature:

> Being a prose writer he cannot change the things themselves—flower and leaf, and sky—into melody and words, as the poet can in verse. Prose is, by its nature, discursive and explanatory, and Jefferies brings the objects before the eyes gradually, by means of a phrase, a comment or a thought arising out of them, invests them with the spirit of life which gave them their first significance of him.[5]

Edward Thomas's prose as well as verse are records of his impressions of countryside and the people which he gathered during his travels. But his approach to them in his prose works is different from that in his poetry. In his prose works, his approach to nature is that of a gardener who is not very close to the natural world. Here he belonged to the tradition of literary nature writers like Richard Jefferies who represented the decline of the Englishman's vital relationship to their natural world. And this produced writings that were overwritten and self-conscious. In his poetry, on the other hand, Thomas's approach to nature is that of a countryman and here he follows the tradition of Clare and Hardy as well as that of his friend Robert Frost.

In addition to his prose works, his critical writings, which engaged his attention for the major part of his life, also display his love for the countryside and natural landscape. Some of his critical works such as *Richard Jefferies, Lafcadio Hearn* and *Keats* suggest isolated moments of his communion with nature. *Richard Jefferies* is the key text. His reading of country books from White to Hudson is reflected and explored in his critical writings. He lamented the degeneration of rural spirit in England and recalled the rural and cultural heritage of the past. The present appeared hopelessly congested to him and he wrote in one of his reviews: "It will soon have become impossible to see nature for the books that are written about her."[6] His reviews frequently discriminate between the especialised viewpoint of the botanist, the ornithologist, the topographer, the archaeologist, the

anthropologist of rural society, and a higher intention which includes and transcends them all. Similarly, the poem "The Unknown Bird" ponders the unclassifiable origin of his inspiration: "I told/The naturalists; but neither had they heard/Anything like the notes that did so haunt me." (*CP* 133)

Edward Thomas was, in fact, a lonely man who belonged to no general movement. Thomas wrote at a time when Georgian poetry was being written. As a critic he had reviewed Georgian poetry and had commended many of its aspects, particularly its English quality. But even a cursory glance through the poetry of the Georgians reveals how distinct Thomas's poetry is from their poetry. In his choice of colloquial diction and pastoralism, he may have been quite close to the Georgians, but unlike the week-end ruralists who saw nature from a distance, Thomas's verse is an expression of himself in which he displays not only his deep love for the countryside but also his suffering, his pessimism, his melancholy. For Thomas, the English countryside was a living reality rather than a pleasant view from a week-end cottage. Again, Edward Thomas is too privatised and alienated to be categorized with the modernists. In fact, if Thomas is to be seen in relation to such Georgians as Thomas Hardy and such modernists as T.S. Eliot, he serves as a bridge between the two. He did draw much from the Georgians but he also anticipates the modernists in several important respects. By exhibiting a distinctly modern sensibility, he serves as a fruitful middle ground on which many subsequent poets have established themselves. W.H. Auden, R.S. Thomas, Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes have all recorded their debts to him. His attraction to the natural world on the one hand and his individual isolation on the other gives him a singleness of a voice which distinguishes him from the rest of his contemporaries.

NOTES

1. Edward Thomas, *Collected Poems*, with a Foreword by Walter de

la Mare (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 65. Abbreviated as *CP*.

2. Eleanor Fargeon, *Edward Thomas—The Last Four Years* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 232.
3. Edna Longley, ed. and intro., *A Language Not to be Betrayed: Selected Prose of Edward Thomas* (London: Carcenet Press, 1981), p. 204.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
5. Edward Thomas, *Richard Jefferies* (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), p. 198.
6. Edna Longley, p. xviii.

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Social Consciousness in the Early Poetry of Stephen Spender

UDAY SHANKAR OJHA

During the inter-war years of crisis, when Stephen Spender along with W.H. Auden, Cecil Day and Louis MacNiece emerged as a new signature in English poetry, the social reality so much intruded upon the private lives of the artist that they could not help feeling 'hounded by external events.'[1] Having grown up under the shadow of war looming large in and upon Europe, Spender finds the crisis of the time to be an unchanging background of his life. He, like other poets of his group (i.e. the Auden group of poets) was sensitively alive to the social and political problems of his time. His acute as well as obsessive awareness of the world beyond the precincts of his individual self despite his most explicit natural romantic temperament and leanings which his poetry reflects, requires to be studied specifically as social consciousness in the poetry of Spender.

Spender's awareness of the seemingly unpoetic realities of his time is revealed at the very outset in the poems contained in *Nine Experiments* (1928), his first collection to be published only in thirty copies on a private press. The poet, here, takes up the contemporary themes rather than falling into the traditional lines of poetry like the belated Georgians. He is very much a part of the contemporary world and has naturally developed a fascination for many a thing around him, even triflers like gasworks and water canals. His fascination for gasworks becomes the subject and title of the poem "Come, Let Us Praise the Gasworks." He finds in the working of the grate "an archaically perfect mechanic" and feels it to be "the Grimmest and starkest/of all

those intimate machines."[2] With this fascination, Spender was, indeed, hailing the advent of another order, different from still invoked "literary liverocks, lovely lambs, and traditionally deathless nightingales."[3]

Poems like "Epistle and Appeal" introduce one to the real Spender and reveal how the heart of the poet is smitten with the miserable plight of the poor and also how regretful he is on his partner's (whom the poem is addressed to) indifference to all that for he (the addressee) "knows no charity." And while the poet hints at others's "dumb temerity" in the poem "Appeal," he goes to reveal his own heart in "Ovation for Spring," yet another poem in *Nine Experiments*. It shows how the contemporary reality is falling heavy on his nerves, the consciousness of which has become an obsession so much so that he has now ceased to be stirred with the sight and sound of the spring season and can only mark "earth wake and turn/again in penitential round."

Spender continues with his strong contemporary impulse despite all his deep inherited wish "to yield to the romantic afflatus"[4] and the poem "Always between Hope and Fear" contained in the collection *Twenty Poems* (1930) shows the poet's involvement in the crises of his time and also the resolution to overcome the romantic relapses by avoiding his fascination for the past and the future:

> Cancel that heaven and abyss
> Whose blues and reds roar back to madness,
> Avoid these chasms and steep gaps in space.
> Sense should grope on all fours.[7]

He now wants his poetry to be one 'touching the ground,' that is, completely turned to down-to-earth reality. This shows his leaning for the 'proletariat,' his sympathies for the 'unloved and the unlucky' and a domination of Marxian view of society.

The essentially violent phenomenon of his time needed to "be fought with, rushed at, over-awed/And threatened with sword"[8] rather than just adopting a passive or non-involved atti-

tude to it which, according to Spender, amounted to 'boredom' or 'wishing.' Spender could no longer contain himself in his personal problems and in just remorsefully marking the contrast between constancy of nature and the humdrum of human life. The publication of his major collection of verse, *Poems*, in the year 1933, proves to be a decisive one for he now assumes a defined or rather well pronounced "role in the dramatis personae of his generation" and carved himself into a poet of permanent and convincing truth. He now achieves perfect fusion of social reality and his poetic idiom.

The period between the two wars was, however, not a "blank of peace." It was so much filled with political upheavals and socio-economic turmoils that Spender could easily visualize in the early thirties the approaching shadow of a second world war. In such an agonizing world of calculated savagery, his "pen stops" and creative writing seems almost an impossibility.

> Who live under the shadow of war
> What can I do that matters?
> My pen stops, and my laughter, dancing, stop,
> Or ride to a gap. (*Poems*, 31)

Apart from that of the general intellectual crisis of the age, Spender was, in fact, extremely worried to find himself in a personal crisis. He, himself being a member of bourgeois society, developed a secret affection for the worthless outcastes and wanted to give them the love they were denied by the respectable people. This led to a sense of guilt-consciousness in him which found a suitable expression, with the implication of the tiger imagery symbolic of destructive force and fierceness, in the poem "My Parents Kept Me from Children Who Were Rough":

> I feared more than tigers their muscles like iron
> Their jerking hands and their knees tight on my arms
> I feared the salt coarse pointing of those boys
> Who copied my lisp behind me on the road. (*Poems*, 22)

The poet's attitude towards this boundless misery produced by political and economic crisis is one of pity. James Southward in his essay on Spender, develops this theme of pity as the key-note of Spender's poetry and says that "pity is the germ of 'The Prisoners.'[8]

> My pity moves amongst them like a breeze
> On walls of stone
> Fretting for summer leaves, or like a tune
> On ears of stone. (*Poems*, 37)

Spender's pity, most remarkably, restrains itself even in overwhelming situations and the images of the breeze and the tune have softened it into a tender feeling.

We notice here that the poet's feeling for "the worthless outcastes" and pity for the prisoners is nothing but an enlargement of love which refuses to be contained within the domestic walls of a private passion. Spender, rather, directed his feelings into a social context and strengthened them by a will to revolution. The poet's hope, that contemporary 'Waste Land' can be changed only when the young men rebel against the existing state of affairs, is reflected in a typically direct and straightforward manner with a touch of his socialistic leanings and revolutionary fervour:

> Oh young men oh young comrades
> It is too late now to stay in those houses
> Your fathers built where they built you to breed
> Money on money . . .

Thus, Stephen Spender, like Auden, seems to be interested in leftist political views and his collection *Poems* (1993) clearly indicates the same but with a marked difference. The communist myth which, for Auden, was a sort of glorified pubic school with a touch of the Kamredshaft of the German Youth Movement, and for C.D. Levis, simply the English countryside freed from commercialism and snobbery, was for Spender a liberation of the individual spirit like the one prophesied earlier by Shelley in

Prometheus Unbound.

Spender's poetry up to his *Poems* is, thus, the beginning of something new and contains a seed of inspiration derived from and swamped by the events in the external world, he was acutely and abidingly conscious of.

NOTES

1. Stephen Spender, *World within World* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1951), p. 137.
2. Stephen Spender, *Nine Experiments* (London: Hamstead, 1928), p. 13. Abbreviated *NE*.
3. "Poetry of Power," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 11 (Nov. 10, 1934), p. 274.
4. Stephen Spender, *Vision and Rhetoric* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), p. 205.
5. Stephen Spender, "Always between Hope and Fear," *Twenty Poems* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1930), p. 19.
6. *Modern British Poetry*, ed. Levis Untermeyer (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942), p. 488.
7. Simuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation* (London: The Bodley Head, 1976), p. 98.
8. Stephen Spender, *Sewanee Review*, xiv (1937), p. 275.

Beyond Man-Woman Relationship: Adrienne Rich's Later Poetry[1]

SHOBHA SHINDE

Cultural feminism is the ideology of a female nature of female essence appropriated by feminists themselves in an effort to revalidate undervalued female attributes. For cultural feminists, the enemy of women is not merely a social system or economic institution or a set of backward beliefs, but masculinity itself and in same cases male biology. Implicit in most discussions of cultural feminism is the centrality of lesbianism to the process of depoliticization. By lesbian feminism we mean a variety of beliefs and practices based on the core assumption that a connection exists between an erotic and/or emotional commitment to women and political resistance to patriarchal domination.

Cultural feminism represents just one ideological position within lesbian feminist communities. These communities have forged a rich and complex resistance culture and style of politics that nourishes rather than betrays the radical feminist vision. The lesbian feminist community intersects with many contemporary struggles for political and institutional changes and carries a feminist legacy that will shape the future of the women's movement itself. Harriet Desmoinas writes in *Sinister Wisdom*: "Lesbian consciousness is really a point of view, a view from the boundary. And in a sense everytime a woman draws a circle around her psyche, saying, 'this is a room of my own' and then writes from within that 'room,' she is inhabiting lesbian consciousness."[1]

The radical feminist theorist and poet Adrienne Rich has contributed to the lesbian feminist attempt to redefine female desire as a separate sexual economy. In a poetic career which spans

over a period of fifty years, Adrienne Rich has become a vociferous champion of the women's movement. Rich's poetry has evolved from the perceptions of a woman, dependent on men for her social and sexual identity and economic support to a woman who has been autonomous and self-directing through various experiences and difficulties of life.

Rich denies the tradition that does not permit women to perceive themselves as a source of their own energy. She rejects the conflict and torment of a female psyche divided against itself. For Rich, poetry is not simply an aesthetic rendering of experience, but it is a way of changing the world.

Born in Baltimore in 1929, Rich graduated from Radcliffe College in 1951, when her first book of poems was selected by W.H. Auden for the distinguished Yale Series of Younger Poets Award. Over the next forty years, Rich published more than fifteen volumes of poems, three collections of essays and speeches and a feminist study of motherhood. Rich's work has been translated into German, Spanish, Swedish, Dutch, Hebrew, Greek, Italian and Japanese. This paper limits itself to the third phase of Rich's poetic career and analyses the poems of her later life, which focus on the mutuality of women's experience rather than the traditional romantic scheme of masculine dominance and feminine submission.

In an essay entitled, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," published in 1980, Rich issued a radical challenge to the cultural definition of lesbianism as deviant or perverse. She asks why species survival, the means of impregnation and emotional/erotic relationships should be found necessary to enforce women's total emotional, erotic loyalty and subservience to men. Rich challenges these traditional, stereotypical sexual practices and asserts that institutionalized heterosexuality strips women of their autonomy, dignity and sexual potential. This includes the potential of loving and being loved by women in mutuality.

In "Blood, Bread and Poetry," Rich introduces the concept of the "Lesbian Continuum" to describe a shifting spectrum of female relationships:

> I mean the term lesbian continuum to include a range through each woman's life and throughout history of woman identified experience: not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. . . . As we deepen and broaden the range of what we define as lesbian existence, so we delineate a lesbian continuum; we begin to discover the erotic in female terms as that which is unconfined to any single part of the body or solely to the body itself. (75)

Rich questions the virtual neglect of lesbian existence in a wide range of writings, including feminist scholarship. She expresses the hope that other lesbians would feel the depth and breadth of women identification and women bonding and that this would become a politically activating impulse and not just a validation of personal life.

Rich's "Twenty-one Love Poems" explore the efforts of two women to live, work and love together. She confronts the difficulty of choosing such a life in a world hostile to women and love. The ugliness and brutality of the city, the daily news of political atrocities and torture abroad and the awareness of culture and history as chronicles of opposition in all drain the lovers's power to love, so that:

> Two women together is work
> Nothing in civilization has made simple.[1]

Rich proceeds to make a myth of the dailiness of experience, because as she says: "No one has imagined us." (239)

The female poet can name rather than rename the world around. This transference allows the woman to be both subject and object of consciousness—the agent of desire and also its aim. The love and joy of an emotional erotic relationship has not blinded the poet towards mortality:

> At twenty yes, we thought we'd live forever
> At forty five, I want to know even our limits.

I touch you knowing we weren't born tomorrow,
and somehow, each of us will help the other live
and somewhere, each of us must help the other die.
(*FD*, 237)

The realities of women's lives have been camouflaged or rendered invisible. The ghosts of the many women writers who could not pen their thoughts, out of fear of patriarchy, haunt the poet. This so-called civilization, in which half of humanity is passive, has to be transformed, translated:

and we still have to stare into the absence
of men who would not, women who could not speak
to our life—this still unexcavated hole
called civilization, this act of translation
this half world. (*FD*, 239)

The physical ecstasy which the two lovers experience in each other's arms is compared to the scaling of mountains, walking over smouldering lava, the unnamed flower growing on the mountain. Their sleep is compared to the turns taken by the planets:

But we have different voices even in sleep
and our bodies so alike are yet so different
and the past echoing through our bloodstreams
is freighted with different language, different meaning
though in any chronicle of the world we share
it could be written with new meaning
we were two lovers of one gender
we were two women of one generation. (*FD*, 242)

The question of renaming the world is at the heart of these poems, because Rich perceives the necessity of escaping the boundaries of convention to make "a new world . . . by women outside the law." (*FD*, 243) These poems also mirror the conviction that only by choosing one's life freely or by making one's

choice into a language, can women begin to redefine poetry, appropriating for themselves the power of naming.

In a highly controversial speech before the Modern Language Association in 1976, Rich asserted:

> I believe it is the lesbian in every woman who is compelled by female energy, who gravitates toward strong women, who seeks a literature, that will express that energy and strength. It is the lesbian in us who drives us to feel imaginatively, render in language, grasp the full connection between woman and woman. It is the lesbian in us who is creative, for the dutiful daughter of the fathers in us is only a hack.[2]

According to Rich, the struggles of women for a "human" status have been relegated to the footnotes and to the sidelines. She feels that women's relationship with women has been neglected and denied as a force in history. "The Images" marks a major turning point in Rich's career. The speaker expresses her anger against western culture's representation of women:

> And what can reconcile me
> that you, the woman whose hand
> sensual and protective, brushes me in sleep,
> go down each morning in such a city.[3]

Rich asserts that women must voice their own experiences and preserve the past heritage and help to create a world of their own. Women must find the language to create their own realities and eventually create a vision which connects them to life itself. "Culture and Anarchy," a title borrowed from Matthew Arnold, celebrates personal relationships and the spiritual legacy of the nineteenth century feminists. Women's love for each other has always been a major social and literary influence:

> How you have given back to me
> my dream of a common language

my solitude of self
I should miss you more than any other
living being of this earth
yes, our work is one
We are one in aim and sympathy
and we should be together (*WP*, 8)

Rich writes of the female community which is rooted in American history and based on an intricate web of female relationships. She celebrates the power of these enduring networks in "For Julia in Nebraska," a poem dedicated to Willa Cather, who shared a relationship with a young girl, Julia:

I've listened to your words
Seen you stand by the caldron's gaze
rendering grammar by the heat
of your womanly wrath.
Brave linguist, bearing your double axe and shield
painfully honed and polished
no word lies cool on your tongue
bent on restoring meaning to
our lesbian names, in quiet fury
weaving the chronicle so wildly torn (*WP*, 18)

In her poetry, Adrienne Rich has attempted to create positive public image of women to counteract the distortions due to the subjection of the female mind and the objectification of the female body in patriarchal society. It is Rich's vision to create a gender inflected interpretation of history based upon female identity. The female selfhood will insist not only on the difference among women, but also stress the commonality of their lives.

In "Inscription," Rich takes a historical purview of the events which followed World War II, juxtaposed with the personal, the intimate:

Should I simplify my life for you?
Don't ask me how I began to love men.

Don't ask me how I began to love women.[4]

Though not the only modern writer to insist upon a special awareness of female artistic creativity, Rich is however the most visible and prominent poet in the last half of the twentieth century. Rich has always demanded the rights of all women to make their own choices and live life on their own terms. To adopt lesbianism is her act of rebellion against the norms of patriarchy.

NOTES

1. Adrienne Rich, *The Fact of a Doorframe: Poems Selected and New 1950-84* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1984), p. 238. Abbreviated *FD*.
2. Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose: 1966-78* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1979), pp. 200-1.
3. Adrienne Rich, *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far: Poems 1978-1881* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1981), p. 5. Abbreviated *WP*.
4. Adrienne Rich, *Dark Fields of the Republic: Poems 1991-95* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1995), p. 59.

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Edgar Allan Poe: Poetry and Metre

A.A. MUTALIK DESAI

> Poetry comes from a two-fold source—a mysterious inner compulsion and a fully conscious technical discipline: it is a process in which both living and language mingle, in which both meaning and method marry, and in which both visions and revisions play their parts.[1]

Traditionally, at any rate, most definitions of poetry tend to emphasize poetry's concern with human passions and emotions, which the poet seeks to express. Thus, any number of poets and critics have characterized the substance of poetry as follows: Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science. It is thoughts and words in which emotion spontaneously embodies itself. By poetry, we mean the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by words what the painter does by means of colours. It is the language of imagination and the passions. But others have drawn attention more to the outward form or mould in which poetry is cast. Thus, poetry is metrical composition. It is musical thought. It works by modulating its language on the principles of variety in unity. It is the art of producing pleasure by the just expression of imaginative thought and feelings in metrical language. It is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language.

These defining statements which focus on two aspects of poetry, substance and form, show that the essence of poetry is first in human sensitivity, namely, feeling and imagination; and secondly in its outward, articulate manifestation, where it relies

upon such tools of language as metre and rhythm. Indeed it is the latter, in the opinion of many, that distinguishes poetry from the other harmony of prose. But this too has been the ground for much difference of opinion both among the practitioners and connoisseurs of this art. To some, metre is vitally connected with poetic expression, as noted above; but to others, it is merely an adjunct, a pleasurable embellishment, and no more: it is mere apparel, an ornament and no cause to poetry, poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre, any composition in verse, and none that is not, is always called, whether good or bad, a poem. And, finally, here is a sober and less dogmatic comment: there is considerable meaning in the old distinction of poetry being metrical, having music in it. In these observations, one sees a wide range of opinion on the role and significance of metre in poetry. But, all the same, conscious detractors from, as well as fervent advocates of metre, will both agree that most poetry is composed with at least some recognition of the value of metrical devices. In the words of Matthew Arnold, metre is a part of the perfection poetry tries to attain.

Turning to Edgar Allan Poe, an attempt will first be made to review his various pronouncements on metre, versification and on poetic technique in general. These are found mostly in his "The Poetic Principle" (1850), "The Rationale of Verse" (1848), "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846), and in many prefaces, reviews and magazine articles. In these is revealed Poe's great interest as much in abstract principles involved in poetry, as in the practice of other poets and lesser versifiers.

In "The Poetic Principle," Poe is more concerned with the broader aspect of poetry as art. For instance, he discusses here the need for unity and ideal length for a poem, the heresy of the didactic, the inter-relatedness of taste and beauty with poetry, etc. While discoursing on the organic relationship between music and poetry, however, Poe records his views on metre, rhythm and rhyme. According to him, the essence of the poetic principle is in "the Human Aspiration for Supernal Beauty,"[2] in the attainment of which the musical qualities of language must play a vital role. Poetry, which is "the Rhythmical Creation of Beauty,"

(894) must seek its loftiest ideals and highest attainments through its union with music.

"The Rationale of Verse" deals more explicitly with "all that is involved in the consideration of rhythm, rhyme, metre and versification, a subject so suffused with . . . inaccuracy, confusion, misconception, misrepresentation, mystification, and downright ignorance on all sides." (908) As Poe argues, it is amazing that such a subject (which in his own words is one-tenth ethical and nine-tenths mathematical) should have been subjected to so much inaccuracy and misunderstanding. He rightly complains against the ordinary textbooks of grammar that treat this subject so inadequately, and so often resort to pedagogy. Their frequent reliance upon Greek authorities often creates a bewildering mass of mere verbiage, as his following remark illustrates: "When a syllable is wanting, the verse is said to be catalectic; when the measure is exact, the line is acalectic; when there is a redundant syllable it forms hypermeter." (909) It is easier now to see why Poe must have sneered at such phraseology—which is enough to dampen anyone's curiosity about the subject. What is worse, such an approach fails as much by its dogmatic nature as also by its inadequate explanation of the postulates. Therefore, Poe's thesis in this respect is an appeal for a more empirical attitude in dealing with the mechanism of versification, which is after all a very practical subject.

After this Poe continues his argument with a consideration of the need for such ingredients as rhythm, metre, stanza, rhyme, alliteration, refrain, "and other analogous effects." These originate in man's instinctive desire for harmony (or, "equality"), and this in turn includes "similarity, proportion, identity, repetition and adaptation or fitness." (913) Even like the pleasure in viewing a crystal, one hopes that poetry, which is akin to music, is built upon harmony and proportion, Poe insists.

Throughout the essay, Poe deals with many other details briefly: his comments are as informative and tactful as they are steeped in his romanticism. Quality and quantity are analyzed and the linguistic difficulties of the latter in English are pointed out; the function and usefulness of such basic metrical feet as

iamb, trochee, anapaest and dactyl are explained (as the other metrical feet "have no existence except in the brains of scholiasts," (915) the essential features of a stanza as "the insulation of lines into equal or obviously proportioned masses," (918) its unity in the hands of ancient poets and its looseness in the hands of moderns, and finally the need for modulation as a safeguard against monotony in versification—are all quickly glanced at. On this last mentioned subject of modulation, Poe's statement illustrates his criticism at its best and his ability for dispassionate evaluation. He says:

> I speak of the *occasional* introduction of equivalent feet. It sometimes happens that unskilled versifiers, without knowing what they do, or why they do it, introduce so many "variations" as to exceed in number the "distinctive" feet: when the ear becomes at once balked by *bouleversement* of the rhythm. Too many trochees, for example, inserted in an iambic rhythm, would convert the latter to a trochaic. I may note, that, in all cases, the rhythm designed should be commenced and continued, *without* variation, until the ear has had full time to comprehend what *is* the rhythm. In violation of a rule so obviously founded in common-sense, many even of our best poets, do not scruple to begin an iambic rhythm with a trochee, or the converse; and so on. (923)

Turning now to Poe's practice as a poet, with special reference to his employment of the various concepts of prosody, one is again confronted with sharply divided critical opinion on his performance. To some, Poe's keen awareness of prosodical values is not matched by his poetic performance, while others have found fault even with his technique. Yet others have extolled the sweet music and the abiding charm of his lines. Emerson spoke of him as "the jingle man." Swinburne referred to him as "utterly true, rich, clear, and native to the singer: the short, exquisite music, subtle and simple and sombre and sweet, of Edgar Poe."[3] Edmund Gosse admired the "perennial charm of Poe's verses."[4] On the other hand, Henry James describes Poe's poetry as "very

valueless verses," and adds that, "an enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection."[5] More recent criticism has blamed Poe for "the inconsistencies between his critical dicta and his actual practice . . . [and] the platitudinous nature and monotony of his rime."[6] Occasionally, there has also been criticism of a dubious kind. For example: "Careless in his rimes, conservative in his use of meter, modern in his choice and order of words, Poe is most noteworthy for his unusual stanza forms."[7] Or, like this one, on "The Bells": "ingenious technique never made poetry. Poe's purpose in the poem was apparently to synthesize the ambivalences of experience by underscoring heavily the multi-faceted complexity of a single object. To accomplish this purpose he mastered the most intricate patterns of rhyme, vowel-motives and refrain to be found in his poetry. . . . Poe's versatility was never more in evidence than here, and never more ineffectual."[8]

Any evaluation of Poe's skill and versatility in poetic technique must, however, depend upon an unbiased and critical appraisal of the range and variety of metres, stanza forms and other prosodical paraphernalia employed by him. Many other poets have written substantially on the art and craft of poetry. Sir Philip Sidney, Dryden, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Emerson, Longfellow, T.S. Eliot and others have all something to say on poetry, and in retrospect, Poe's statements on an art he practised with consummate skill do not make an unfavourable comparison. As noted earlier, "The Poetic Principle" and "The Rationale of Verse" and his other briefer and less ambitious writings speak eloquently about his keen interest in technique. For illustrating from his poetry, this essay will first deal with "Tamarlane" in some detail, and then with other poems briefly.

"Tamarlane" (1827) is among Poe's first published poems. By virtue of its symbolic theme and style, its poetic merits and prosodic richness, this poem invites our attention. To the student of prosody, its complex structure and abundant variety are of equal fascination. An attempt is made in the following analysis to bring out its chief metrical features and highlights.

Lines	Metrical Features
1-12:	Two cross-rhymed quatrains and two couplets.
13-26:	One cross-rhymed quatrain followed by five couplets.
27-34:	One couplet and a sextet made up of interlaced rhymes.
35-40:	One quatrain with enclosed rhyme scheme and a couplet, comparable to the French ballad stanza form, "Rime Roue."
41-54:	Two cross-rhymed quatrains separated by one with enclosed rhyme scheme and then followed by a couplet.
55-64:	A simpler and shorter version of lines 41-54.
65-74:	As in lines 27-34, another example of interlaced rhyme scheme: but the couplet comes at the end.
75-85:	Three couplets and five lines of interlaced rhyme, but less organic in effect.
86-95:	A Shakespearean quatrain followed by a Petrarchan sextet.
96-111:	Cross-rhymed quatrains and couplets.
112-127:	Couplets, cross-rhymed quatrains and the final quatrain with enclosed rhyme scheme.
128-138:	An extended cross-rhymed quatrain, a regular quatrain and a couplet.
139-144:	A couplet followed by a cross-rhymed quatrain.
145-154:	A cross-rhymed couplet and a variant sextet.
155-164:	A rare instance of a quatrain separated by another unit.
165-176:	Two regular cross-rhymed quatrains separated by a rare example of a quatrain with a single rhyme.
177-186:	Five couplets.
187-200:	A cross-rhymed quatrain followed by four couplets.
201-212:	Five couplets as in lines 177-186.
213-221:	A cross-rhymed quatrain, a couplet and a triplet.
222-243:	First seven lines with interlaced rhymes followed by two couplets and a triplet.

From this, Poe's metrical immense variety, inventiveness and dexterity in manipulating the existing tools are evident. Without slavishly conforming to any accepted mould or pattern which he regarded as a Procrustean adjustment, he makes variations in

structure, length, rhyme-scheme through all possible permutations and combinations.

These very characteristics of variety, inventiveness and dexterity are no less apparent in other shorter poems. Here in these, Poe uses every metre and stanza form: Sonnet ("To Science," "To Zante" and "Silence"), Four-foot iambic ("Song"), Five-foot iambic ("Dreams"), Heroic-Couplet measure ("A Dream within a Dream," "The Lake" and "Alone"), Heptasyllabic measure ("Spirit of the Dead," "A Dream" and "To: I heed not . . ."), Ottawa Rima ("Stanzas"), Blank verse ("The Coliseum"), Trochaic metre ("The Raven"), Anapaestic metre ("Ulalume"), and so on. Among the various stanza forms, there is also another factor that explains for this variety, namely the syllabic length of different poems. At one end of the scale, there are short lines with five to six syllables in each as in "Eldorado." At the other, there are lines with fifteen to sixteen syllables as in "The Raven." "The Bells" is a rare example where both are found in the same poem. Even less tangible factors, like overflow or enjambement and endstopped lines are used with a sense of economy and proportion as in "Song" and "Dreams."

"The Raven" and "The Bells" deserve some attention, prosodically as well as poetically. "The Raven," in eight-foot trochaic metre, is yet another attempt to succeed in composing fifteen or sixteen syllabled lines in English. The story of such experiments goes back to the Poulter's Measure in the hands of early Tudor poets. Much later, Tennyson tried it in his "Locksley Hall" and "Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After," and so did Browning in his "Saul" and "A Toccato of Galuppi's." Longfellow tried it in his "Nuremberg," and to a certain extent John Greenleaf Whittier in "Massachusetts to Virginia." One fact emerges from all these experiments: as the lines are considerably long, the poet has to have a pause in the line, and more often, in the middle of the line. This structural characteristic affects the rhythm and is responsible for its main weakness. The pause in the middle of the line tends to split the line into two halves: so, when read aloud, this eight-foot measure sounds more like the familiar four-foot measure.

In many poems, Poe has introduced refrain in varying degrees of prominence given to it. In his early poems, refrain is only an artistic piquancy; but later he came to depend on it, and it becomes a regular feature. "The Happiest Day," "I saw these on thy bridal day," "To One in Paradise," "Eldorado," "The Raven" and "Ulalume" are some of the prominent examples. But in spite of the claim that "The poem which represents Poe's most ambitious effort with the refrain and at the same time his most colossal failure is 'The Bells.'"[9] "The Bells" is the very best in Poe in this respect. Few poems can equal the haunting melody of the following lines: "Yet the ear distinctly tells,\ In the jangling,\ And the wrangling,\ How the danger sinks and swells,\ By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells. . . . \ In the clamor and the clangor of the bells."

Much is said about Poe's weakness with regard to rhymes. His many inconsistencies in rhyming are pointed out by Pettigrew. It is undeniable that Poe has admitted many imperfect rhymes in his poems. There are actually scores of light rhymes, half rhymes, eye rhymes and examples of assonance. Poe has also employed rime rich, imperfect vowel identity; he has made use of proper names in rhymes and is guilty of repetitiveness. Though this does not ruin his poetry, the charge cannot be explained away; and, for one who was a conscious, avowed craftsman, this constitutes a serious weakness. Even in his best moods, he is not free from this blemish.

Notwithstanding this demerit, Poe's striving for perfection is self-evident. As Killis Campbell has pointed out, Poe constantly revised his poems or as Stoddard has said, "No poet who wrote so little ever re-wrote that little so often, and so successfully."[10] It was only natural for one who loved words and word-music so fondly. W.H. Auden once wrote: "I like hanging around words, listening to what they say."[11] Poe could have said the same.

NOTES

1. Elizabeth Drew, *Poetry: A Modern Guide to Its Understanding and Enjoyment* (New York, 1964), p. 21.
2. Edgar Allan Poe, *The Complete Tales and Poems* (New York, 1938), p. 906.
3. A.C. Swinburne, qtd. Killis Campbell, ed., *The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York, 1962), p. iv.
4. Edmund Gosse, *Questions at Peace* (London, 1893), p. 89.
5. Henry James, *French Poets and Novelists* (London, 1878), p. 76.
6. R.C. Pettigrew, "Poe's Rime," *American Literature*, IV (Jan. 1933), p. 151.
7. W.L. Werner, "Poe's Theory and Practice in Poetic Technique," *American Literature*, XXV (May, 1954), pp. 176-77.
9. Allen, p. 70.
10. Stoddard, qtd. Campbell, p. 322.
11. Auden, qtd. Drew, p. 20.

Dharwad

Woolgathering: The Growth of Shiv K. Kumar's Poetic Vision

BIJAY KUMAR DAS

Woolgathering (1998), Shiv K. Kumar's sixth book of verse, which shows a rising graph of his poetic career, is the convergence of all his earlier five volumes of poetry. The titles of all his six volumes of verse are suggestive and often paradoxical. *Articulate Silences* (1970) is a paradoxical title which means that silences could be articulate. *Cobwebs in the Sun* (1974) is symbolic because the sun which is a symbol of clarity, of vision and of logic and reasoning is not really so for us because human experience is a muddle in the Forsterian sense. Hence, there are cobwebs in the sun. *Subterfuges* (1976) suggests tricks not about life but about the creative process. The poet alone knows how his poem is composed and for readers there are only 'hints and guesses.' *Woodpeckers* (1979) suggests the pecking into the sensitive mind like the little bird pecking into the trunk of a tree to get at the problem and discover the truth. *Trapfalls in the Sky* (1986) is suggestive of trapfalls to trap us, like the elephants are trapped in trapfalls in the jungle—it hints at deromanticising of the moon and the stars and coming to terms with reality. *Woolgathering* (1998) marks the culmination of Kumar's poetic achievement, for he has now learnt, to look upon life not through cobwebs and subterfuges but through trapfalls and hence, woolgathering would help to heal the wound and agony that abide him.

Woolgathering contains sixty poems on various themes such as love, death, contemporary reality, landscape seasons and a few poems about family. The thematic range is wider than all his earlier poetry volumes. Moreover, the perception of new reality

makes the resonance of Kumar's poetic voice distinct and unmistakable. Let us begin with Kumar's love poems. Human love is the central theme of his poetry. Frustration in love and betrayal by friends are major preoccupations in this book. Kumar, like English metaphysical poets, depicts various moods of love with insight and precision.

In "Bedroom," Kumar tells us about a couple who, though lie "together in bed," are distanced from each other by misunderstanding and "daily wrangles." It is not the closeness of the bodies but the minds that brings the couple together. Love is in the mind not in the body, Kumar seems to say.

> If time and space lend perspective
> to the mind, we should have learnt
> to shift the word. from its resonance.
>
> To change a bed's locus-standi
> each autumn
> may not retrieve anything
> when the mind is still shadowed by the bat's wings.[1]

"Twenty-fifth Wedding Anniversary" generalises the problem that bedevils wife-husband relationship in "Bedroom." Kumar debunks hypocrisy in no uncertain terms. The hide and seek played by the wife and the husband disturbs the poet. The innocence is drowned in double-dealing and pretension. The misunderstanding between the wife and the husband is deep rooted and therefore, there is no love between them—only suspicion and distrust. Thus, the poet employs a gruesome image to describe their relationship in the following lines:

> Your impulsion to needle
> each word I spoke
> as if it were some brown worm squirming.

The guests pretending happiness in married life wish the hosts 'many returns of the day' and therefore, the poet ridicules such

people in no uncertain terms. He says:

they have started to pour in,
each wearing his own anniversary on his painted face
Poised to wish as many returns of the day—
or the night of eternal discord?

The imagery in his love poems is highly innovative, learned and original. Love and sex are depicted with consummate skill and the ideas are successfully conveyed through the imagery. In fact, in Kumar's poetry, particularly in his love poetry, the image is the idea and therefore, the hints and guesses "whisper results." In "Rape," he writes:

Each icon of love speaks
its own language—
husky cooing in a thistle—
down bed, eyes that seek the meaning
of pollen wafting from one blue-bell
to another—and fingers that weave
occult patterns around brown nipples,
till even stone melts into benediction.

Likening the final assault in sex act to "legs pinioned like a fowl's/ before it is traded off" and the arousal of sex to "moon tide" and the post-sex act to "the moon hiding/behind a fugitive cloud/ and the stars sniggering," is to create innovative images to judge human love and sex in terms of the movement of the stellar bodies. In another poem called "The Ring," the comparison between talisman (i.e. the Ring) and lie, desire and "an abandoned mackerel" speaks volumes for Kumar's insight into image-making. This is how the comparison has been brought out:

It's my talisman against wind's
Whispering campaign.
Grown smoother and wider
like a lie, it can now let

any questioning glide through. . . .
The games are done only when the knuckles
Shrivel up, the nails show
their white flags for truce
and desire lies gasping on the sand
like a mackerel abandoned
by the receding combers.

Sleeplessness caused by one's wife's infidelity is brought out, in a subtle way in a poem called "Insomnia." Failure in love and distrust in marriage are recurrent themes in Kumar's poetry. As he puts it:

I know where my wife's secrets
lie sealed. Each night I hear
the same tato in my skull's chamber.

I have counted, all the stars
Over my terrace. The steel bars in my
neighbour's balcony are twenty-one
and three suburban freight trains rumble
the rail-crossing between two and four.

Darkness now snaps at the seams.
A hymn floats across the sky
like a bird's warble . . .
—the milkman's bottle
jingles at my doorstep.

I must walk through the day's fire
To let another moon demolish me.

Unhappy conjugal life haunts the poet without end and in his poetry one discerns the groundswell of frustration in love in one's life due to the infidelity of the woman. I concur with Surjit S. Dulai when he says:

Conjugal unhappiness continues to be a frequent theme of Kumar in this collection. He seems to see disharmony in marriage as a rampant phenomenon in the modern world. All the guests in "Twenty-fifth Wedding Anniversary" are wearing a mask of happiness in marriage and wishing the hosts "many returns of the day," while they know full well the truth is otherwise. If possibilities of extra-marital romance arise, they are smothered by the hovering ghosts of wedded partners in "Thou Shalt Not Commit" and "Ghosts." "I am a Vegetarian" is a light-hearted picture of a husband thinking about the consequences of weakness "a lamb's liver, a chicken's breast"—in his relationship with his "shrewish wife." Most poems about marriage are about a man's unhappiness caused by a woman's heartlessness. But the most moving poem on the subject, "First Night—After a Doweried Wedding," describes the feelings of a bride, victim of the common Indian custom of arranged marriage, a custom that pays scant regard to the bride's feelings, making marriage synonymous with death.[2]

If love takes a substantial part of Kumar's poetry, death as a theme is also given a prominent place in it. Since pain and suffering are integral part of life, death and resurrection are recurrent themes in *Woolgathering*. In "The Death of My Father," the poet commemorates a personal sorrow, which gets impersonalised and objectified in the last stanza of the poem. The sorrow for not being able to attend the father's funeral makes him feel nostalgic about the past. Thus he writes:

Since I arrived here a day after the flames
had already eaten you away
I could commune only with your last remains. . . .
I'll be ambushed by memories of my childhood—

how you'd scold a boy of five
for emerging from his shower,
draped only in his nudity, as though to show

that we shared something (besides our fierce dissents)
that had been denied to mother and my sisters.

The personal loss soon gets objectified as the poet tries to universalize this kind of emotion on the part of the protagonist. Thus, the poetic persona becomes anyman who mourns the death of his father. As Kumar puts it:

Now I feel like a child
Playing marbles down a blind lane
with a ghost, whose hands weave in the air
Patterns of a familiar sound.

In "Crematorium of Adikmet, Hyderabad," the poet describes how cremation has become a mere ritual, when priests take it as a kind of business: "The Priest Chants louder/ for a generous tip." And the ritual continues. In the words of the poet,

Here the earth replenishes itself—
wipes out a name to welcome
a fresh arrival.

Death is depicted as inevitable in some of Kumar's poems. The idea is to accept it as one accepts life. Once that is realized, death will cease to be terrible and dreadful.

Kumar wrote a number of poems on man's predicament in this harsh world and the first person narrative gives a kind of authenticity to these poems. Right from the beginning of his poetic career, Kumar has been preoccupied with human suffering and that is why, in his poetry there is a constant search for innocence and concern for the well being of individual human being. Poems like "Shadow Lines," "Sleep Walking," "Blackout," and "On Moving into a Complex of Apartments," reflect the condition of an individual in different situations. The uncertainty of the future looms large in the face of a person as the fate is governed by celestial bodies. Thus he writes in "Shadow Lines":

My morning mirror shows a configuration
of Shadow lines as though the crisscrosses
On my palms have surfaced here,
Presaging disasters.

He continues in the same vein in "On Moving into a Complex of Apartments":

for compulsions have their own logic
Horoscopes are never governed
by terrestrial laws

If postcoloniality, which is currently in fashion, emphasizes a contemporary state, Kumar, like his contemporaries, Nissim Ezekiel, Jayanta Mahapatra and A.K. Ramanujan, is a postcolonial poet par excellence. Kumar writes a number of topical poems. In "I say it on oath, your Lordship,' and "Farewell to Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi," Kumar reflects on the court scene. In the first poem, the protagonist pleads for his divorce from a nagging wife in a tone marked by anguish and disgust. The imagery employed is evocative and highly suggestive. Kumar writes:

Speaking out one's mind in an open court
is always an embarrassment
like the wedding-kiss,
under the priest's direction
so may I use my own language, please,
which speaks more through vehicle
than tenor?

I was always subjected to the terrors
of her scimitar-tongue, which hurt me
like a surgeon, doing the stitches
without anaesthesia. . . .

Even on our anniversaries,

if I ever let my desire speak
the body's language as a gesture,
She immediately receded
into the other hemisphere
where the moon hibernates and the sun
blazes its copper to dry even the spittle.

. . . your lordship,
how I have withstood these assaults
on my mind's fragile fortress
But now I pray that this siege be lifted.

Kumar is up against hypocrisy, falsehood and double-dealing. His idea of morality is linked with simplicity, honesty and innocence. On being asked about his idea of morality, he tells the interviewer Saraswati Subbu:

> Morality? You ask me a very significant question. Dedication and simplicity of the self are important. That is why I satirize urbanized modes of perception. I come down heavily on people living in big towns, the hypocrisy linked to the social system. I debunk the judiciary in my poem on Tis Hazari courts. What about falsehood, hypocrisy, religion and pure orthodoxy? A simple person, who does his work right, is to me a little god; an uncomplicated human being. The woman in my poem "A Woman Labourer, Breast-feeding her Child, during Lunch-break" just carries bricks. She is not interested in anything else. Yet, to me she is the Madonna herself. Another poem on Mother Teresa—it's not what you do for yourself. So, I have a system of values. This is my morality.[3]

Kumar's "Farewell to Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi," a sequel to his earlier poem, "Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi," (included in *Trapfalls in the Sky*) reminds us of Nissim Ezekiel's poem, "Undertrial Prisoners," in which the latter underlines the lacunae in the judiciary system.

Kumar's topical poems reflect on not only contemporary reality that engulfs us, but on human condition as well. in "Felling a Tree," Kumar says,

> Humiliation is lethal
> when the victim has no weapons for defence,
> when you have to carry your own cross
> and you are your own pyre—
> fuel, flame and ashes.

Kumar's sympathy is always with the poor and innocent who are the victims of the society. The pavement-sleepers of Bombay, for whom the "day is for sweating" and who sleep "under cover of night-sky,/ heads on jute-bags rolled into pillows," may look like "corpses waiting to be dumped/ into a mass grave" but, for the poet they "are only fallen angels/ who will return home when the sun/ has run its course."

Woolgathering gives vent to his memory and desire and makes an assertion of self through dream and reality. Life, love, and death—three eternal themes of poetry are worked out artistically in this volume. The poet has come to terms with the mystery of life and declares in "On Listening to Mozart's Requiem":

> I know when the wind waves its wand
> it's time to give up.

The world of human beings is contrasted with the world of birds in the manner of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," "Talking to a Bird on my Window-sill," brings home the agony of life. People may change and smile but the agony abides, Kumar seems to say. Thus he writes:

> You seem to chirp your way through life—
> never a streak of sorrow
> in your beady eyes,
> you don't know the problems I have to face—
> darkness, rain, nightmares—

Or that cyclone, last summer, that uprooted
a tree in my compound, demolishing
a nest that had sheltered my vagrant thoughts.

Kumar's poetry being image oriented, it falls into the category of 'Oblique Poetry' in contrast with direct poetry which yields meaning at the surface level. Kumar's poetry makes sense at the deeper level and, therefore, irony becomes an important mode in his poetry.

Kumar's poems on Indian landscape are integrated with contemporary life in our society as in "Banaras: Winter Morning," "Dawn breaks over Khasi Hills," "Musing in a Park" and "Moongazing."

In "Dawnbreak over Khasi Hills," Kumar expresses the "secret sorrows" of individuals as well as the tribes in terms of the landscape of the place. One finds a brilliant example of pathetic fallacy at work in the following lines:

Outside my window, a tall weeping
Willow, its stable tresses dropping
from its shoulders
is still immersed in some ancient
grief—its tears watering a fugitive
flower-bed beneath which I buried
my mother, three winters ago.
Out there, from the drowsy valley
rises a wail, bemoaning all those tribal
ancestors who walked away beyond the hills
Centuries ago
lost in their secret sorrows.

Like the *Tower* volume of W.B. Yeats, *Woolgathering* is Kumar's greatest poetic achievement. It has memories of love and lost relationships, bitterness in married life and separation but all the dreams are not shattered and hope is not completely lost. Instead, the poet has learnt the wisdom of life passing through the fire of suffering, pain and even betrayal. Again, like Yeats, Ku-

mar can be read as a poet of the old age who realises that "ripeness is a cruel mentor" and knows "it's only my mind sending out/skiffs down and blood-stream." That Kumar has acquired the wisdom of Shakespeare ("ripeness is all") and Milton ("the mind in its own place and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell and Hell of Heaven")—is for the discerning reader to see. Again, in "Walking by Riverside," he asserts that when "the past and present eddy around each other reinforcing nothingness," "disaster comes too soon."

If "true poetry is always a direct outpouring of personal feeling, then its values are determined by the nature of the emotion which it exepresses."[4] Kumar has little to fear. The search for innocence, the pangs of life, the failure of love, the betrayal of women, the corruption in public life, the East-West encounter, the hollowness of rituals, the fear of ageing, the pervading presence of death and the predicament of modern man in an irreligious milieu—all attract the attention of Kumar and he takes all these as his themes in his poetry. He dramatizes his own failure or triumph, impotence or passion, love or hate, as "the normal passionate, reasoning" of man to reach an intense universality of meaning. To read his poetry is to watch an actor enacting his 'tragic-play'—it is to know him inside out. *Woolgathering* reinforces all the themes employed in his earlier volumes and carries them to their logical conclusion. With this volume to his credit, Kumar becomes one of the best postcolonial Indian English poets of our country who "himself is the unity of his work."

NOTES

1. Shiv K. Kumar, *Woolgathering* (Mumbai: Disha Books, 1998), p. 45.
2. Surjit S. Dulai, "Shiv K. Kumar's Writing," *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 25:2 (Summer, Fall 1990), p. 37.
3. Interview with Saraswati Subbu, *Indian Literary Review*, April

3. Interview with Saraswati Subbu, *Indian Literary Review*, April 1989; reprinted in *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 25:2 (Summer, Fall 1990), p. 234.
4. Ronald S. Crane, *A Collection of English Poems 1600-1800* (New York: Harper, 1932), p. v.

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Beckettian Reality Reconsidered in Pinter's Plays

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The names of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter have become indispensable in the list of the greatest dramatists of our age. Both these playwrights emerged in the controversial and stormy 1950s and both have openly flouted the conventions of traditional drama. The bold experiments which constitute the main body of the works of both Beckett and Pinter have often been taken to be the similar notes of a larger symphony popularly known as the Theatre of the Absurd. In fact, in many ways, Pinter is considered to be a part of the younger generation of the Theatre of the Absurd, of which Beckett is taken to be a father figure.

The general belief is that the plays of both Beckett and Pinter reflect a similar attitude towards life and are designed more or less in the same way. The present paper endeavours to focus on the startling dissimilarities in the plays of both these dramatists and attempts to establish that despite their apparent similarities, both in their vision and its dramatic presentation, Beckett and Pinter employ different strategies to achieve different and probably mutually antagonistic goals through their works.

To begin with, what strikes us as an obvious aspect in the works of both Beckett and Pinter is perhaps their realization of the absurdity of all human endeavours and its ruthless depiction in their plays. But in this basically similar vision, Pinter's approach is different from that of Beckett. Though the absurdity of human existence is shown by both, Beckett's plays essentially convey their author's sense of metaphysical anxiety at the realization of the absurdity of human existence and they also exhibit his sense of despair at not being able to find a meaning to the

existential mystery that surrounds the universe. In this sense, his method is essentially and pessimistically polyphonic.

There appears no such strain in the writings of Harold Pinter. He chooses to be distant and detached. Rather than exhibiting an overt pessimistic outlook of the writer, Pinter's plays give a complicated picture of life. In fact, they cleverly elude all direct possible interpretations and appear far more neutralised and objective in their thematic concerns and their presentation. Unlike Beckett's works where the disillusionment at the discovery of the futility of all human efforts seems to have been written all over the place, Pinter's plays push before the reader a 'do it yourself' exercise.

In Beckett, the reaction to and expression of reality is philosophical whereas in Pinter, it is artistic. Beckett first thinks and then creates the metaphors of life on stage; Pinter, on the other hand, first feels and then holds before the audience the poetic images of reality of life. Beckett's essence is that of a thinker but Pinter's is that of an artist, a poet. Thus the structure of Beckett's plays is quite static and that of Pinter is extremely fluid. The situations in Beckett's plays don't develop much; the beginnings are weary and without much of apparent action, the plays drudge towards an intangible and vague end. Though Pinter's plays too attain only an intangible end, yet the situations are much more dynamic and the psychological assurance, that the play has come to an end, is provided rather more obviously to the reader.

Likewise, the human communication and its intricacies is perhaps one subject where Beckett and Pinter appear so similar but are so startlingly poles apart. Beckett's characters refuse to speak as language does not appear to be a means of expression to them. They become silent as having known the ultimate reality, they don't have anything to express, no desire to say anything to anyone. Beckett's characters assume a silence which is a symbol of their complete denial to be associated with the futile business of conversation with others. We see the passive, old, decrepit figures like Henry of *Embers*, Krapp of *Krapp's Last Tape* and Hamm of *Endgame* who all do little and speak very

few words and just brood over their past lives. Whatever little they speak, it serves only to express the breakdown and disintegration of language and they perfectly seem to echo Beckett's own sense of disgust with the futility of entire communication process as he expresses his own sense of loss at language: "I have to speak whatever that means. Having nothing to say, no words but the words of others, I have to speak."[1]

Pinter's characters, on the other hand, take the entire communication process to be a strategy to carry their own desires through and above others. They resort to subtle manipulations and manoeuvres through the language that they employ. They "all play games, all the time. They all tease each other, they all try and get rises out of each other, they all try and disturb each other by saying the opposite of what other one was hoping or expecting."[2] There, in fact, always is much at stake for Pinter's characters. Pinter himself feels that he deals with his characters at the extreme edge of their living. To fight the battle of survival, the characters in his plays arm themselves with the sophisticated weapon of language. In Pinter's plays, all the contentious issues are decided by the linguistic competence of the characters. Thus they all know that the abstract and invisible weapon of language is far more lethal than those which their opponents can see and thus have a chance to parry the attack. Therefore, most of his characters go for a strategic communication to disarm their opponents. Hence there are subtle linguistic nuances, the double entendres, the non-committal grunts, the repetitive expressions, the struggle with the words and the silences and the pauses. But unlike Beckett's plays, the silences, adopted by Pinter's characters, are not a reflection of their renunciation of worldly pursuits. Rather, it is yet another deceitful weapon in their hands to defeat their opponents. The Matchseller in *A Slight Ache* amply testifies one such strategy employed by Pinter's characters. He outplays the loquacious Edward with his tenaciously held silence for the possession of Flora.

In fact, much of the struggle in Pinter's plays is for the possession of a female or territory. In Beckett's plays, there is hardly any such thing. In Pinter, the primitive roots and instincts

of the characters are given much more focus than anywhere else. Pinter's characters essentially are males and females entangled in the incessant battle for possession and dominance. In Beckett's plays, on the other hand, the characters, rather than appearing to be males or females, seem merely to be the personifications of the existential anxiety which the author himself experiences.

Obviously then there is more action in Pinter's plays than in that of Beckett. The characters in his plays, rather than indulging in any action, prefer to stand and wait to put out the flame of life. They seem so very deeply befuddled by the existential void that they refuse to participate in the normal activities of life. In fact, Beckett's characters "do not believe in action, wealth or reason. They are aware that all we do in this life is as nothing when seen against the senseless action of time, which is itself an illusion."[3] Thus rather than fighting, Beckett's characters resign to a cruel design above them which, in fact, is mysterious to them.

Pinter's characters, on the other hand, fight; perhaps they too are vaguely aware of the futility of all human endeavours but refuse to give up and get crushed under the weight of these realities. They continue to involve themselves with everyday battles where desires for possession and domination reign like supreme and primitive instincts. They actually appear more lifelike despite an obvious lack of motivation provided to them by the playwright for their actions on the stage.

This fundamental difference between the visions of Beckett and Pinter forces the difference in the language employed by their characters. In Beckett, we find a dialogue that is packed with philosophical genus and arouses our metaphysical concerns. That's why they seem to express themselves in rhythmic and thought-provoking expressions:

Vladimir: You are right, we are inexhaustible.
Estragon: It's so we won't think.
Vladimir: We have that excuse.
Estragon: It's so we won't hear.
Vladimir: We have our reasons.

Estragon: All the dead voices.
Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.
Estragon: Like leaves.
Vladimir: Like sand.
Estragon: Like leaves.[4]

The poetic intensity along with the rhythm picks up as the number of words decrease in the above dialogue. The philosophical musings of the piece are nonetheless paramount to us in this elegiac and perfectly phrased passage of the play. Again, Beckett's characters appear far more intelligent than that of Pinter. His characters exist in full knowledge of their existential absurdity and a futility and meaninglessness that permeates their entire being:

Hamm: We are not beginning to mean something?
Clove: Mean something ? You and I mean something?[5]

Thus Beckett's characters, despite the fact that the author does not force his views into light through them essentially, become the tool in his hands, philosophizing the views of their creator. They do share the frustration, the metaphysical anguish and its expression with the author.

Moreover, there have always been the symbolic, hidden, allegoric meanings of his characters. For example, Beckett's "Pozzo and Lucky have been interpreted as body and mind: Vladimir and Estragon have been seen as so complementary that they might be the two halves of a single personality, the conscious and the subconscious mind."[6]

All such assumptions vanish as soon as they are applied to Pinter and his characters. Pinter's distance from his characters is remarkable. Almost decidedly, Pinter assumes the position of an outsider who struggles to understand the motives of his own characters. His characters, the embodiments of wily intentions, hardly exhibit the existential dilemma that the author himself might have experienced. In fact, Pinter himself declares emphatically that his characters cannot be interpreted with any traditional yardsticks:

> I have usually begun a play in quite a simple manner; found a couple of characters in a particular context, thrown them together and listened to what they said, keeping my nose to the ground. . . . I have never started a play from any kind of abstract idea or theory and never envisaged my own characters as messengers of death, doom, heaven or the milky way or, in other words, as allegorical representations of any particular force, whatever they mean . . . we don't carry labels on our chests, and even though they are continually fixed to us by others, they convince nobody.[7]

As Pinter refuses to define his characters and abstains from making them achieve any symbolic worth and meaning, he seems to have invented a drama which is subtle and unique. Turning down all the pre-conceived notions about his plays, the characters therein and their possible association, categorization and meaning, Pinter appears to have announced the death of the omniscient author who knows all about his characters, their actions and meanings. Thus, by refusing to interpret the movements of his own characters and robbing his characters of all such certainties, Pinter stands in sharp contrast to Beckett whose characters seem to have been moulded right after their author's feelings and who seem to have been paralyzed due to the disillusioning reality that seems to have dawned on their creator. Thus the implied or symbolic connotations, which often are the hallmark of a Beckettian character, seem impossible for Pinter's characters to whom he provides an air of uncertainty to deprive his readers of all such assumptions and categorization.

Pinter however does not exhibit the same amount of uncertainty in terms of the construction of his plays. In fact, unlike the seemingly static structure of Beckett's plays, Pinter's plays move logically and reach a befitting culmination point. Thus there always is something which is resolved before the curtains are drawn in his plays. In Beckett's plays, the characters continue to be in a similar situation in which we find them at the beginning. Most of his plays demonstrate an ample amount of

structural coherence once their movement is established. As most of Pinter's plays focus on the characters's struggle and confrontation for territorial dominion, social dominance and the possession of the female, by the end of the play, this battle is lost by a few and won by a few other characters.

That is why when in Pinter's *The Room*, Bert Hudd hits Riley in the end and leaves him unconscious, some shape is provided to all the concerns and fears of Rose. The play achieves a violent ending but this is not an unexpected one. The slow action that precedes this outburst, psychologically prepares the readers to receive the end which seems sudden but is in consonance with the preceding tension embedded in the play's action. Similarly, the ending of *A Slight Ache* is also convincing. It seems indispensable that Flora replaces Edward with the mysterious Matchseller at the end of the play for throughout the play she continues to test the fitness of Edward as her companion. Edward, on the other hand, seems too desperate to assert his authority but is beaten by the perplexing silence of the Matchseller. So, when Flora hands over the Matchseller's tray to Edward, it only conforms Edward's fears of betrayal and separation from Flora and appears all the more logical and appropriate.

Similarly, in *The Caretaker*, the old tramp is sacked from the house after having received a warm and benevolent welcome from Aston. Again in *The Homecoming Ruth*, Teddy's wife, who in the beginning was not keen to stay with the father and the family of her husband, decides to stay with them forever as a prostitute. Thus in Pinter's plays, we see that a lot has changed for his characters. The situation is not in the end what it seems to be in the beginning in a Pinter play. Even when Pinter abstains from an obvious ending, his plays achieve some subtle end as they indicate some change or shift in the action or situation before the curtains are drawn. So, we have a most obvious end in *The Birthday Party* where a sequestered Stanley is taken away by the menacing intruders Goldberg and McCann whereas in *Old Times*, the ending is subtle but masterly as the fully lighted stage at the end of the play reminds the dimly lit stage of the opening scene and indicates that the most vital issue of the play has been

resolved and Kate has won the subtle battle for possession and dominance which actually is the chief concern of the play. In fact, whatever may be the situation in the beginning, some change always occurs in Pinter's plays which clearly demonstrates a situation much different from the initial one.

It is not the case in Beckett's plays which seem to begin and end on the same note. The hopeless characters struggling to penetrate the agony of the human existence and the mysteries of the universe above them hardly seem to achieve anything at the end of a Beckett play. In fact, it would not be wrong to assume that the ending of Beckett's plays is always much more speculative than the beginnings. His plays actually seem to enjoy only a metaphoric end. For instance, in *Waiting for Godot* the attitude of Estragon and Vladimir hardly changes towards the mysteries of life and even when the curtain falls in the play, they continue to wait for the hopeless arrival of somebody called Godot. Similarly, in *Endgame*, whether Clov leaves or stays remains open. Even in *Krapp's Last Tape*, the action ends in almost the same manner as it begins and only measures the listening of some old tapes, even those some of which have become uninteresting to Krapp himself. The tape continues to run when the curtain falls. Again Henry of *Embers* begins to think about his loneliness when the play begins and having thought about his father, daughter and wife, the play is folded back as Henry continues to remain alone, with thoughts of his loneliness.

Hence it becomes easily discernible that much of Beckett's characters and plays continue to prove their playwright's own philosophy of nothingness of life. They reflect this mood of their creator with an endless and melancholic brooding and an action which, at its fastest, is slowly static. Thus, unlike Pinter's plays, the situations do not develop or explode into logical or surreal endings in Beckett's plays. They begin and end almost on the same note and plane only emphasizing the Beckettian belief that nothing is; and if anything is, it cannot be known; and yet if anything is and can be known, it cannot be expressed in speech and action.

Hence, despite an underlying similarity in their matter and

manner, the plays of Beckett and Pinter stand apart and it is the expression of the reconsidered Beckettian reality which we find in Pinter's plays.

NOTES

1. Peter Hall, "Directing Pinter" in *Harold Pinter: You Never Heard Such Silence*, ed. Alan Bold (London: Vision and Barnes and Noble, 1984), p. 23.
2. Samuel Beckett "The Unnamable" in *Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (London: John Calder, 1959), p. 316.
3. Martin Esslin, "Samuel Beckett: The Search for the Self," *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 58.
4. Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), p. 64.
5. Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p. 32.
6. Martin Esslin, p. 67.
7. Harold Pinter, "Introduction," *Plays: One* (1976; rpt. London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 10-11.

B.I.T.S., Pilani

Returning to the Folk: Three Contemporary American Plays

NILA DAS

The American postmodernist cult of cultural de-centralisation has largely flourished around erasing the "great divide" between the "high" and the "low" cultures, cultures marginalised or ignored within the institutionalized modernist programme. In contemporary American vocabulary, low/mass/popular culture mostly implicates the culture of the people, their behaviour, values and entertainment. This is no different from folk culture, if one goes for the lexicon definition of the term. The folk stands for masses of people of a homogeneous social group. Folk culture signifies a body of customs, beliefs, doctrines, myths, legends and dreams, that shape the values, thoughts, relationships, the very life-ways of a community. The folk, in the contemporary selectivist social context, can be a matrix of creating collective consciousness.

Contemporary American drama, specially the post-60s Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway theatre mirrors a distinct drift towards folk culture, not always and necessarily as a lived experience of a community, but rather as an idea to re-orient the audience to theatre, and presumably to a homogeneous society. Proceeding from a premise that mainstream theatre, including the *avant garde* has been getting distanced from the people at large, some Off-Broadway theatre groups, under the banner "Performance Theatre," bill a motto to restore drama to its "proper function," a community participation, "part celebration, part therapy, part ecstasy." The emphasis in Performance Theatre is on physical movement, spontaneous sensual response rather than intellectual communication. Some groups even replace single authorship of a play by collaborated composition.

Performance group plays are often frameworked on the ancient Greek legends, including the off-beat one. In postmodernist reading, the refocalisation of occidental culture at its beginning fulfils a specific need within the American society that has its common set of beliefs and norms disintegrated. Let us have a glimpse of the Performance Group production of *Dionysus in '69*.

First staged in 1970, the play takes the audience to the sanctuary of Dionysus, where in ancient times folk rituals to the gods of vegetation, music, poetry enabled the congregation attain ecstasy. The rites included enacting Dionysus legends. Some call the Dionysus ritual theatre a mystic cult. In the ritual, the god was sacramentally torn to pieces and devoured by the congregation so that they could temporarily imbibe the divine spirit. Dionysus came to life again.

About six hundred out of thirteen hundred lines of the American ritual play are adopted from Euripides's *Bacchae*, some from *Antigone*, the rest improvised by the actors themselves. In Euripides's play, Dionysus, the son of Zeus and the Theban princess Simeli, on a mission to make himself known as god to man, comes down to Thebes and entices the recalcitrant womenfolk to worship him. King Pentheus, hostile to the new cult, attempts to imprison Dionysus. The king spies on the women's mystic rites, is detected by them, and is torn to pieces.

Partly a collage of old texts, *Dionysus in '69* is actually an adventure into the realm of myth and mystery without a psychic orientation to the rites. Expectedly, the play progresses on the distance between ritual role and play acting. The actors in recent sloppy street clothes frequently switch over to speaking about their own experience, rather than remaining as characters. Dionysus's opening speech sets the tone of the play:

> Good evening! My name is Pat McDermott. I was born . . . about a generation ago in the state of Nebraska, My mother's name is Ada Belle. . . . Some folks say I'm a bastard . . . Ada Belle says I'm the son of the God.

The immediate reality merges with the legend as the actors talks out his role:

> I have come here tonight for three very important reasons. The first . . . to announce my divinity. . . . The second . . . to establish my rites and rituals. As you can see they have already started. . . . And the third reason is to be born if you will excuse me.

The photographs in the book containing the playscript show about a dozen young performers dancing or writhing while the spectators sit among them on the floor, on the platform, on the ladder. Obviously the play intends incorporating the audience among the performers.

In the ancient Dionysus theatre, folk participation had been the other name for public worship. The contemporary American cast enacts on stage a New Guinea folk birth ritual for Dionysus's birth. The sharp reaction of the Broadway critics to the "notorious nudity" of the spectacle, the "bad diction" and "worse odors" of the play counteracts the intended effect on the audience that Richard Schechner, the leader of the Performance Group, speaks about, "We do not have an audience that believes in the old myths. What we have is an audience that wants to believe in our performance and knows the power of modern ecstasy." The critical debate over audience response makes one seriously doubt if the use of folk rites, specially of another culture, for sheer theatrical showgame can make the performers including the audience experience ecstasy at all.

Invariably, folk rites turn into a game in the play. The chorus join the "Dionysus game," as the playscript itself terms it. With the actors playing in and out of the game, the Dionysus ritual repeatedly erupts and gets disrupted. In the crucial Pentheus-Dionysus encounter the Pentheus-actor who otherwise sticks closely to the role, loosens himself, while the Dionysus-actor, who frequently speaks in *propria persona*, becomes a god, of course of stage antic. In the grand finale, Dionysus is carried aloft by his followers and borne out to the street with noisy ac-

claim. The play ends, but the revel continues.

Commenting on the finale, a postmodernist critic writes, "*Dionysus in '69* . . . celebrated the breaking of boundaries, and the blurring of individual distinctions. Drugs, rock and roll, colourful clothes and sex were but a new incarnation of wine, the flute . . . fawnskins." (*Colakis*) Richard Schechner's own elucidation of Dionysus image is none-too-different: Dionysus "is present in today's America—showing himself in Hippies, in the 'carnival spirit' of Black insurrections, on the campus . . . in the living rooms of suburbia." So much for folk participation, performance, ecstasy. The opinions are their own critique.

II

Multi-ethnic, multi-cultural America has no dearth of folklores, legends, myths springing from its own soil for the contemporary dramatists to fall back upon. The rich folk culture and literary tradition of specially the Native American tribes can be recalled in the context. Although the Native Americans do not have a folk theatre of their own, such a tradition exists with the Chicanos, the half-Native half-Mexican community. Since the early *Pastorelas, Pasodas, Autos*, to the late nineteenth century travelling shows of *Carpa* (the vaudevillian comedy combining pantomime, dance, song) and *Tanda* (the short musical revue on age-old folklores enacted through dance and sketches) to the *Teatro de pueblo* (people's theatre) of the stormy Sixties, Chicano folk drama marks a steady massive popularity. Since 1950s Chicano folk theatre has turned into a cultural centre for performing arts. Its powerful impact is all-too-pronounced on the recent Chicano plays. Basically geared to making the audience have a feel of the charm and pathos of Chicano folk life contaminated by "mechanical, inhuman" American, the recent plays, often bilingual, fuse nostalgia, protest, fun while making abundant use of folk theatrical practices. Till date, Chicano theatre remains a powerful medium of celebration and revitalization.

A typical example of the trend is Luis M. Valdez's *Los Vendidos*, a post-Sixties hilarious comedy that depicts the tactics

the marginalized community adopts for survival in the authoritarian, racist, Euro-American consumer society. Valdez, the founder of *Teatro Compesino* (Workers' Theatre) mostly centres his plays on rogues and picaros, who frequently lapse into slapstick comicality and "colourful slang." Valdez encourages physical participation of his audience.

In *Los Vendidos*, Valdez makes lavish use of Chicano music, dance and dialect, along with Greek mime. The play opens at Honest Sancho's curio shop. Miss Jim-enez (she insists on Anglo-American pronunciation), a secretary from Governor Reagan's office, looking for a "Mexican type for the administration" prefers a hardworking brand. Sancho displays the farm-worker model, "built close to the ground," bottom-line economical, friendly: "You can put him in old barns, old cars, river banks . . . out in the field overnight with no worry." The sell fizzles out as Sancho highlights another code of behaviour of the model: he is "designed to go on strike." "No! Oh no, we can't strike in the State Capital," recoils the agent of the authority.

Sancho meets the secretary's second push button choice for "something more sophisticated" with "1969 Johnny Pachuco model," streamlined for anything and everything necessary for survival in city life. He knife-fights, dances, gets arrested, can be kept on hamburgers, marijuana. The model mimes the activities. "He can also be beaten and he bruises, cut him and he bleeds," says Sancho. Once again the sell falls through as Johnny demonstrates how he can "liberate" by instantly stealing away the secretary's purse. Johnny is yet another folk model created, standardized, simultaneously sustained and rejected by the repressive power.

The third choice, "something more traditional, more Romantic," fetches in the Mexican harvester model, the "early California bandit type," who rides horses, stays in mountains, crosses deserts, kills and gets killed, the popular movie image. "A genuine antique . . . made in Mexico in 1910," canvases Sancho. "It is more important that he be American," retorts the purchaser. The fourth model finally settles her need, the middle-class, college-educated, acculturated, Mexican-American "political ma-

chine," who bends to his waist to eulogize American administration, "American, American, American. . . . God bless America!"

The drama takes an expected turn as the secretary pays a large sum for the model, and he instantly raises a cry for Chicano Power. The rejected models join him to drive away the instrument of the exploitative master system. The actors playing the folk models come out of their roles. They extricate the money from the frozen Sancho and march out to celebrate. The last laughter goes with the dramatist and presumably with the audience over the culture that commodifies both the victim and the victimizer even in role reverse.

III

Let us return to the Off-Broadway theatre for the last play of our choice, *A Fable* (1978) by Jean-Claude Van Itallie. The entire play is frameworked on folklore without being culture specific. The play is a metaphor of the post-modern situation, American or otherwise. As typical in folk theatre, the actors sit with the audience, and keep on returning to them. Their costumes are the everyday wear of "earth colours," well-worn, having no particular ethnic significance. Folk music punctuates action and dialogue. The play begins with the theme song of the fable:

> The Fable
> When did it begin?
> Once upon a time that was not this time. . . .
> In the Village of People who Fish in the Lake. . . .
> They talked of the Golden Time
> But only knew this was not it.

The lines are sung as refrain throughout the play. The faith/doubt discourse of the villagers over the Golden Time brings the fable close to the contemporary scent. A young village woman leaves the habituated rural life choir in search of the Golden Time. She reaches the King's court full of "afflicted persons." The King

himself groans: "We are the mouth of our people/ They moan with our voice/ We are the king of the afflicted/ We are afflicted." The King threatens to have the village belle "beaten, imprisoned, hanged" as she refuses to join him at a game of chess, but allows her acquittal provided she kills the beast that has afflicted the people.

The woman crosses the border. The beast is described to her in multiple terms by multiple voices. "It has no eyes of its own—It takes over people/ . . . Suddenly what is familiar is unfamiliar/ That is the beast," says a nameless person. At the marketplace while a charm-seller, a beggar and a juggler dance to the tune of buying and selling, the beast appears in all of them. The scared journeyor seeks shelter under a tree. When the tree speaks, she hears the voice of the beast: "I can numb you/Grow inside you/. . . . Make you think my thoughts/. . . . Become your eyes/ Become any being you see." Attempting to silence the determinant patronage, the young woman chops down the tree. The beast is no longer evident. It is only the tree, the collapsed traditional shelter or sheltering tradition.

At the island of the Better than Golden Time, on the point of being caught in the enchanting dream of a reversed set up, the journeyor notices a hanging person and rushes up to cut her down. Is the person the village belle's alter-ego unable to adjust to the ethos of paradoxes? The Interpreter for the Dreamer Who Never Wakes Up identifies the uninterrupted dream as homologous ideology. "That is the beast," cries the journeyor. The Fugitive Who killed the King has another wisdom to impart: "The beast is the king/. . . . But the king does not see it. . . . /But there was still the beast/ we put a doll on the throne/ But there was still the beast."

The perplexed rural woman runs into the Forest with No Roads, stays for a while with a hermit, is initiated to a life of quietude. She moves to the house of the legendary Grandmother of folk culture, listens to her tale of life's multifariousness, expandability, continuum. Her own tale does not fit in with the Grandmother's. The Grandmother freezes. The journeyor is left alone delinked with history and heritage. The last scene is a

group dance. The images presented by the characters overlap. The characters are not even played by the actors who played them originally. Both the yearning for the Golden Time and the threat of the beast are lost in the heteroglossia. The music turns increasingly insistent as the dancers sit with the audience in rhythm. The Hanging Person, left alone, dances a "fierce dance of exuberance and joy." Then she dances off.

Defining theatrical ecstasy, Richard Foreman, the founder of Ontological-Hysteric Theatre, writes, "replace conflict—push and pull of selected forces with total action of all forces. That is statis, that is ecstasy." (1976) Whether the Hanging Person's fierce atonal dance, or the heteroglossia can be termed "total action"/communion, is a debatable issue.

IV

In postmodernist reading, *A Fable* strings together some features of life that do not lead anywhere. The folk elements in the play help creating a moment-to-moment reality, and that is all that matters. The same can be said about *Dionysus in '69*. The interpretation deconstructs in its own terms the basic concept of fable/lore/legend, and for that matter, the very idea of folk culture. Folk art forms codify certain patterns of experience and vision of life that stem from a shared body of tradition, a mutual past and present of a community. Folk elements projected as immediate reality/entertainment minus folk memory, make the art forms lose their natural vigour and rhythm, as is evident in *Dionysus in '69*. The opposite example is *Los Vendidos*.

Drama lives immediately in mass awareness. It is said that folk theatre forms, by combining, as they do, the intimate and the crowded, the vulgar and the magical, confirm, celebrate and transform life from within. They widen the perspective of both the crowd on stage and the crowd watching. Cultural transformation is a slow process. For the recent American dramatists to initiate a largely non-oriented ever-shifting audience to folk forms, ways, vision, is none-too-easy. The effort is of value.

NOTES

1. Marianthe Colakis, *The Classics in American Theater of the 1960s and Early 1970s* (University Press in America, 1993).
2. Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism* (Routledge, 1989).
3. Richard Foreman, ed., *Plays and Momentos* (New York University Press, 1976).
4. Roberto J. Garza, ed., *Contemporary Chicano Theatre* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1976).
5. Jean Claude Van Itallie, *A Fable: A Collaborative Piece* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1976).
6. Richard Schechner, *Public Domain: Essays on the Theatre* (Indianapolis: Bobb-Merill, 1969).
7. Patricia Waugh, ed., *Postmodern Reader* (London: Edward Arnold, Hodder and Stoughton, 1992).

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Rabindranath Tagore's *The Cycle of Spring*: An Archetypal Analysis

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Rabindranath Tagore, the epitome of Indian spiritual heritage, served his fellowmen fruitfully and characteristically by assuming the roles of an interpreter and mediator between the civilizations of the East and the West. While Shakespeare was unconsciously mythical, Yeats turned to Celtic myths, Joyce to Homer and Eliot to Frazer in their attempt to give meaning to the modern predicament, Tagore combined the Indian and Western literary traditions to bring a synthesis between the East and the West. Diana Devlin writes, "the philosopher, writer and teacher Rabindranath Tagore set out to unify Indian and European traditions creating plays which have been described as a mixture of Bengali folk drama and Western medieval mystery plays."[1] Tagore in his *The Cycle of Spring*[2] gives his spiritual message to the King, the royal metaphor, he uses in his plays to symbolize his Universal Man.

A play within the play is staged by Kabi Sekar, the poet, whose purpose is restoring confidence in the King, who is terrified of death. In the play within the play, some adventurous young men set out to capture the Old Man, the true original Old Man whose business is kidnapping. They are guided by a Leader and one Chandra. They flow in all directions in search of the Old Man. On going inside a Cave, the Leader realizes the non-existence of such an old man. For the other youths who wait on the Cave's entrance, the Leader seems to be the Old Man for some transient moments. They realize the great truth that death or Old Man is winter, when he is viewed in the context of nature which brings death to natural luxuriance. As they are renewed or reborn in spring, the death and decay caused by winter

or old age are more apparent than real. The old is always new and the play of spring in Nature is the counterpart of youth in human world.

The archetypal *mythos* of 'the chasing of the Old Man' has the descent motif accompanying the linear quest. The hero leaves behind him his companions and ventures forth into the cavernous earth. The Biblical myth of Jesus's decent into "the toothed gullet of the aged shark" and the redemption of the parental figures should be remembered here. Endymion's underworld descent gives redemption to the long awaiting Glaucus, the Old Man of the sea. In the Hindu myth of Bhagiratha, he descends down to the bowels of the earth, along with the holy river Ganga, to give redemption to his ancestors. Prince Mahbub of the Persian myth takes up the adventurous deed of going into the earth to do funeral obsequies to his murdered father and also to give redemption to the dead king. The assimilating feature of all these stories is the underworld quest and the subsequent redemption of the parental figure. The descent is at last only a reversion into one's ancestral line. At the end of the quest, the hero understands the truth of continual creation and eternal resurrection in time.

The analysis of the *ethos* will further unearth the hidden meanings of the play. Characters and situation constitute the *ethos*. The action starts in the realistic world, when it is about the King and his courtiers. Then it is shifted to the world of fantasy. It is an attempt to instil energy into the mind so that the imagination would do the rest of the work. "Our only background is the mind. On that we shall summon up a picture with the magic wand of music." (352) Like Blake's "Mental Traveller" and Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the play within the play invites the audience to the landscape of consciousness. The playwright manages the shift with the help of stage-craft. The world of reality and that of fantasy are demarcated by a purple secondary curtain.

The character study in the *ethos* demands the archetypal study about the Old Man. The feature which assimilates the quest in the Glaucus episode of Endymion with that of the Leader in *The Cycle of Spring* is their meeting of an Old Man. Endymion

is startled at the sight of the Old Man and imagines that the Old Man wants to kill him and make piece-meal with the bony saw. The youths of *The Cycle of Spring* suspect him as the one who will drink the sea of youth in his insatiable thirst. They imagine him in all shapes. "Was it the one who is like the dark night, whose eyes are fixed on his breast, whole feet are turned the wrong way round, who walks backward? Was it the one who wears the garland of skulls, and lives in the burning ground of the dead?" (397)

The fear of the Old Man is allayed when the heroes come to know him more and more. They realize the truth that the Old Man and themselves are one and the same, sharing a common destiny. In *Things Fall Apart*, the Old Men's apparitions, which would appear during somebody's funeral, enable the young men to have a transition from this world to the world of ancestors, at least temporarily. While coming back from the Trojan war, the Old Menelaus, an Old Man, was able to know the past and the future. Noah, the Old Man, stands between old and the New worlds and constructs the life-bearing vessel. In Kachiappa Sivachariyar's (an ancient Tamil poet) *Kanthapuranam*, Lord Shiva and his eye-born son Murugan appear as Old Men, while searching their female principles. Murugan tells Nambi, Valli's foster-father, that if only he takes bath in Kumari (punning upon the Tamil word to denote the river and connote the young damsel), he will be able to regain his lost youth. When Valli, the earth principle, embraces the Old Man, his wrinkles disappear and Murugan becomes young again.

In *The Cycle of Spring*, it is the onlookers who behold the Leader as the Old Man, while the Leader of the quest is undergoing a metamorphosis. In *Matsya Purana*, the Eternal Old Man, Markandeya, is made to have a vision of constant creation in the maternal, cosmic ocean. A toe-biting child, the symbol of the cycle of continuity, confronts the Old Man and introduces himself to him. "Child," the child says, "I am the primeval cosmic man, Narayana. . . . I am the cycle of the year which generates everything and again dissolves it. I am the divine *yogi*, the cosmic juggler or magician who works wonderful tricks of delusions.

The magical deception of the cosmic *Yogi* are yugas, the ages of the world."[3] In *The Tempest*, the Old Prospero and the young Ferdinand meet near a cavernous setting. The convergence of their meeting is in Miranda, who is the representative of the maternal life principle. The contest and confrontation of the old and the young are described in terms of Blake as that between Orc and Urizen. The former is the youthful hero and the latter, an Old Man. The victory of Orc over Urizen, in terms of Tagore, is the process of birth, death and rebirth and is also seen as the power of rejuvenation, a power which renews an exhausted form in the Old Man.

In all these situations, the old becomes young or they merge at a crucial event. This can be described as father-son atonement or as the mystical, implied meaning of the term, at-one-ment. In "The Eve of St. Agnes," the Old Man dies when the lovers consummate their love, a situation of father-son succession. The motif of father-son atonement is carried out in "The Fall of Hyperion" by making the hero take shelter under the huge image of the Father-God, Saturn. In the Hindu story of Bhagiratha, the young hero wakes his dead ancestors up from the underworld, by his Herculean task of bringing down the heavenly river Ganga, which is another instance of Father-son-at-one-ment at the female principle. Santiago, Hemingway's Old Man, fails to conquer the mysterious feminine principle of nature without the help of the boy.

The cave symbol of *The Cycle of Spring* is associated with the maid, the mother, the maternal earth, the river or the ship as they play a vital role in carrying out the Father-son-at-one-ment. To perpetuate the race, the older generation meets the younger one or vice-versa in the maternal region which is the "apriori" of space and time. It is also into and through her that the Life force pours into the field of space and time in a continuous act of world-creative self-giving. The cave symbolizes the Universal Womb, the inexhaustible source of all creation. The Leader's leap into its source is likened to death or seed-burial, a return to the Mother, a temporary re-entry in the maternal bosom. The mystery of the withheld reply is revealed to the quest-hero and

the other awaiting youths, after the hero's adventurous entry into the cave. This reply is the constant procreation by the maternal earth which enables the cycle of birth, death and rebirth possible.

The quest hero goes into the air, the water, the earth and at the end of his quest, he unites with the planetary fire. There is a Dionysian loss of identity and amnesia as he fails to narrate what happened in the cave. The Leader goes in and becomes whatever objects he enters in. There is a split in the character of the hero in *The Cycle of Spring*. Even though one person enters the cave, two of him emerge out, Chandra, the life principle and the Leader are said to come out of the Cave separately. This is the visualization of the epiphany of the split into two characters, the one ecstatic and anguished, who dies over and over like the Mystery god Dionysus. Chandra does not know and cannot tell his experience but the pangs of rebirth are felt by him as a Dionysian god. But the Leader is his Apollonian double who is the god of light, harmony, symmetry and order.

The *dianoia* or visual pattern of *The Cycle of Spring* clearly gives a picture of a temporary retreat into the green world of romance and a return from it. There is a rhythmic movement from the anxiety-ridden normal world to the green world of romance and a return from it. Shakespeare's romantic comedies have this trait which in turn imitated the already existing tradition established by the seasonal ritual plays experimented by Peele, Greene and Lyly. In *The Cycle of Spring*, the youths follow up a quest into the green world and return triumphantly from it. The green forest is substituted by the purple secondary curtain. It is lifted once and for ever for the free flow of characters into it, including the onlookers of the drama. At the end, everyone stands on the main stage to participate in the dance of spring festival.

Come and rejoice,
For April is awake,
Fling yourself in the flood of being,
Bursting the bondage of the past,
April is awake.
Life's shoreless sea,

is heaving in the Sun beyond you.
All the losses are lost,
and death is drowned in its waves.
Plunge into the deep without fear,
with the gladness of April in your heart. (401)

Ritually interpreted, the play is the enactment of the victory of spring over winter. By striking an analogy between the passing of the seasons and the transience of the individual life, a greater permanence is assured to the individual human existence, which is part of the vast and deathless pattern. Psychologically interpreted, the Dionysian frenzy or the fear of death is overcome by the Apollonian assurance of immortality.

NOTES

1. Diana Devlin, *From Mask and Scene: An Introduction to a World View of Theatre* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 132.
2. Rabindranath Tagore, *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore* (1936; Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1985).
3. Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. Joseph Campbell (1946; New York: Pantheon Books, 1953).

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D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*: A Middle-Class Novel in Triangular Shape

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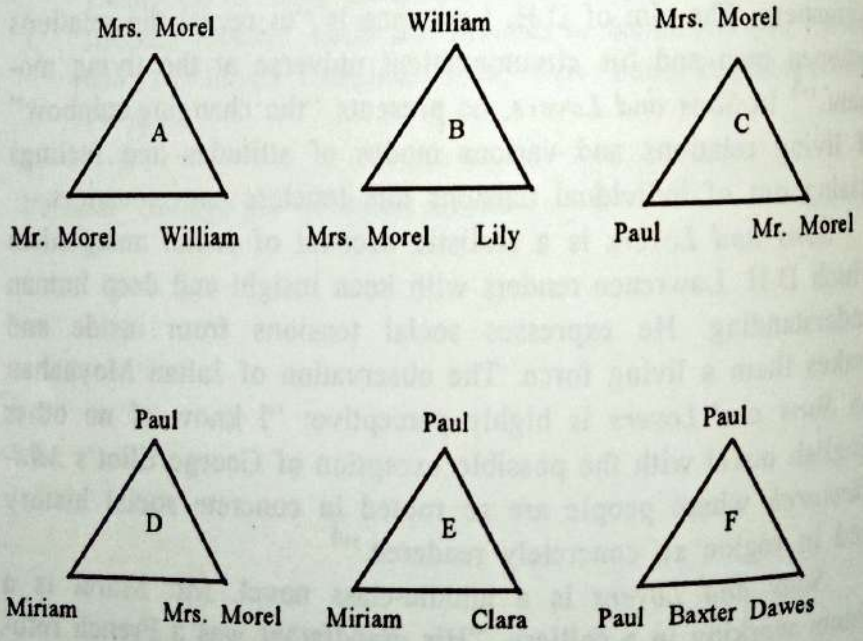
The criticism of *Sons and Lovers* is mostly confined to its autobiographical interpretations and Freudian analysis of Oedipus Complex. F.R. Leavis writes that the success of *Sons and Lovers* "is bound up with the strict concentration on the autobiographical."[1] Graham Hough observes that *Sons and Lovers* "presents the Freudian Oedipus imbroglio in almost classic completeness."[2] These observations do have relevance from a particular angle of perception but they certainly ignore Mrs. Morel's basic cause why she turns to her sons casting off her husband. The text of the novel from the very beginning deals with a solid social account of the current situations of miners working in collieries and middle-class consciousness. The aim of D.H. Lawrence is "to reveal the relations between man and his circumambient universe at the living moment."[3] In *Sons and Lovers*, he presents "the changing rainbow" of living relations and various modes of attitudes and feelings arising out of individual tensions due to class consciousness.

Sons and Lovers is a realistic account of social antagonism which D.H. Lawrence renders with keen insight and deep human understanding. He expresses social tensions from inside and makes them a living force. The observation of Julian Moynahan on *Sons and Lovers* is highly perceptive: "I know of no other English novel with the possible exception of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* where people are so rooted in concrete social history and in region so concretely rendered."[4]

Sons and Lovers is a middle-class novel. Mr. Morel is a miner working in a colliery. "His grandfather was a French refugee who had married an English bar-maid."[5] Mrs. Morel came of

"a good burgher family, famous independents who had fought with colonel Hutchinson. . . . Her father George Coppard was an engineer—a large handsome naughty man, proud of his fair skin and blue eyes, but more proud still of his integrity." (15) The marriage of Mr. Morel and Gertrude Coppard was of "opposites." The wife "loved ideas and was considered intellectual." (17) The husband was "soft non-intellectual, warm, a kind of gambolling." Again, the wife was "puritan like her father and highly stern." (8) The husband was "full of colour and animation." (17) There is a basic dichotomy in their attitude and individual claims towards life—personal as well as social.

Sons and Lovers moves on a rhythmical pattern represented by a series of triangles which in their succession with variations show the changing relationships of characters resulting from claims of antagonistic forces and consequent recategorisation of values and attitudes. D.H. Lawrence has used triangles as a convenient technique to work out the central theme of the novel which is basically a middle-class problem. The following diagrams of six triangles clearly illustrate the subtle variation in grouping and regrouping of characters corresponding to the changes in situations:



E.M. Forster in his *Aspects of the Novel* defines rhythm as "repetition plus variation."[6] The variations occur in these triangles not only due to re-grouping of characters but also due to changes in the ratio of male and female characters and re-categorization in the theme of the novel. The form of the novel explains the theme and the theme determines its shape. There has been a conflict between Mr. Morel and his wife since their marriage but the triangle-like situation develops with the birth of William, the first son. He is born at a time when the mother Mrs. Morel is bitterly disillusioned with her husband's way of living. She is shocked to find in her husband's pocket many "bills of the household furniture, still unpaid." (20) Their house still belongs to her mother-in-law. Mrs. Morel, being a puritan and intellectual, does not aspire for sexual gratification as much as for a dignified social status and a strong financial security. The novelist observes: "He [Mr. Morel] never saved a penny, and he gave his wife no opportunity of saving, instead, she had occasionally to pay his debts; not public house debts, for those never passed on to the women, but debts when he had bought a canary, or a fancy walking-stick." (28)

Gertrude Coppard's marriage made in a moment of romantic infatuation makes Mrs. Morel wise. She is now fully conscious of the gap between romance and reality. The basic cause of conflict with her easy going and "eat, drink and be merry" type husband is that "she fought to make him undertake his responsibilities to make him fulfil his obligations . . . she tried to force him face things." (23) The third chapter called "The Casting off Morel—The Taking on of William" clearly hints at the triangle made of the father, the son and the mother. Mr. Morel gets jealous of his own son because his wife is more attentive to their son. But the reason is not the Oedipus complex; it is the disillusionment with her husband on social level which draws her close to her son: "He [William] came just where her own bitterness of disillusion was hardest to bear; when her faith in life was shaken, and her soul felt dreary and lonely. She made much of the child, and the father was jealous." (23)

Mrs. Morel has a high expectation from her son and dreams

of seeing him tall in her social set up. She wants financial stability and social dignity through her son. "Already he was getting a big boy. Already he was top of the class, and the master said he was the smartest lad in the school. She saw him a man young, full of vigour, making the world again for her." (63) Her dream of life seems to be close to fulfilment. William gets a place in London, at a hundred and twenty a year and the mother is very happy. He comes home at Christmas with "endless presents": "There was a sense of luxury overflowing in the house. for his mother there was an umbrella with gold on the pale handle. . . . Everybody had something gorgeous, and besides, there were pounds of unknown sweets. Turkish delight crystallized pineapple, and such like things which, the children thought only the splendour of London could provide." (104-5) The mother for the first time feels elevated. Her middle-class dream seems to be fulfilled.

However, this status-symbol loses its splendour. William falls in love with a girl Lily. He earns a hundred and thirty pounds but sends her only ten shillings twice. The mother is annoyed when her son comes with his beloved. There is a typical Jane Austenian concern in her for a financially stable married life. The failure of her own marriage, she thinks, must teach a lesson to her son. Lily is not fit to be her son's wife. "She has no idea of money; she is so wessel-brained." (163) Mrs. Morel warns her son that it will be "a mesh of marriage." (163) Her advice speaks of her middle-class concern of a wise mother rather than of her urge for sexual fulfilment. "My boy, remember you are taking your life in your hands. Nothing is as bad as a marriage that is a hopeless failure. Mine was bad enough, God knows, and ought to teach you something." (164)

William dies and there is a variation in the triangle formed now of Mrs. Morel, her second son Paul and Mr. Morel. The father is jealous of Paul as he was of William. The reason is again Mrs. Morel's dislike of her husband and her attention to the son. The father becomes an "outsider." (82) Most of the critics opine that Mrs. Morel tries to make Paul a "husband-substitute." Middleton Murry observes, "she was determined consciously or un-

consciously, that no woman save herself should have her son's love; and he obeyed her."[7] D.H. Lawrence himself writes in his original Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*, "the old son-lover was Oedipus." (37) But there is no textual evidence that she wants sexual fulfilment from her son. Not only Paul but other children also hate their father because of his drinking and bullying nature. He makes the whole life of the family a misery. They have an apprehension that their father may hit their mother again. There is a feeling of horror and a sense of blood. Paul prays every night for his father, "Make him stop drinking. . . . Lord let my father die." (79)

The coming of Miriam in Paul Morel's life creates another variation in the triangle-like conflict. Mrs. Morel is vehemently opposed to Miriam's attachment with her son. She thinks Miriam "will never let him become a man." (99) She knows the potentiality and promise in her artist-son. She is overjoyed when he wins the first prize in painting. The lines quoted below amply prove what kind of wish the mother nourishes in her attachment with her sons who are called lovers:

> William had brought her his sporting trophies. She kept them still, and she did not forgive his death. Arthur was handsome—at least a good specimen—and warm and generous, and probably would do well in the end. But Paul was going to distinguish himself. She had a great belief in him the more because he was unaware of his own powers. There was so much to come out of him. Life for her was rich with promise. She was to see herself fulfilled. Not for nothing had been her struggle. (226-27)

Mrs. Morel is Paul's mother-cum-friend, guide and guardian. When he is bidden a call upon Thomas Jordan, Manufacturer of Surgical Appliances at 21, Spaniel Row, Nottingham, she is "all joy." She accompanies him to give him inspiration and strength. Being horribly disappointed with her gambolling and smug husband, she tries her best to infuse a new spirit in her son to make him fully conscious of his latent powers to be a great artist. She

wants to save him from Miriam who is all possessive towards Paul: "She frankly wanted him to climb into the middle-class, a thing not very difficult, she knew. And she wanted him in the end to marry a lady." (314) Her well-experienced and mature advice to Paul on marriage is a testimony to refute the general charge of Oedipus-obsession: "But if you could meet some good woman who would make you happy—and you began to think of settling your life—when you have the means—so that you could work without all this fretting—it would be much better for you." (334)

All of Mrs. Morel's struggle, sacrifice and prayers are to see Paul well settled and dignified "so that he might not be wasted" (334) in Miriam's company in which "he will never be a man on his own feet." (237) She prays for him to "fall in love with a girl equal to be his mate, educated and strong." (36) Walter Allen in his essay "D.H. Lawrence in Perspective" and A.B. Kuttner in his essay "Freudian Appreciation" overlook the current social realism in Mrs. Morel's opposition to Miriam. Allen observes: "what interests him in this character is not the social man—the differentiated individual, but the seven-eighths of the iceberg of personality that is submerged and never been."[8] A.B. Kuttner remarks that being defeated by her robust husband, Mrs. Morel wants to "effeminate" Paul.[9]

With the coming of Clara, a married woman, in Paul's life, Mrs. Morel grows weaker and weaker and withdraws herself realizing her limitations. The triangle is now formed of Miriam, Paul and Clara. Paul is torn. He "loved Miriam with his soul. He grew warm at the thought of Clara." (337) Baxter Dawes, Clara's husband is a prototype of Mr. Morel, simple, frank and natural. Both are neglected by their wives. His arrival creates the last triangle. Miriam is withdrawn and Clara is at the centre with her husband and lover. Baxter Dawes fights three "battles" (419) with Paul and defeats him. Paul gets rid of his mother by mixing an overdose of morphia in her milk. He helps in reconciling Clara with her husband. Refusing to be an object of pity by Miriam, he moves alone towards the town with his closed fist. In the rhythmic variations of triangles, it is quite clear that in one

way or another, it is the social antagonism that matters much. Mrs. Morel's concern is purely social and economic rather than sexual. Her oppositions to William's love for Lucy and Paul's for Miriam are of a woman who, being conscious of her own miserable married life, desires social status and economic security for her son first and then she expects them to choose good girls who would make them happy. *Sons and Lovers* is really a middle-class novel and not a Freudian one as the title seems to suggest.

NOTES

1. F.R. Leavis, *D.H. Lawrence, the Novelist* (Penguin, 1964), p. 19.
2. Graham Hough, *The Dark Sun* (Penguin, 1961), p. 55.
3. D.H. Lawrence, "Morality and the Novel," *The English Novel*, ed. Stephen Hazell (Macmillan, 1925), p. 56.
4. Julian Moynahan, *The Deed of Life: The Novels and Tales of D.H. Lawrence* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1972), p. 20.
5. D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (Penguin, 1964), p. 17.
6. E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Penguin, 1927), p. 169.
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"The Vastation" in Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*

PUNITA JHA

Henry James was a prolific writer and had a very long eventful career. Ten years of story telling in various lengths preceded his first novel. It was with *Daisy Miller* in 1870 that he made his enduring reputation, and there was at least one masterpiece of the short form in each decade: *The Aspern Papers* in the 1880s, *The Turn of the Screw* in the 1890s and *The Beast in the Jungle* in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The world of his tales is visual, plastic and analytical as that of his novels, and it is large and leisurely, peopled by the civilized and the self-aware. It is a world of manners with problems of behaviour; there is no violence therein and the emphasis is rather on intensities of feeling. The medium is often verbal, replete with devices of irony, satire and paradox. James's short stories communicate the various aspects more powerfully than his best novels. *The Beast in the Jungle*, for instance, conveys the basic idea of loss on the part of the protagonist much more powerfully than *The Ambassadors*. The germ of the two stories is the same and yet the short story makes a stronger impact on the reader. The thematic concerns of the short stories are better organized structurally and afford Jamesian insights into life. There are five major themes in his stories: personal, social, moral, artistic and supernatural.

This article aims at evaluating the supernatural stories of James with special reference to *The Turn of the Screw*. A brief introduction to Henry James's view of supernaturalism shows his refinement of the form and the theory by which he worked. He wrote mainly two kinds of ghost stories: viz, (a) those in which

no ghosts show themselves, and (b) the other ones in which apparitions make their visual presence felt.

Whether James showed us palpable ghosts or only those of the mind is an unprofitable enquiry but it is evident that his mastery of the form lay in his knowledge that man, brave though he is on the earth and in space, can still be frightened by his own dreams. Upon this discovery, he based his fundamental theory of the ghostly tales of his father's as well as his brother's experiences of "The vastation"—a familiar term in the James family. A terror or evil was not only a psychological seizure but a spiritual crisis with William James from whose analysis the varieties of religious experiences were begotten. According to James, "vastation, a perfectly insane and abject terror without condensable cause to be accounted for . . . by some dammed shape raying out from his feted personality, influences fatal to life." 'Sense of evil is the corruption of innocence.'

We can best illustrate the difference between the old-time ghost and the Jamesian ghost by comparing Hamlet's father and Banquo. The apparition of Hamlet's father strikes terror when we see him in his ghostly pallor on the battlement of Elsinore walking restlessly at the chiming of the deathly hour; but by the time he is unearthing the skeletons in Denmark's closet to his son, he has become less a ghost than a lecturing father. Banquo, however, is a ghost of a different order. He appears not in dark unearthly ambience, but quietly seated in his place by flaring torchlight in the midst of a merry feast. He is visible only to Macbeth; and he is silent. In reality, it is not the ghost of Banquo, but Macbeth's fear, which offers the tension and the terror of this splendid scene. It is this Banquo type of ghost, rather than the ghost of Hamlet's father, that appealed to James. "The extraordinary," James wrote, "is most extraordinary in that it happens to you and me."

James's ghosts accordingly walk by daylight, they appear in places where ghosts are least expected, lounging at their ease in a drawing room or quietly entering the church and reading a hymn book to their neigbhour. "A good ghost story," James wrote when he was a young man, "to be half terrible as a good

murder story, must be connected at a hundred different points with the common objects of life." In his maturity, the novelist expressed this more characteristically—the ghostly tale called for "the strange and sinister embroidered on the very type of the normal and the easy."

On the other hand, James's ghosts may appear casual and informal and still be conveyers of a sense of evil more potent than one we may know in real life, and this because the nature of that evil is not specified. James carefully explained his method in *The Turn of the Screw*. It was all too easy, he said, to plant routine evil in a tale of terror through such familiar signs as blood stains, a body, a crime, etc. of anything. But what if there were "no blood stains, no body, no crime . . . only fear, a kind of chilling sense of the ominous, an extra-human foreboding of evil?" His father had experienced such a fear in 'vastation' when he had conjured up a misshapen in form and felt it was radiating evil in the room: there was no hallucination . . . he saw nothing . . . he merely felt that some strange shape was somewhere at hand, a phantom of the mind, cutting him off from all security and ease. There had been day-nightmares in the family; and what James set himself to do in his ghostly stories was to create such nightmares for his reader.

"Make him think evil, make him think it for himself and you are released from weak specifications," James wrote. This was his formula for *The Turn of the Screw* and the critics who have been straining themselves to the utmost with the sole aim of explaining this story for more than half a century have, in reality, actually ended up in despair, multiplying their own nightmares in the process.

His earliest tales of the 1860s are sufficiently conventional. The second group including *The Turn of the Screw* belongs to the middle-age when he was in a state of anxiety and depression. The final phase stories written in the new century contain some of his most interesting phantoms and some demonic and frightening; others benign and even occasionally comic.

James's *The Turn of the Screw* reveals a magisterial concern for conscious behaviour. It is his most ambitious symphonic mas-

terpiece. This story was written at the end of 1897, serialized promptly in America and appeared in book form early in the following year in a volume entitled *The Two Magics.* It became James's most widely known tale of the world. It was serialized on television. Besides being one of the most famous ghost stories, it has become most controversial. There has been an endless and often tedious discussion in the English speaking world of such questions as whether the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* is sexually repressed, whether she sees the apparitions and whether the story deals with the supernatural pure and simple, or whether it is a subtle study of hallucination and hysteria.

A young governess, sent to a secluded countryhouse to take charge of two children, Flora and Miles, sees (or thinks she sees) the ghosts of a valet (Peter Quint) and another young governess (Miss Jessel) who had formerly lived there and had recently died. The governess is convinced, by the strange strained behaviour of the children, that they, too, see the ghost individually and specifically. By questioning the housekeeper (her only adult companion in the house) she gathers the impression that both of the dead servants had been evil, corrupt persons. She also knows that Little Miles, who looks as innocent and behaves as sweetly as his sister, has nevertheless been temporarily expelled from his school. She convinced herself that it is her duty to protect the children from the influence (unguided but presumed evil) of their former playmates: both Miss Jessel and quint, having been raffish or worse when alive, must surely have infected the children with whom, in the absence of their uncle and guardian, they must have become intimate. The climax of the story occurs when the governess, interrogating Miles on the cause of his expulsion from school, sees (or thinks she sees) Peter Quint but foolishly betrays Quint's presence (or imagined presence) by addressing and pointing to him, whereupon Miles, in unexplained terror, dies in her arms.

Leon Edel in his biography of James argues that the experimental phase, especially the sequence of texts that includes *The Other House, What Maisie Knew* and *The Turn of the Screw*, embodies a process of 'imaginative self therapy' through which the

novelist assumed 'the safety disguise' of a little girl in order to work out unresolved psychological tensions, particularly his uncertainties about his own masculinity. These fictions struck many of the contemporary readers as strange, shocking and even wilfully perverse. But when reviewers of *The Turn of the Screw* attacked it as "repulsive" and "hopelessly evil," they were probably responding most essentially to the way in which the story, like the other experimental texts, works to undermine the familiar perspectives, norms and conventions of literary realism.

The quality of the malevolent imagination is the ultimate horror of James's tale. This is perhaps why many have experienced it as the most frightening ghost story they have ever read. Its effects are derived from James's theories of the supernatural: "So long as the events are veiled," James once explained, the imagination will run riot and depict all sorts of horrors, but as soon as the veil is lifted, all mystery disappears. "Everything in James's tale is ambiguous; every part of *The Turn of the Screw* seems to be concrete, and yet there is always a refusal on his part to specify, the story itself is a printed version of a copy of the old manuscript. The governess has no name. She doesn't describe herself. We do not know what kind of clothes she wears. We have only the barest details of her background. We know only her day-dreams. In his Preface, written ten years after publishing the story, James is explicit about what he has done: "Only make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough . . . and his own experience, his own imagination . . . will supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars. Make him think the evil, make him think it for himself and you are released from weak specifications."

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The Question of Indianness

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Treatment of genuine Indian reality in Indian writing in English has been a bone of contention among writers and critics alike for more than two decades. In reference to Indian-English literature, Saleem Peeradina declared in 1972 that "a literature that is just beginning cannot be vital unless it stems out of, and is involved in, the life around it." He thought that "our unplanned family of poets (aside from the present group) does not show an awareness even of the physical and human landscape that is India" and approvingly quoted D.H. Lawrence in his support.[1]

Vilas Sarang in the Introduction to his anthology grapples with the issue under a separate heading. According to him, it is "not merely a question of the *material* of poetry, or even of *sensibility*, it is tied up with the factor called *audience*." He is, however, firmly of the view that "Indianness by itself, strictly speaking, cannot become a criterion, or guarantee, of aesthetic value."[2] Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, however, adopts a polar attitude disfavouring any model that purports to transport "linguistic and cultural materials from the bottom to the surface, from Indian mother tongue to English, which is all very well except that it tends to narrowly equate Indian poetry with Indianness." He clinches the issue by observing that "a good poem is a good poem, and not because it matches the colour of the poet's skin or passport."[3]

In prose fiction, however, the issue assumes a crucial importance and must be faced squarely. Fiction must, directly or indirectly, deal with specific reality, which is different for each socio-cultural group, whether co-extensive with the political boundaries or not. There is also the problem of expatriate Indian

authors who are in danger of being excluded from Indian literature in English. It is, therefore, not surprising to find Vikram Chandra launching a vigorous polemical attack on the test of "real" Indianness being applied to the Indian authors living in the Western countries.[4]

Vikram Chandra ridicules Meenakshi Mukherjee for probing him on his Indianness with a suggestion that he used such terms as Dharma, Artha and Kama in his novel with a view to attracting the western reader. He calls Pankaj Mishra's review of Salman Rushdie's *Ground Beneath Her Feet* published in *Outlook* "an oedipal assassination attempt" because the former is also eagerly solicitous of Western acceptance as is indicated by the sentence used in the magazine to introduce him: "Pankaj Mishra's novel *The Romantics* due to be published next year, has been sold around the world for over half a million dollars." He is also irked by the decision of the Delhi University syllabus Revision Committee to choose *The Shadow Lines* in preference to *Midnight's Children* on the ground that the former is sufficiently Indian as compared to the latter. Vikram Chandra further argues that he has his own bit of Indian reality to which he belongs—it is a part of Bombay society which is cosmopolitan in life style and vocation just like any other urban population in the world. In conclusion, he pleads the cause of a writer's fearlessness and freedom with which he must pursue his only beloved, the goddess of Beauty, in a rhetorical passage I am tempted to quote:

> Believe in your *mashuque*, lose yourself in the dream of Her, and you will be Indian, a good artist or an adequate, local and global, soft, as a rose petal, and as hard as thunder, not this, not that, and everything you need to be. You will be free. (xv)

Many more combatants on either side can be discussed here, but I shall refrain from doing so because most of the writing on this controversy appears to me to be motivated and tedentious and lacking in objectivity and critical responsibility. I shall, therefore, attempt to delineate the issue in epistemological terms.

According to the established usage, a writer is designated on the basis of the socio-geographical community and culture to which he belongs and whose tradition, life and language he utilizes in his writing. It is worthwhile, therefore, to pay attention to the use of language and the means of knowing the reality in the special context of Indian writers in English.

English is not our native tongue; its influence and use are on the decline; and yet, paradoxically there are some schools and colleges throughout India that impart the best education in English language. Since the British days we have a tradition of distinguished speakers and writers of English. It should now be regarded as an acquisition rather than a relic of our subjugation: we are able to face the Englishman on his own ground. That some people choose to do their writing in English should not be a matter for surprise; this has always been like that where an international language related to the source of power—political or cultural—is involved. The renowned Buddhist scholar, Nagarjuna, who wrote in Sanskrit hailed from the South and must have spoken a Dravidian dialect: two of his works are still available in original Sanskrit. Satvahana rulers are famous for their patronage of Sanskrit literature. The author of *Mricchakatika* was either from the South or knew that region very well. Bharavi, the author of a great Sanskrit epic, was an inhabitant of Travancore. Similarly when Latin was the dominant language in Europe, many West European and British authors wrote their works in that language.

Today, owing to historical and 'industrial-revolutionary' reasons, English happens to be a global and politically most powerful language. And if some Indian writers are able to create internationally acclaimed literature in that medium, it should be nothing but a matter of pride and satisfaction to us. However, one reservation to this praise must be mentioned, namely, that Indian literature in English suffers from an inescapable handicap: it can never be as full-blooded, as intimate and as representative as literature produced in our native tongues.

Now, a writer, who is confined to Indian education and most of the time lives in India, is much less exposed to English than

an expatriate living in England or America; he is constantly subject to the pull of the native speech and generally lags behind the current usage. A careful sociolinguistic study, I'm sure, can reveal significant differences in grammar and style.

The second point we must consider is related to the channels through which knowledge of the reality is gained. It may come through the senses to the experiencing self which textualizes it into cognition along the matrix of the sign system available to the subject. I may stand in the queue for a railway ticket and be pushed aside by a tough guy who threatens violence if he is not allowed to buy a ticket out of turn. Secondly, I may stand at some distance and take in the situation through my watching senses—eyes and ears; this will be the act of the observing self. Thirdly, living in a Western country, I may gather my information from books and journals which will inevitably have an alien frame of reference; moreover, when I am thus situated, I shall be unable to access a large mass of the Indian reality that consists of numberless tiny but telling details of daily living, simply because they will not be available in the media or on the internet. Take this description, for example, from Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*:

> However, she had now begun cooking the evening meal. Nothing much . . . just rice, dal and one vegetable. Even that was an ordeal in what now seemed a primitive kitchen, with its primus stove that hissed like a demon and yet took endlessly long to cook anything The tap was in one corner, so low that you had to crouch to wash up anything, the cement floor below it cracked and black. There was no cooking platform. She had to squat on the ground to do the cooking.[5]

An expatriate author will also be exposed to the attitudes and connotations of a foreign culture with which the Western media repaints the picture of our society. Let me give an example of such 'Occidentation.' Answering the call of nature on the open ground is a common sight in the suburbs and villages of

the text produced. The validity of this thesis can be tested only by further heuristic research involving careful comparisons of the two kinds of texts—a task which I am constrained to forego here for obvious reasons.

Meanwhile, I shall stick to the above classification, and proceed to clarify the position of the West-based Indian writer. He or she has his/her own immediate milieu and personal experience combined with direct observation, but his/her proper domain is different from that of the India-based writer. He faces daily problems in adjusting to a new culture, suffers a feeling of restlessness and finds his inherited Indianness and the Western ways conflicting and making mutual concessions for accommodation. When he deals with the themes within this area, he is on his new home-ground and most likely to succeed. The cross-cultural topics provide him the best chance.

Now the question is: Where shall we position such Indian writers? Within American or British literature, they will have a dubious foothold; they are not as strong, I think, as the blacks or Jewish writers in America. At present most of them would not like to be called, for example, Indian-American on the analogy of African American writers—provided with Bharati Mukherjee's leadership, they may build their case for such a title in future. And when American and British authors still adhere to their national identity, the slogan of cosmopolitanism will have few takers. Therefore, the only viable alternative for them is to be designated as Indo-Western writers (or Indo-British and Indo-American writers, if you like) and placed within the fold of Indian Writing in English. In this way they are to be distinguished from Indian English writers until they become totally assimilated with the Western culture or establish an independent identity—cultural and literary—or until we reach the stage of cosmopolitan culture and literature with a single identity.

One thing more remains to be clearly stated in connection with the distinctions discussed above: the categorization does not involve any evaluation; it is purely descriptive in respect of the cognitive reality of India and does not suggest that Indo-Western writing is inferior in any way to Indian English writing, for it

has its own excellences such as cross-cultural perspective, much wider resource base, formal update, and contemporary sensibility.

I would not think of claiming that Amitav Ghosh or Jayanta Mahapatra is a greater writer than Salman Rushdie or Vikram Seth, but the basis of the present study on five authors is their rootedness in the Indian tradition and Indian life and their familiarity with the Indian reality as the principal means of cognition behind their work so far.

Amitav Ghosh appears to have learnt a good deal from Salman Rushdie: creating a special physiognomy for symbolic meaning, magic realism, first person narrative, use of irony as a structural element. One important aspect of his fiction is the exploration of Indian character, particularly Bengali, in its various manifestations. There is also the element of bildungsroman inasmuch as an Indian boy—the narrator in *The Shadow Lines* and Alu in *The Circle of Reason*—is exposed to the experience of life in India and abroad and in the process he matures, gains insight into historical events and actions of his family members, and journeys towards what may be called a spiritual goal. Homecoming, whether explicitly stated or not, is a recurrent motif. Some scholars have discovered Vedantic thought underlying some of his work. His descriptions of Indian places and social and domestic activities have a ring of authenticity—it would be quite interesting to compare his depiction of the Indian settings with his portrayal of the foreign lands. Above all, his use of irony is quite distinctive; his irony, directed against typical Indian follies—such as eccentric behaviour, superstition, etc.—often terminates in gentle humour, as in Chaucer, or some insight rather than bitter satire, contempt or denunciation. These are some of the things by virtue of which he is generally credited with having dealt with the 'matter of India' from the inside.

Shashi Deshpande is thoroughly home-grown. Hers are the most authentic accounts of Indian women's life in family and in workplace. The author has the advantage of being a woman herself. Her fiction—novels and stories—form a saga of women's lives in different situations: a girl is discriminated against in her

parents's house; if some loss occurs to the family on account of her she is discarded by her own mother; when she is offered in arranged marriage to an unknown man, she ponders on her fears and feels humiliated when she is forced into the act of sex. She suffers from the tyranny of social convention and barbarism of male cruelty including rape which almost destroys her. But although Shashi Deshpande's women—as those of Nayantara Sahgal—are quite mild and even submissive when compared to their western counterparts, they have a remarkable stamina to face adversities and ultimately work out a solution when parents and husbands have failed them. Sarita's sufferings in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* lead her to a new consciousness and instil self-confidence into her:

> They came to her then, all those selves she had rejected so resolutely at first, and so passionately embraced later. The guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife . . . persons spiked with guilts. Yes, she was all of them, she could not deny that now. She had to accept those selves to become whole again. But if she was all of them, they were not all of her. She was all those and so much more. (220)

Similarly, Urmi in *The Binding Vine*[7] vicariously suffers humiliation and rape in the persons of her dead mother-in-law and Kalpana, and is estranged from her husband, but her life is not without hope; love in other forms is discovered to be a redeeming force in a life of frustration.

In spite of her victimisation, woman in our tradition-bound society remains the hub of cultural activities. Therefore, Deshpande's feminist concerns give her ample opportunity to depict our rituals, festivals and ceremonies and present a close view of the family life of the middle class. She has devised a method of narration which serves her purpose very well. Simply stated, it consists of suitably alternating first and third person viewpoints, enabling the reader to perceive the character from inside as well as outside—the acting self and the observed self, private self and public self.

In his poetry, Jayanta Mahapatra is the son of the soil. He is almost obsessed with the past and the present of Orissa. He is moved by the poverty and hunger of the people. His pity moves from past to the present and back: the massacre of Kalinga soldiers by the army of Ashoka, the miserable life of the village folk, the deplorable condition of the relics of Indian religion and culture. He cannot run away from his ancestry—grandfather, father, mother; he meets their influence everywhere; they are in his blood. His modernity is powerless before them:

> Thinking to escape his belief
> I go to meet the spectre of belief. ("Life Signs")

He watches the changing aspects of his land like a lover in rain, in summer, in autumn; in his verse we find some of the most vivid images of Orissa's landscape. In *Life Signs* alone, there are several poems describing a river which in his imagination easily passes into a symbol; this is perhaps the best metaphor for his entire project; it leads him backward to the past; it still flows today like the poet's present consciousness; on its banks are places and people he loves to depict.

Jayanta Mahapatra's reaching out for the roots inevitably leads him to the resource of Indian philosophical thought which shuns materialism and rests itself on the spiritual being. According to K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, in several poems of the collection *Waiting*, the poet "seems half-consciously to recapitulate Vedic times and themes for he too is Man Watching Nature within and without. The ancient spiritual quest tugs at the physicist-poet's heart-strings."[8]

Girish Karnad's work[9] arises from the very depth of the Indian tradition. Since he writes his plays first in Kannada and then translates them into English, he must be treated as a part of the Nativist movement. He is like the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o who switched over from English to Gikuyu in such novels as *The Devil on the Cross* and then translated them into English. Karnad relies on myth and history in his dramatic works and presents characteristic Indian settings. He draws his plots

from such ancient texts as the *Mahabharata* and *Kathasaritsagar* and from oral tales. The mythical tales he utilizes from this material, like all myths, are the cryptic language of the human condition within and in relation to natural and supernatural phenomena. Therefore Karnad's mythical plays do possess universal overtones. *Naga-Mandala* deals with the love of the cobra for a woman—the myth contains a deep psychological truth having to do with female sexuality of which Karnad may not have been fully conscious: if the serpent dies, it means the woman has sacrificed her urge under male suppression and if the serpent lives then the woman may be said to be nursing her sexuality secretly. *Hayavadana*, whose central myth is found in other ancient cultures also, dramatizes the basic disparity within man, the conflict between head and heart, human and animal nature; any attempt to become complete is destined to fail, nor can the head of one and body of another bring a solution. Man can never be complete and the best course of action as realized by Padmini is for each to embrace his/her destiny. There is also a recurrent allusion to the conditions of our society. In the end, we have a kind of Bharatvakya:

> Grant us, O Lord, good rains, good crop,
> Prosperity in poetry, science, industry and other affairs,
> Give the rulers of our country success in all endeavours,
> And along with it a little bit of sense. (139)

We thus find that the myths are explored and filled out not just for their own sake or mere entertainment but for illustrating and commenting on the contemporary Indian society. Broadly speaking, *Yayati* dramatizes the conflict between tradition and modernity which is an ongoing matter in our society. *Tughlaq* illustrates how good intentions are frustrated by selfish interests and evil designs; it is not merely a reinterpretation of Tughlaq's reign, it is also a commentary on our own society and its politicians and officials. *Tale Danda* deals with the stigma of casteism and *Naga-Mandala*, apart from what has been said above, deals with the subjugation of woman by man; keeping

Rani under lock and key is a symbolic action and Appanna is any man.

Karnad is equally important in his contribution to the dramatic art and here also he is distinguished for his Indianness. His mainstay is in the age-long tradition of Indian drama which goes back to many centuries before the British set their foot on Indian soil: the art of dramaturgy as propounded by Bharatmuni and practised by distinguished Sanskrit dramatists as well as folk performance—Kathakali, Yakshagana, and other forms. He has certainly learnt a great deal from the Western masters, such as Brecht and Beckett, and has learnt how to make the best use of the cinema and media techniques, but these things are not allowed to displace the traditional structure; they are used for enrichment of presentation.

Finally, we come to Ruskin Bond. He is a man who long years ago fell in love with Garhwal hills, their humble people and the activities with which they vibrate. "Once you have lived with mountains," he writes, "there is no escape. You belong to them."[10] He has made two special contributions to Indian writing in English: he is a master story-teller and this is the medium that suits him. Secondly, he gives us authentic accounts of the village life in mountains in which art, author and object come to a happy blending because mostly it is his own experience that shapes itself into a story. In an interview published in *The Times of India*, he told Aruna Dhir that he doesn't like "city life and nothing could persuade him to live, in Delhi."[11] And in a recent interview published in *The Hindu*, he lets us know that his books are very personal and autobiographical and "I do believe that those who want to know about me can do so through my writings."[12]

Bond is truly avancular: like an uncle he is informal and personal in the telling of the story; he is also very gentle. In his work we get a glimpse of peaceful rural life, hear about generous and loving people—not much of bloodshed, violence, conspiracy and cruelty. As he has said, even his ghosts are gentle: they do not strike the children's hearts with terror; in the long run the ghosts themselves are frightened and disappear.

The crux of a story is an epiphany, whereas a novel leads to a broader vision. Epiphany is associated with some kind of revelation. It is this essential element that characterizes Bond's stories. James Joyce has shown in his stories how an ordinary happening or scene may lead us to the perception of the inner truth of a character. In Bond's short stories, we find the same feature; it also helps him structure his story neatly and economically. Almost every story (which is not a tale) in *Ruskin Bond: Collected Fiction* (Penguin, 1999) brilliantly illustrates this point. "The Coral Tree" shows how everybody wants to be free to go wherever he likes; there is also a touch of pathos in the end: the narrator has to leave just when he has been accepted by the little girl as her second best friend. Another story reveals the strange usefulness of the window: "At first I was lonely in my room. But then I discovered the power of my window."[13] A chance encounter between a very old English lady and a schoolboy reveals the consolation and pathos of her love of flowers ("The Prospect of Flowers"). Some of Bond's stories are in the nature of a parable and they will never lose their appeal. For example, "What's your Dream?" brings out a profound truth: each man has an ambition peculiar to himself, and he must adhere to it rather than borrow other people's ideas:

> Live long, my friend, be wise and strong,
> But do not take from any man his song. (443)

Bond also wrote some tales which are of an autobiographical-historical nature such as "Escape from Java" and "A Flight of Pigeons." They do contain some revelations, but they are primarily artistic accounts of events and episodes. And then he has written some short novels. The point easily noted in all his work is that it is the flowering of his Indian experience, personally felt or closely observed, the experience of the place and its ambience, which is cherished with loving care and art.

NOTES

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9. Girish Karnad, *Three Plays* (New Delhi: OUP, 1995).
10. Ruskin Bond, *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1991), p. xi.
11. Ruskin Bond, "I Haven't Done All that I could," *The Times of India Review*, 14 February 1993, p. 5.
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Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*: A Feminist Reading

BHAGABAT NAYAK

In the nineties, one notices a luxuriant growth of Indian English fiction. Arundhati Roy, Vikram Chandra & Vikram Seth have created waves in the English speaking world by writing novels in Indian English idiom. These novelists have given a new dimension to Indian English novel. Manju Kapur, a Delhi based, Miranda House teacher of English, has successfully presented the problem of Indian women in a joint family in male dominated society. Her debut novel *Difficult Daughters* won the Commonwealth Writers' Best First Book Prize in 1999.

Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* is a feminist literary work. A feminist writer primarily responds to the way woman is presented in literature. As B.K. Das puts it, "it has two basic premises: one, 'woman' presented in literature by male writers from their own viewpoint and two, 'woman' presented in the writings of female writers from their point of view."[1] While the former group which treats woman as reader, is known as phallocentrists and the later group which treats woman as writer is known as gynocritics. Manju Kapur belongs to the group of gynocritics and has become more self-confident and experimental in dealing with the problems faced by an educated daughter in a joint family. As a postcolonial feminist writer, she intuitively perceives Virmati's position in the male dominated society and deals with her problems with insight and authenticity. The novel seems to be Kapur's tribute to her country's celebration of fifty years of independence in which she makes her Virmati, a cult figure to fight against taboos, social and joint family restrictions and the man-made rules in the traditional society.

The novel reminds us some of the situations during the Indian war of Independence when the socio-political condition of the country was ravaged by the communal fire and ensuing partition. In this kind of social surrounding, Kapur presents the problems of an upper-middle class urban Arya Samaj Punjabi family in Amritsar in purely imaginative reconstructions. The novel highlights the issues like the awakening of the country for freedom, women education and feminine freedom. The women characters in the novel are divided into three generations with their own values, mindsets and relationships. The novel presents larger issues of patriarchy, which denies women voice and freedom set around the time of partition. The novelist expresses the condition of woman in the society—particularly her lack of freedom to pursue her studies, choose a career, and above all to choose her mate in life. She has no freedom to marry a man of her choice. Basically, she has presented the women of the 1940s, when women had no voice to assert their rights. But unlike the modern woman, she has made her Virmati more vocal to fight against male chauvinism for her right to education and economic independence.

Virmati is a complex character to be studied as her suffering raises some issues of modern women and their problems. She is torn between family duty, desire for education and illicit love with an Oxonian professor and her neighbour who is already married and has two children. She loves her parents, family, education and the romantic professor. She looks after her ten siblings as their "second mother,"[2] her sick mother and realizes her responsibility for her academic career. Being caught in hopeless illicit love, she refuses her engagement with Inderjit, a decent boy. She loves her mother, admires her father and follows ideals of Shakuntala, her elder cousin sister who reads in Lahore, "the Oxford of the East." (4) Like a modern woman she thinks that "Study means developing the mind for the benefit of the family" (14) because "a girl lives for others, not for herself." (13) She knows that her family was against her decisions and "it was useless looking for answers inside the home. One had to look outside." (15)

Kapur has studied the problems of Virmati as a socialist/Marxist feminist for her situation and struggle for identity and self-expression. For her, it appears that feminism is both a concept and a movement in the present century and in a new dimension to contemporary thinking. She reflects on Virmati's conflicts (both internal and external) and depicts the protagonist in a favourable light. On the one hand, she was aware of professor's love for her but on the other she was not ready to betray her father's faith in her. Even though Virmati was sure about the professor's position and status, she had decided to marry him as "he was . . . a successful academic, a writer of books, a connoisseur of culture, a disseminator of knowledge," and above all she had an idea, "I would be lucky if I found a husband like my father." (144)

While Kapur presents the 'psychic distress' of both Virmati and Ganga, she has also not overlooked the suffering of Kasturi, as a mother and Kishori Devi as a mother-in-law when they say desperately: "we have to accept—this is our lot in life" (195)

An Indian mother feels it a shame if her daughter runs away or marries against her choice for which Kasturi questions Virmati whether her education has taught her so and it was "a setback to the Arya Samaj effort to educate girls." (85) In her opinion, "education encourages girls to be independent and wayward" (181) for which she accompanies Virmati to Lahore for her B.T. course.

The major part of the novel deals with the problems of Virmati as a difficult daughter for her parents. At the beginning of her love, she knew that "professor Sahib wasn't formidable" (40) but later she finds her life in difficulty standing between "education versus marriage." (38) She becomes rebellious for the professor's reluctance to marry in spite of her frequent entreating and this enables her to understand the gratification of 'male desire.' Realizing her position in all artificial barriers, she complains to the professor:

> I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find out, not

being able to live in peace, study in peace and why? and why? because I am an idiot. (137)

She suffered the traumatic experience of her abortion in Lahore and realized "her father had died without forgiving her" (221) that had made her mad and "forgotten who she was, who she was married to and all her obligations." (222) Lack of love and humiliation from both the families made her steadfast to uphold her right to self-assertion through education at Lahore and economic independence by becoming a teacher in Pratibha Kanya Vidyalaya at Nahan.

Both Virmati and Ganga accuse each other of snatching away each other's rights. While Ganga is more aggressive due to her possessiveness in the family, Virmati becomes more passive due to her civilizing influence of education, winning favour of the professor and may be due to her cultural background. On this, Vandita Mishra rightly comments in *The Pioneer*: "Kapur never permits Virmati any assertion of power or freedom. Because even as she breaks free from old prisons, she is locked into newer ones. Her relationship with the professor, for instance. While it does provide an escape from a loveless arranged marriage, it is itself furtive and claustrophobic, offering only a stolen togetherness behind curtained windows."[3]

As Kapur's modern woman, Virmati is disillusioned with the ideologies of satyagraha movement, strikes, academic freedom, the war, peace, rural upliftment, mass consciousness, high prices, congress committee, the Muslim League, anti-imperialism and realization of her lot in love as "men do take advantage of women" (138) in the context of the Shakespearean texts and her suffering is a tragic irony. She realizes her predicament when "male egocentricism blinds men to the situation of women, who may be placed in agonizing circumstances on account of their relationship with men."[4]

With the awakening of the country in nationalistic fervour and partition politics, the "mighty empire was fighting for survival." (216) While the country was politically active, Virmati's impression of bloody riot had made her "depressed at the death

of the civilization" (253) and beginning of the 'dark age.' She was only happy with the slogan 'India belongs to Indians' but dissatisfied with the Hindu Code Bill. In her impression:

> Men don't want family wealth to be divided among women, say their sisters get dowry, that's their share and the family structure will be threatened, because sisters and wives will be seen as rivals, instead of dependents who have to be nurtured and protected. As a result women will lose their moral position in society! (232)

With the fervour of independence and passing of Hindu Code Bill, she aspires to 'remove the inequalities between two wives' and asserts a woman's right to achieve her dues from her husband who has a co-wife and her child will get share from her step children.

Kapur's Virmati is a new woman of colonial India and stands as a metaphor to explore the possibilities for modern women in education and economic independence who experiences humiliation and disillusionment in their colonial matrix. The novelist has raised the 'question of women' during a political and social movement in colonial India for which

> We may term a novel 'feminist' for its analysis of gender as socially constructed—for its understanding that change is possible and that narrative can play a part in it. Feminist fiction is the most revolutionary movement in contemporary fiction—revolutionary both in that it is formally innovative and in that it helped to make a social revolution.[5]

Some historical incidents like the Second World War, communalism and partition are fictionalized with social purpose in a realistic way which recognise the potential of colonial women who had joined with their male counterparts in social regeneration and were unwilling to accept the social role that was imposed upon her Virmati.

Virmati's desire for establishing self-identity is "a value

charged, almost a charismatic term, with its secured achievement regarded as equivalent to personal salvation."[6] Her quest for identity is a "spiritual odyssey of the modern man who has lost his social and spiritual moorings and who is anxious to seek his roots."[7] In love-making and relationship, both the families suffer and women characters search for self-identity and desire to assert their rights. Virmati's struggle in the Darwinian theory for existence is only for her love with the professor and "it is not a mere physical experience. The man and the woman experience a feeling in which everything, including their individualities ceases to exist."[8] Her love and marriage with the professor has led him to an intellectual and scholastic perfection. If Professor's marriage to Virmati is on his intellectual selection, it appears quite Shavian in Kapur's theory of man and superman but Virmati's resentment with her family is quite Ibsenian like that of Nora's in *A Doll's House.*

The novel evokes some concern over the problems of women in a male-dominated society where laws for women are made by men in its social matrix and a husband stands as a 'sheltering tree' under which a woman proves her strength through her suffering. Kapur has defended this through her Virmati with an idea that

> The emergence of feminist ideas and feminist politics depends on the understanding that, in all societies which divide the sexes into differing cultural, economic or political spheres, women are less valued than men. Feminism also depends on the premise that women can consciously and collectively change their social place.[9]

For Professor Harish, Virmati is an enigma, a riddle and an essential partner for his physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual satisfaction. While Professor's love with Ganga is sacred and unsatisfactory, with Virmati it is platonic and based on intellectual understanding. The 'winds of misfortune' in both the families blow for Virmati for which she has a 'bizarre obsession of grief' and in a human predicament she searched for her self-

autonomy. Kapur's women are born out of typically Indian situation as in Shashi Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows* and Ismail Merchant's *Cotton Fry*. They are caught between culture and modernity, self-aggrandizement and self-realisation and between self-assertion and confrontation. Virmati's problems and conflicts are existential and her struggle for self-assertion leads her to self-alienation.

Like her contemporary Shobha De, Kapur has presented the intimate understanding of women and their problems. The novel appears also as a 'personal testament' of a young woman and her Virmati is the "creation of an Indian consciousness."[10] Kapur has presented her in "the way of female imagination responded to pressures and oppressions of patriarchal culture."[11] Kapur, like her contemporary feminists, presents the injustice done towards her woman in the name of religion, God, morality, honesty and other taboos. She has made 'marriage' as a security for women, a conjugal compromise, transforming a fugitive desire into a lasting emotion for both.

Virmati is portrayed with sympathy and warmth to cloud our colonial consciousness. Her views on marriage and sex will drive the last nail in the coffin on the age-old institution of marriage and patriarchy. She makes it clear that a sexless existence or unfulfilled relationship leaves a scar on the psyche of a sensitive woman as Virmati has experienced in her frustration and disenchantment in Professor's family. Throughout the novel, the novelist has made matrimony and sex a vital subject.

NOTES

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2. Manju Kapur, *Difficult Daughters* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1998), p. 6.
3. Vandita Mishra, *The Pioneer*, 1 August 1999.
4. R.K. Dhawan, ed., *50 Years of Indian Writing* (New Delhi: IAES,

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5. Susan Bassnett, *Feminist Experiences: The Women's Movement in Four Cultures* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 1.
6. Dennis H. Wrong, "Identity: Problem and Catchword," *Voices of Revelation*, ed. Nancy H. Deane (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), p. 77.
7. R.S. Pathak, *Modern Indian Novel in English* (New Delhi: Creative, 1999), p. 52.
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9. Gayle Green, *Changing the Story: Feminist Fiction and the Tradition* (Indiana UP: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1991), p. 2.
10. Dorothy M. Spencer, *Indian Fiction in English* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), pp. 18-19.
11. Sachidananda Mohanty, *The Hindu*, 6 Feb. 2000, p. xiv.

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Home and Abroad: Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*

PARMANAND JHA

A slim looking Jhumpa Lahiri has emerged as a literary heavyweight following the publication of her debut collection of short-stories *Interpreter of Maladies* which won her the prestigious Pulitzer Prize, America's ultimate literary accolade, for the year 2000. Being the first South Asian to win an individual Pulitzer, Lahiri has joined the elite company of such illustrious winners of Pulitzer as Steinbeck, Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, Ernest Hemingway, Pearl S. Buck and John Updike. With the stunning success of her very first literary venture, Lahiri has turned out to be the expatriate version of the one and only Arundhati Roy.

Born in 1967 in London to parents who emigrated from Calcutta, and raised in Rhode Island, America, Lahiri has been a precocious child, writing since the age of seven. "The very first stories I wrote, in the second grade during recess," reminisces Lahiri, "were imitations of what I'd learned to read in the classroom. Writing allowed me to observe and make sense of things without having to participate."' Her c.v. amply shows her insatiable thirst for academic distinctions—B.A. in English Literature from Barnard College, M.A. in English, M.A. in Creative Writing, M.A. in Comparative Studies and Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies—all from Boston University where she taught creative writing, apart from a short stint as a teacher in the Rhode Island School of Design. She has been a recipient of the *Transatlantic Review* in 1993 and a fiction prize from the *Louiseville Review* in 1997. In 1999 she was named by the *New Yorker* as "one of the 20 best writers under the age of 20" alongside Sherman Alexie, David Foster Wallace and

Jurot Diaz. Three of the stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* have already been published in the *New Yorker* and the title story has been selected both for the Henry Award and the award for the best American short stories.

Lahiri has been shuttling periodically between Boston and Calcutta. She views Calcutta as "a bustling, unruly city, so different from the small New England town where she was raised."[2] She has spent a lot of time in Calcutta with her grandmother, reading, writing and observing things and finding solitude in life amidst a crowd of people. Calcutta was the nursery where she learnt to think imaginatively. "Calcutta nourished my mind, my eye as a writer and my interest in seeing things from a different point of view,"[3] reminisces Lahiri.

Interpreter of Maladies, with the sub-title "Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond" deals with the problems of the immigrants in an alien land; the yearnings of exile, the emotional confusion, et. al. Being an immigrant herself, Lahiri deeply felt the importance of family bonds which tie people to their homelands. She has undergone the trauma of failing to find her identity in a world where she could never have a sense of belongingness and so tries to fall back upon the treasured memories of what Rushdie calls 'Imaginary Homeland' which with its vibrant colours and versatility gave life to her starving existence and stimulated her very being. "I went to Calcutta," Lahiri admits "neither as a tourist nor as a former resident—a valuable position, I think as a writer. I learned to observe things as an outsider and yet I also know that as different as Calcutta is from Rhode Island, I belong there in some fundamental way, in the ways I didn't seem to belong in the United States."[4] This is rather a problem faced by many others of Indian diaspora. In an interview with the *Newsweek*, just after winning the Pulitzer Prize, Lahiri said, "It's hard to have parents who consider another place 'home'—even after living abroad for 30 years, India is home for them. . . . We were always looking back so I never felt fully at home here. There's no body in the whole country that we're related to. India was different—our extended family offered real connections. To see my parents as children, as siblings was rare."[5] But the pangs

of not growing up in India took its own toll. She further adds, "I wasn't a part of things. We visited often but we didn't have a home. We were clutching at a world that was never fully ours with encouragement."[6]

This dilemma, this sense of emotional exile and the excruciating pain it entails is at the core of the stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* which has not only gleaned rave reviews from countless critics but has also been sold in Germany, the U.K. and in several other countries. Six of the nine stories in the collection have their settings in America and deal with the lives of Indian immigrants "who hope to find a better life. But what they discover is often vastly different from what they imagined." The rest three are set in India and deal with the type of subaltern personalities and the conflicting encounters among them in a style that is highly accessible, absorbing and moving.

The opening story "A Temporary Matter" finely portrays the conjugal crisis of a young couple—Shoba and Shukumar—who don't know how to cope with the grief bequeathed by their stillborn child, and the gradual erosion of their intimate togetherness in Boston. The announcement of hour-long power-cuts in the evening—though a temporary matter—comes to their rescue. They begin to sit together again and communicate with each other during the black-outs, share some moments of intimacy, exchange confessions and appear to have moved closer to some understanding. Memories of India do play a vital role in their interludes of intimacy. "I remember during power failures at my grandmother's house, we all had to say something," Shoba continued, "Shukumar hadn't spent as much time in India as Shoba had. . . . He wished now that he had his own childhood story of India."[7]

"It was only then . . . that I knew what it meant to miss someone who was so many miles and hours away" (42) sets the tone of "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," the second story in the collection. Set again in Boston, the story has Indo-Pak war of 1971 and the birth of Bangladesh as the backdrop. Mr. Pirzada, who has come to Boston on a grant from the government of

Pakistan to study the foliage in New England, is a native of Dacca, where he "had a three-storey home, a lecturership in Botany at the University, a wife of twenty years and seven daughters between the ages of six and sixteen whose names all began with the letter A." (23) Mr. Pirzada befriends an Indian Bengali family in Boston. Worried always about his own family in Dacca, he regularly visits the Bengali family to eat dinner and watch the evening news. The small daughter of the family, who knew India only through books, tries to make sense of events, through Pirzada's presence, taking place far from Boston and her history lessons in the American Revolution. The Indian family in Boston goes on playing the Good Samaritan until Mr. Pirzada is finally reunited with his family in Dacca. In this story, Lahiri attempts to "forge her own amalgamated domain" rather than respond to her parents's cultural nostalgia. In her own words, "My focus in this story wasn't the unilateral translation of a place or language. Instead it was a simultaneous translation in both directions, of characters who literally dwell into two different worlds."[8]

The title story "Interpreter of Maladies," the third and longest story in the collection, is set in Puri, India. The phrase 'interpreter of maladies' flashed across Lahiri's mind following an encounter with an acquaintance in Boston way back in 1991. "I asked him," recalls Lahiri "what he was doing and he said he was working as a translator for a doctor who had a number of Russian patients who had difficulty explaining their ailments in English. I had never heard of a job like this, but realized that it was a necessity in places where doctors and patients didn't have a common language."[9] It is a complex story about an Indian-American couple—Mr. Das, his wife Mina and their three children—Tina, Ronny and Bobby. They hire the services of one Mr. Kapasi as a tour-guide and chauffeur, to see the famous Sun Temple at Konark. During their conversation en route, the couple learn that Mr. Kapasi, besides his part-time job of a tour-guide, works as an interpreter in a doctor's clinic where he translates the Gujarati spoken by some of his patients. Mr. Kapasi who "found nothing noble in interpreting people's maladies" (51) is

flattered to hear Mrs. Das describe it as "romantic." Unlike his wife, who "had little regard for his career as an interpreter," Mrs. Das had "reminded him of its intellectual challenges." (53) Mrs. Das, whose "shaved largely bare legs" had tickled Mr. Kapasi earlier, seemed to be interested in him, he thought, and he begins to imagine a romantic relationship with her. His fantasy is further fed when the couple invites him to be included in the photographs they take. Mrs. Das even asks him for his address so that she could send him copies from America. The real crisis, however, comes when Mrs. Das discloses to him, in the car, that one of her two sons, Bobby, was conceived from her husband's Punjabi-Indian friend in a mutually agreed sexual encounter in her own house. Mr. Kapasi, the interpreter of people's maladies, fails to offer any remedy to Mrs. Das's malady, which may be her failing marriage and falling out of love for life, which she had vainly hoped, he would offer. All he can utter is, "Is it really pain you feel Mrs. Das or is it guilt?" (66) Mrs. Das's scornful silence shatters the fantasy of Mr. Kapasi and thus puts an abrupt, early end to their strangely intimate relationship. "When I was putting the collection together," writes the author "I knew from the beginning that this had to be the title story because I think it best expresses thematically the predicament at the heart of the book—the dilemma, the difficulty and often the impossibility of communicating emotional pain and affliction to others, as well as expressing it to ourselves. In some senses I view myself as a writer, insofar as I attempt to articulate these emotions as a sort of interpreter as well."[10]

The two other stories with their setting in India are "A Real Durwan" and "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar." In these two stories, Lahiri portrays the lives of servants and marginal figures. They are unlike their economically sound counterparts in other stories. Questioned as to why she made this choice, Lahiri answers:

> Both of these characters came out of observations of people when I was there (in Calcutta). What drew me to writing about them was partly a projection of my own feelings of

> being marginal when there, of not being a part of the culture, of feeling foreign even when this was a place my parents call home and refer to in their minds as home, even though they've been away for 30 years.[11]

"A Real Durwan" was written, recalls Lahiri, "soon after returning from a visit to India in 1992, in my bed room in my parents's house in Rhode Island." It is a pathetic but powerful pen-picture of an old lady, Boori Ma, a self-appointed sweeper of the stairwell of a multi-storeyed building. Her services "came to resemble those of a real durwan" (73) because in exchange for her lodging below the letterboxes, she kept the "crooked stairwell" spotlessly clean. Apart from this, "the residents liked that Boori Ma, who slept each night behind the collapsible gate, stood guard between them and the outside world." (73) But the same residents, accusing her of the theft of the basin, throw her out one day because they need a real durwan as "Boori Ma has endangered the security of the building." (82) The vagaries of material possession plaguing human relationship forms the matrix of this story.

"The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" is yet another moving tale of a 29 year orphan, unmarried girl who suffers from a mysterious disease. Staying in a married cousin's house, she has to sleep, initially, on a camp cot downstairs but is, subsequently, forced to stay in the store-room for ever as her presence, the Haldar couple fear, will infect their new born child. The women of the neighbourhood are sympathetic to her and try to persuade, unsuccessfully, the Haldar couple to get her married, as the doctor in charge of Bibi's case, after performing a series of blood tests "concluded that a marriage would cure her." (161) The Haldars, reluctant to waste their money on a wedding, finally move off to a new place leaving her in the store. She lapses into a prolonged isolation until one day when the women discover her "about four months pregnant." (172) Later one evening she delivers a son but would never "tell us who had done it." The women help her in raising the child and setting up a small shop in the storeroom. The story ends on a positive note: "for years

afterwards, we wondered who in our town had disgraced her. . . But there was no point in carrying out an investigation. She was, to the best of our knowledge, cured." (172)

A brief but deeply intimate adulterous relationship constitutes the core of "Sexy," the fifth story in this collection. Miranda, a young American, falls in love with Dev, a married Bengali investment banker, whose wife has left for India for a few weeks. They spend every night together, visit shops and theatres, drink sangria and eat pulled pork. One Saturday afternoon Dev takes Miranda to his favourite place in the city called Mapparium where, standing on a transparent bridge thirty feet apart, Dev wants Miranda to say something. Dev's whisper turns her on:

> she felt it under her skin, under her winter coat, so near and full of warmth that she felt herself go hot.
>
> "Hi," she whispered, unsure of what else to say.
>
> "You are sexy," he whispered back. (91)

Miranda's relationship with Dev begins to lose its passion and warmth after the arrival of Dev's wife. Dev's Sunday afternoon sessions of warming up Miranda do not help her recover from her gnawing loneliness. She offers to look after for a day, Rohin, the unhappy and precocious nephew of her friend Laxmi. Rohin asks Miranda to put on, for his entertainment, the slinky cocktail dress that she had once bought with Dev in mind. When she puts on the dress, Rohin, like Dev in Mapparium, remarks, "you are sexy." (107) Miranda's heart skipped a beat. Later, forced physically by Miranda to explain the meaning of sexy, Rohin whispers, "It means loving someone you don't know." (107) "What the classicist and philosopher Martha Nussbaum has called 'Love's knowledge' is here eclipsed by a radical scepticism that is primarily sexual, but must also be implicitly philosophical."[12] The story ends with Miranda's deciding to end the relationship and returning to places where Dev had kissed her.

The poignant realization of the loss of the familiar is well treated in the next story "Mrs. Sen's." Mrs. Sen, the thirty-year-

old wife of a mathematics professor, becomes the baby-sitter for the eleven-year-old Eliot, the son of a single mother who has her own problems to cope with. It is hinted early that Mr. Sen wants the job for an engagement to fill up her lonely afternoons. The more she tries to connect herself to the new environment, the more she finds herself cut off from her milieu. Eliot gradually becomes Mrs. Sen's companion and confidant and discovers that only two things make her happy—letters from home, that is, India and whole fresh fish from the sea. Unfortunately, she does not know how to drive and her husband has no time to drive her to the fish market. "It is very frustrating," says Mrs. Sen, "to live so close to the ocean and not to have so much fish." (123) She turns nostalgic and adds that "in Calcutta people ate fish first thing in the morning, last thing before bed, as a snack after school if they were lucky." (123) Mrs. Sen's acute sense of alienation reaches its climax when she turns philosophical in a conversation with Eliot:

> "Eliot," Mrs. Sen asked him while they were sitting on the bus, "will you put your mother in a nursing home when she is old?"
>
> "May be," he said "but I would visit her every day."
>
> "You say that now, but you will see, when you are a man your life will be in places that you cannot know now."
>
> She counted on her fingers, "You will have a wife, and children of your own, and they will want to be driven to different places at the same time. No matter how kind they are, one day they will complain about visiting your mother and you will get tired of it too, Eliot." (131-32)

The story presents the difficulties faced by Indian wives in an alien culture, without friends or family, struggling to cope with the new surroundings they can't call their home. Also, it skilfully probes the mixed feelings of an American child—fear, astonishment, fascination and awe—toward an Indian living abroad. "In this beautifully observed story East meets West in the shared ex-

perience of loneliness and the poignancy of Mrs. Sen's situation is handled with utmost delicacy and control unsullied by any hint of mawkishness."[13] The story is partly autobiographical. Lahiri herself admits, "Mrs. Sen is based on my mother who baby sat in our home. I saw her one way but imagined that an American child may see her differently, reacting with curiosity, fascination or fear to things I took for granted."[14]

The reasons behind the emotional and spiritual distance between spouses trying to adopt the culture of their new home are excellently explored in the next story "This Blessed House." Sanjeev, an ambitious corporate vice-president has recently married Twinkle, a 27-year-old girl. Their marriage is arranged through their parents who are old friends. They are only in the second month of their marriage and certain things begin to nettle Sanjeev—"the way she [Twinkle] sometimes spat a little when she spoke, or left her undergarments after removing them at night at the foot of their bed." (142) The discovery of a white porcelain Christ, St Francis postcards and Noah's arc-light switch plates left behind by the previous tenants proves deeply unsettling. While the wife seems fascinated by the discovery, the husband is scornful and dismissive. He under-estimates the tenacity of her whim and threatens to dispose of the found only to find her in tearful rage, who shouts at her, "I hate you." (149) The story, like "A Temporary Matter" ends with a make-shift peace.

The last story "The Third and Final Continent" is, to quote Khushwant Singh, "perhaps the best in the collection." It tells us of an Indian immigrant who reminisces about his first few weeks in America thirty years ago. Having studied for four years in London, he makes a short trip to Calcutta for his arranged marriage with Mala. He moves to America only a week after his marriage, to work as a librarian at the M.I.T. His wife has to wait for her visa for six weeks before she can join her in America. On his arrival in Boston, he checks into the local YMCA. The year is 1969, the year of America's landing on the moon. "The timing is more metaphorical than coincidental; the new country the narrator stumbles upon is as foreign to him as the

moon."[15] Sometime later, the narrator rents a room in the home of a 103-year-old crotchety widow, who lives by herself and is visited infrequently by her sixty-eight-year-old daughter. The widow is finicky about the class of the renter (he must either be from Harvard or MIT), about punctuality (both in matters of returning time and rent) and about the American Flag on the moon. When the narrator's wife joins him, the lady, Mrs. Croft, puts her through a series of scrutiny and interrogation and finally pronounces: "she is a perfect lady." (195) It is through this scrutiny that the narrator feels empathy for his bride as it reminds him of his own experiences as a confused and bewildered stranger in London. "I like to think," says the narrator "of the moment in Mrs. Croft's parlour as the moment when the distance between Mala and me began to lessen." (196) They later on shift to their new house and come to know one day of Mrs. Croft's death in an obituary column. The narrator grieves as if he had lost his own mother. The story comes to an end on a positive note as the narrator and his wife reconcile themselves to the new life on the third and final continent.

The nine stories in the collection offer a wonderful variety of experiences gathered from the cultural clashes rippling outward in many directions. The trauma of dislocation, an acute sense of loneliness and the pangs of estrangement suffered by the millions of "exiled Indians" who try unsuccessfully to balance themselves between 'home' and 'abroad' are the major maladies Lahiri attempts to interpret. Most of her characters keep hanging in limbo—between two identities—non-Indian and Indian, a fact that brings Jhumpa Lahiri fairly close to Bharati Mukherjee, another successful interpreter of 'immigrant angst.' In her attempt to diagnose the discrepancies that exist between 'home' and 'New home' abroad, Lahiri stands in close proximity with Shauna Singh Baldwin and even Amit Chaudhuri. In interpreting the 'meaning of distance' (as Miranda does in the story "Sexy") Lahiri reminds one of Amitav Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines.* In writing about the disturbed conjugality and its impact on the young couple ("A Temporary Matter") she reminds us of Carver. In portraying tour-guides, seduction and subsequent disillusion-

ment ("The Interpreter of Maladies,") she comes close to Hemingway. She even draws obvious parallels with Isherwood when she writes about a landlady scrutinizing her young renter evoking contrary feelings of disgust and tenderness ("The Third and Final Continent"). The octogenarian young man Khushwant Singh likens her to Somerset Maugham: "Without striving to impress, without a witty turn of phrase, Jhumpa manages to hold the readers' interest. She reminded me of Somerset Maugham."[16] Like Bernard Malamud who dealt at length with the Jewish community in America, Lahiri has created a literature revolving around the Indian immigrants in America. Like James Joyce, she displays an insight and a penchant for documentation of details. Her keen awareness of the contours of her craft coupled with the use of direct, clear, elegant and sparkling prose makes *Interpreter of Maladies* a timeless treatise.

NOTES

1. Jhumpa Lahiri, "To Heaven without Dying," FEED (www.feedmag.com, copyright, 2000) 16/11/00 17:2.
2. Lavina Melwani, "Interpreting Exile," *The Hindustan Times*, April 23, 2000.
3. Surabhi Khosla, "Beauty, Brains, Bounce and Bengal," *Swagat*, Nov. 2000, p. 155.
4. Lavina Melwani, "Interpreting Exile."
5. Surabhi Khosla, "Beauty, Brains, Bounce and Bengal."
6. *Ibid.*
7. Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies* (Delhi: Harper Collins, 1999), p. 12.
8. Jhumpa Lahiri, "To Heaven without Dying."
9. Naresh Fernandes, An Interview with Jhumpa Lahiri, *Literature*, 13 June, 1999, p. 18.
10. Lavina Melwani, "Interpreting Exile."
11. Gaiutra Bahadur, An Interview with Jhumpa Lahiri, Citypaper.net Sept. 16-23, 1999.
12. Aveek Sen, "Enigmas of Distance," *The Telegraph*, 1.5.2000.

13. Susan Ram, "Chronicle of the Cultural Interface," *Frontline*, Oct. 22, 1999, p. 71.
14. Vibhuti Patel, "Maladies of Belonging: An Interview with Jhumpa Lahiri," *Newsweek International*, 20.9.1999.
15. Greg Changn on *Interpreter of Maladies*, *The Atlantic Journal Constitution*, ajc.com 1 of 2.
16. Khushwant Singh, "Between Two Continents," *The Telegraph*, 1.5.2000.

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Diasporal Dream in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

MITHILESH K. PANDEY

Bharati Mukherjee has been regarded one of the prominent novelists among the writers of Diaspora and is "the clear eyed but affectionate immigrant in American society."[1] Her quaint approach to expatriatehood as a metaphysical experience of exile and as an agent of attitudinal change has been accepted in different cultures. She wrote novels like *Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife* and *Jasmine* in which her diasporal dream figures prominently. But its treatment after her migration to America has become more vigorous and comprehensive. However, she has herself realized that "For me it is a movement away from the aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration."[1] Forgetting her Canadian experience as an expatriate, she is now ready to welcome the freedom and liberty of America. Unlike Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee frankly asserts that the immigrants should come out of their cocoons of defence into the openness of discussion. And it is the reason that *Jasmine* is filled with the diasporal dreams and desires with new colour and aspiration.

However, in the third fiction, Jasmine is the fascinating heroine, who remains the best example of "fusion" as Mukherjee points out that "immigration was a two way process and both the whites and immigrants were growing into a third thing by this interchange and experience."[2] The experience of immigration is somewhat different in the case of Tara and Dimple, the protagonists of *Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife* who feel isolated due to their ambivalent attitude to their native tradition as well as the culture of the new world. But the climate of immigration to Jasmine is suitable where she enjoys with her previous experiences

by a sheer will to tie herself to her adopted land.

America, the place of attraction for the new writers, compelled Bharati Mukherjee to follow its modes of life. *Jasmine*, written in this frame of mind, appears vibrant with Mukherjee's eager savouring of the bracing typical American reverence for the freedom of the individual. It is this sense of freedom and liberty by which the novelist wants to highlight the character of the heroine Jasmine. Mukherjee has a psychological insight into the American life—that of 'observer-participant' as in Clark Blaise's wife but this is marked by real experience of the writer. However, Mukherjee's own background in real life—top family, school, caste and place—is worlds apart from that of her poverty-ridden protagonist Jasmine, passing her life in a dirty dwelling place, devoid of necessary amenities like water and electricity. This is akin to Bharati Mukherjee's own statement in the "shape of her life" and of her "desires."[3]

Like postcolonial authors, Bharati Mukherjee steers clear of Naipaul's love-hate relationship to his roots but her diasporic consciousness is worth noting regarding her indebtedness to Malamud. She believes that there is a similarity in their work but "in spite of the fact that he describes the lives of East-European Jewish immigrants and I talk about newcomers from the Third World. Like Malamud I write about a minority community which escapes the ghetto and adapts itself to the patterns of the dominant American culture. Like Malamud's, my work seems to find quite naturally a moral centre."[4]

In spite of some differences, this moral centre in both the authors appears to have in common a concern for effective acculturation against the "ever present fear of failure and betrayal"[5] which also shows a kind of divergence in rendering the "schism" itself caused by the crisis of expatriate identity. However, Mukherjee expands her fictional canvas while underscoring a curious guiltlessness consciously mustered as a strategy to survive and to make good in this vast world. Apparently she engages our attention towards the immigrant, feminist and existential sensibility but deeply she unravels in her characters's awareness of the dark spots in their lives, and their dauntless efforts

to discover areas of light. It is this search for light, for joy and satisfaction in her fiction that protagonists struggle for self-realisation. It is evident that Mukherjee has been able to project the confrontation of a multi-racial society in which a character like Jasmine is striving for her own existence, survival and freedom desperately. To Jasmine, the United States is her dreamworld and her strange mission is soon forgotten. She gives up her Indian name and dress and changes herself easily to every circumstance of life. In spite of remembering her own past life in India, she is not perturbed by the clash of conventional Indian values and the American climate she faces. She is of a changing nature and exemplifies Mukherjee's 'Maximalist' creed which is essential, according to her, for every expatriate. It is a general nature that the expatriate faces the dilemma of being unable to return home and yet not finding a home in the adopted land. He, however, believes that he will be able to merge into the culture of the new land. They change their names, appearances and even life partners, as for instance in the case of Jasmine. She runs off with one man when she is pregnant with another man's child. It is not surprising when she speaks, "I had been reborn,"[6] a complete change from the girls of Punjab. This concept of rebirth in one life is repeatedly used by Mukherjee in this novel. She follows the idea of Sant Kabir's famous couplet of water mingling with water and hence uses the metaphor of air to indicate merging with all the experience of the new country as she accepts, "I took in everything." (179) It is this principle, which brings Mukherjee close to the Hindu philosophy of self mingling with the Absolute. She firmly believes that the multi-cultural country America happily invites all immigrants, irrespective of colour, caste and race. Therefore, the heroine Jasmine, a lady of her own temperament, decides to settle in America and feels no discrimination after the initial brutal attack. Taylor and Bud Ripplemeyer lean on her and Jasmine too takes their every wish as a command. She boldly utters: "I had landed and was getting rooted." (179)

By her powerful narrative technique, Mukherjee highlights alternatively the 'mutations' in her heroine's identity as Jyoti,

Jasmine, Jase, Jane and fills in details about different parts of Jasmine's life through the terrains of Hasanpur, Jullundhar, Florida, Columbia Baden and finally towards the road to California. The fragmented life of Jasmine shown by segments in life as plot nodes gets additional significance by the narrative voice's underscoring, not an unequal value given to her in comparison with other protagonists, but of her total separation as a "strange pilgrim in an outlandish shrine." Therefore, regarding the narrative technique of Mukherjee, Melanie Kaye perceptively remarks: "Mukherjee's particular gift is montage, a jump out movement that creates a bond with the first person narrator and distance from everyone else, thus underscoring with great economy the immigrant's isolation, by-product of American opportunity."[7]

In the beginning of her life, born as Jyoti to a man driven from his affluent house in Lahore to a life of utter poverty in the Punjab village Hasanpur during the partition riots, Jasmine meets with the disappointed people uprooted from their homesteads. Jyoti has an uneventful childhood and accepts her inferior status in the society being born as a girl. Two incidents are important for Jasmine when she was in Hasanpur. First, she had to kill a mad dog which tried to bite her and secondly she received a star-like wound on her forehead while she tripped and fell in an attempt to run away from an irate astrologer who predicted an early widowhood for her. She could not forget the prediction of the astrologer even after her arrival in the U.S.A. But her marriage with Prakash, a businessman, brought about a sudden change in her attitude. The changed name Jasmine and a new way of life in Jullundhar compelled her to realize that motherhood was not her sole aim. She assisted Prakash to some extent in his supply of electronic goods when she came to know about Prakash's decision of settling into a much better life-style in America. But the untimely sad demise of Prakash at the hands of the "Khalsa lions," left her grief-stricken and frustrated with unfulfilled dreams. She did not like the idea of passing her life as a widow at Hasnapur. She took help of her brother to arrange a passport for her to America which is a kind of protest of a dejected girl's desperate bid to 'do' something to express her anger

at Fate's cruel thwarting of her husband's diasporal dreams. The daring step of a young girl in undertaking this risky trip abroad is a measure of her innate affinity to the American ideal of fearless enterprise. This image of Jasmine personifies Mukherjee's concept of Americanness as an outlook on life. As Davidar observes: "Some people were meant to be American even if they never leave their village in Punjab. At heart they are American. It is a desire for more, more, more."[8]

Moreover, Indian atmosphere did not allow Jasmine to go ahead in her pursuit of new life-style and her entrance into America was very fearful which began by her brutal rape by the deformed captain half-face, in whose ship she is smuggled into America. She is mentally perturbed by this rape and ultimately could not control herself and kills him. Her meeting with Mrs. William Gordon and her advice that "Let the past make you worry, by all means. But do not let it deform you," (131) helped her to restore peace mentally and physically. With the help of this lady, she met another man Prof. Vadhera who was somehow instrumental in Prakash's securing admission in an engineering course. But her knowledge that the Professor was interested not in teaching but in trading in human hair, and her widowhood in that household compelled her to leave that place. It is the American way of thinking that she decided to leave the place and her protest like that of Bharati Mukherjee herself, is not against Indian culture per se but against its 'retentiveness,' its "particular way of partially comprehending the world."[9]

After living in a hand-to-mouth situation, Jasmine got an opportunity to work as 'Caregiver' to Duff, the little baby of Wylie and Taylor. She felt satisfied with this employment but is soon shocked by the decision of Wylie to live with another man after having divorced Taylor. Taylor took interest in Jasmine and therefore a kind of intimacy developed between them. It is Jasmine's acceptance of both the change in her life and the largesse of Taylor who is above racial and cultural barriers that appears true and suggestive:

> He didn't want to scour and sanitize the foreignness. . . .

> I changed because I wanted to . . . on Claremont Avenue, in the Hayese's big, clean, brightly lit apartment I bloomed from a different alien with forged documents into adventurous Jase. (185)

Finally, she leaves the house of Taylor due to some reason and reaches Iowa and meets Mrs. Ripplemeyer who offers job for Jane in the Bank owned by her son. She suddenly came in contact with Bud who fell in love with her. She was happy with Ripplemeyer's son Bud and adjusted herself in a new set of values. Her idea of relationship with Bud reveals that she has a feeling of distinction in her mind between living with someone separated from his wife. At the end of the story, the sudden arrival of Taylor gives a sort of relief to Jane and she is ready to go with him again without any repentance. Her departure from the life of Bud is not an act of an immature mind but a kind of American dream in which she wants to dwindle as she speaks: "I am not choosing between two men. I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness." This is her independent decision due to which she struggles throughout her life to stand on her feet far away from Indian climate. Her linking of her life to that of Taylor is to be seen as a validation of her avowed belief. "Treat every second of your existence as a possible assignment from God," a reaffirmation of the courage and her restoration of a new life. She cannot be a "rabblemaker" but the various changes in her life as Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane vindicate the fact that she acted boldly to fulfil her dream at the prospect of adventure, risk and transformation.

Among the writers of diaspora, Mukherjee has secured a special position and her work reveals a kind of approach towards life where a protagonist has to work hard to establish his identity in the society. *Jasmine*, one of the best creations of Mukherjee, reflects the boldness of a heroine who can go to any extent for the autonomy and fulfilment of her desires in the male dominated society. The protagonist Jasmine is the mouthpiece of the novelist who, as a representative of the modern female world, does not want to be confined to the boundary of Indian space

and time and aspires to go abroad for a new way of life. Jasmine got satisfaction and self-realisation in America—the only land on earth that gives one ample opportunity to work at making a dream a reality.

NOTES

1. Bharati Mukherjee, "Introduction," *Darkness* (Ontario: Penguin, 1986), p. 3.
2. Interview in *Hindustan Times*, Feb. 9, 1990, p. 3.
3. Sybil Steinberg, "P.W. Interviews," *Publishers Weekly*, 25 Aug. 1989, p. 47.
4. Alison B. Carb, "An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee," *The Massachusetts Review*, Winter 1988, p. 650.
5. *Darkness*, p. 2.
6. Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine* (New Delhi: Viking, 1989), p. 163.
7. Melanie Kaye, Review of *Jasmine*, *Women's Review of Books*, April 1990, p. 7.
8. David Davidar, "The Immigrant Native," *The Indian Express*, Feb. 19, 1989, p. 5.
9. *Darkness*, p. 3.

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The Discriminated Sex: A Study of Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting*

PRABHAT KUMAR PANDEYA

Anita Desai, being a woman, knows well the plight of her gender in Indian society and has portrayed it effectively in almost all her novels beginning from *Cry, the Peacock* to her latest novel *Fasting, Feasting*. Indian culture and people may praise the woman but in practice she is an oppressed and discriminated being. Even the educated people practise it, which is all the more unfortunate. India being a patriarchal society, it has male dominance and people are obsessed with having a male child. The religious belief that only the son can give deliverance to the parents is one of the causes of obsession with a male child. However it may be pointed out that even in foreign countries, the son is much sought after, for he will continue the family. Anita Desai has a subtle grasp of Indian society, even though her mother was a German. In her early novels especially in *Voices in the City*, she presents a graphic description of *Bhadralog* (genteel society).

When we look at her novels, we find that in all of them, the plight of Indian woman has been presented in one way or the other. In *Cry, the Peacock*, Maya's mother-in-law is more concerned with her social work rather than giving affection and emotional security to her childless, emotionally starved daughter-in-law. In *Voices in the City*, Monisha, emotionally sensitive and intellectually sharp, loving serious books of Kafka and Nietzsche, is married in such a family that she feels suffocated. Demand of the family responsibility and her down-to-earth husband ultimately drive her to commit suicide. In a way, Sarah in *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* suffers because of marrying a brown-skinned Indian as she is discriminated against by the white people. In *Fire on the*

Mountain, the social worker Ila Das, who campaigns against child marriage as part of her duty, is raped and killed by a villager Preet Singh. Raka's mother, married to an IFS officer, is regularly beaten by her husband who belongs to the most elite government service. In *Clear Light of Day*, widow Mira Masi is treated like a servant because she is a widow and there is a hint that she would have been sexually exploited, had she been young and beautiful. She is treated more like a thing than a person. In *In Custody*, the prosaic wife of a poet teacher Deven suffers because hers is an incompatible match. Deven considers her and her parents inferior. In *Baumgartner's Bombay*, Lotte, Kanti Bhai's mistress, is not allowed by his sons even to attend his last rites. In *Journey to Ithaca*, Anita Desai has raised Laila, the heroine of the novel, to sainthood. This is the only example of treatment of womanhood in this manner by Anita Desai.

Fasting, Feasting is the story of a lawyer's family consisting of husband, wife, two daughters and a son. The story moves around the plight of an unattractive, not so intelligent elder daughter Uma. The father, who is not named in the novel, is a typical middle-class Indian who rules over the family. He is an example of anglophile, middle-class man going to club and playing tennis. No one is supposed to question him or his decisions. His wife, like a loyal Indian woman, follows him weakly. Since Uma is not very good at studies, her schooling is stopped. The craze for son is so much that even before the second child is born, it is named Arun. Father is disappointed when a female child is born and she is named Aruna from Arun. Uma's mother tells her children how, when she was a child, girls were given inferior treatment:

> Mama said, "In my day, girls in the family were not given sweets, nuts, good things to eat. If something special had been bought in the market, like sweets or nuts, it was given to the boys in the family. But ours was not such an orthodox home that our mother and aunt did not slip us something on the sly. She laughed, remembering that—sweets, sly."[1]

Late in life, Uma's mother becomes pregnant again, which was rather embarrassing. Once again, the hope for a son is revived and this time God grants the wish and a son is born. He is named Arun. But he is weak and unpromising, but after all he is a son. The reserved and sober father bursts with enthusiasm at the birth of a son:

> Arriving home, he sprang out of the car, raced into the house and shouted the news to whoever was there to hear, servants, elderly relatives, all gathered at the door, and then saw the most astounding sight of their lives—Papa, in his elation, leaping over three chairs in the hall, one after the other, like a boy playing leap frog, . . . "a boy!" he screamed, "a bo-oy! Arun, Arun at last!" (18)

When Arun grows up, tutors are appointed for him and great care is taken of him. Father wants him to eat meat, but he does not like it. He wants him to play cricket and be an athlete, but after school, he is too exhausted to do it.

After the birth of the son, Uma's position becomes worse. Since she has failed, therefore, the mother feels that going to school is waste of time and money. She asks her to take care of baby brother and help her in many chores of the baby. Uma, who wants to continue her schooling, hopes to find support from her father in this matter, but he also lets her down. Her mother feels that the Christian teachers are affectionate to her because they want to convert her. Poor Uma fails to understand why she has been deprived of her schooling. Uma's mother's attitude is narrow and parochial. Uma is a poor girl, neglected in the family and denied education. She suffers all her life as a girl, and then as a woman. She is not even allowed to take music lessons.

The daughter of a family friend Justice Dutt is an unmarried medical practitioner. She offers Uma the job of supervising the nurses's hostel (dorm) which she runs. Uma is hesitant and not confident. But the offer is turned down by the hypocrite father who pretends to be progressive, but not in practice: "Papa was quite capable of putting on a progressive, westernized front when

called upon to do so in public, in society, not within his family of course." (141)

Like a typical middle-class Indian, Uma's father believes that it is below dignity for a daughter to work howsoever decent the job may be. He looks down upon working women as if it is a stigma. He believes that it is an undesirable intrusion in the male world. When Dr. Dutt pleads with him for Uma to work, he frowns: "the frown was filled with everything, he thought of working women, of women who dared presume to step into the world he occupied." (145) When Dr. Dutt persists and asks Uma's opinion, he simply dismisses the idea. Instead of him, the mother speaks on his behalf as usual:

> It was Mama, who spoke, however. As usual, for Papa. Very clearly and decisively. "Our daughter does not need to go out to work, Dr. Dutt," she said. "As long as we are here to provide for her, she will never need to go to work." "But she works all the time!" Dr. Dutt exclaimed on a rather sharp note. "At home. Now you must give her a chance to work outside—" "There is no need," Papa supported Mama's view. In double strength, it grew formidable. "Where is the need?" (143)

In the world of people like Uma's father, the woman's wish does not exist. She is treated as a non-entity.

Uma's father is supposed to belong to the upper middle-class having car, bunglow, cook and *mali*, but curiously enough, the daughter is not allowed to make a phone call which is always locked. Once, while the parents are out, Uma rings up her favourite teacher, but unfortunately she forgets to lock the phone and when the parents come home, her unauthorized use of phone is detected, for which she is scolded. After her schooling is stopped, she wants to continue her association with her school by attending school functions. Since she is hardworking, she is called on such occasions by her teacher for help. But her mother does not allow her to do so.

Being unattractive, she is rejected many a time in marriage

proposals and at long last when she could be married it was found that the husband was already married with children who had married second time only for dowry. The marriage of Uma is not even consummated:

> "Did he touch you?" Aruna had wanted to know. No, he had not, and sitting there in the dark, Uma tried to imagine what it would have been like if he had. (97)

In the character of Uma, Anita Desai has presented a very dismal picture of Indian marriages. Within her own family, she is treated no better than a servant, always carrying orders of parents and helping in running about household, even though there is a cook.

Another example of gender suffering, which is more glaring than Uma's, is that of her cousin Anamika who is attractive, bright and promising. She had even secured admission to the prestigious Oxford University. The admission letter is shown to people as a testimony of her intellectual attainment, though she never joins the University. This charming girl is married in a family that ill-treats her. She is even beaten by her mother-in-law and her husband remains a dumb observer. And then the final tragedy comes. Uma's family is informed that Anamika has died of burning and it is projected by her in-laws that she has committed suicide:

> What the mother-in-law said was that she always had Anamika sleep besides her, in her own room, as if she were a daughter, her own child. Only that night Anamika had insisted on sleeping in her own room. She must have planned it, plotted it all.
>
> What Anamika's family said was that it was fate, God had willed it and it was Anamika's destiny.
>
> The tragic incident was described by her in-laws, "that it was fate, God had willed and it was Anamika's destiny." (151)

The above study shows that in *Fasting, Feasting*, the female gender is an oppressed and discriminated lot. The blame goes to the false sense of male ego and perverted social values and practices. The woman who is praised high and not only idealized and made a divinity in scriptures, is in practice mal-treated, abused and exploited by our society. Though with a touch of exaggeration, painting a gloomy picture of women's lot, Anita Desai has presented the grim reality of our society.

NOTE

1. Anita Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* (London: Vintage, Random House, 1999), p. 6.

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The Freedom of Fetters: Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*

MELVA POPE

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that haven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Rabindranath Tagore

Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1988) a narrative of a girl growing up in a wealthy and distinguished family in Lucknow, before and after Independence, is a poignant rendering of the emotional and physical ordeals encountered by this Muslim family at the time of Partition. The central figure, Laila, is also the narrator of the story. The novel focuses attention on India's struggle for Independence and proceeds to present the ironic reward of this struggle—Freedom and Partition. The title suggesting the rise of the sun on a broken column, symbolizes the dawn of independence in the country which is partitioned and divided. In a limited way, it also stands for the breaking up of a Muslim family of 'Ashiana,' owing to the Partition. The name of the house 'Ashiana' (nest) suggests that they were Muslims who had made India their home and were deeply rooted in the land. What is important here, from a nationalistic point of view, is the account of the division of the national movement, in its last phase, into the secular nationalists under the banner of the Congress and the communal nationalists under the banner of the Muslim League. Laila being a Muslim girl experiences the effect of the

division in her own family when her cousins, Kemal and Saleem, go to opposite camps, struggle for their faiths and suffer for it. Although Laila is not an active participant in any of the movements, she is not an impartial observer either. Laila cannot remain indifferent when the whole country is in a ferment and politics enters even the dining-hall of her purdah-wearing, orthodox family and when father and son quarrel over political issues. Her cousin, Saleem, and several other near and dear ones who believe in an Islamic Renaissance, opt for Pakistan and go away through the great national calamity of communal violence and killings.

Sunlight on a Broken Column is the first novel written by a Muslim woman. It presents an impartial view and a perspective different from other Partition novels. The novel, consisting of four parts, spans a period of two decades. The first three parts show how the British rulers sow the seeds of Partition by bringing into play the game of the unscrupulous schemer, politics, to create a rift between the Hindus and Muslims, thereby establishing the policy of divide and rule. As Laila grows up, she finds people of both communities participating in the national struggle for independence under the leadership of Gandhi in the thirties. In the true vein of nationalism, Hindus and Muslims come out together on the streets, in parades and processions, shouting slogans of freedom. Innumerable young men and women participate in these agitations whole-heartedly. Asad, a member of the family, believes wholly in Gandhian principles and dedicates himself completely to the cause for freedom. But then, unfortunately, the united struggle degenerates into a communal one. Sectarian riots between Shias and Sunnis, and communal riots between Hindus and Muslims often break out, and the Indians, instead of fighting against the British rulers, begin to fight among themselves. Asad, the spokesperson of the discerning novelist, sees through the sinister game of the alien rulers and makes their latent motives and intentions clear. He explicitly states that the British had given us the message: "Hate each other—love us." (56) When Zahid expresses his fears that there may be a riot during Muharram, Asad remarks: "Maybe because there haven't been any for too long,

not even Hindu-Muslim ones. Something must be done to prove that the British are here to enforce law and order, and stop us killing each other." (56)

The diplomatic prudence of the British rulers in ruthlessly manipulating a situation to their advantage is seen as the primary object of all politicians. Zainab's brother sees no difference in one ruler or the other. He exhibits a sense of despair and disillusionment when he argues:

> What difference will it make? . . . What difference does anything make? Look around this village. The people rotted under the rulers of our own race, as they do under the English and as they will do if we rule ourselves again. Asad has always been a fool, stretching out for things beyond his reach. (102)

One may observe a certain scepticism in the novelist as to the nature of the freedom that is being sought and the actual purpose behind the national struggle for independence. It is apparent that the prime concern of all politicians is either to achieve or to stay in power rather than exercise a concern for the cause and development of the common man, and to this end, we witness, they use whatever means they can, regardless of the cost. Attia Hosain shows that the British had a hand in dividing the Indians, but they were not solely responsible for it. The British, wearing the garb of the true politician, resorted to the most volatile weapon, religion, in order to recover some of their lost ground and break up the united struggle.

The Indian Freedom Movement suffered a setback the moment religion entered politics. The Muslims themselves divide in two camps—the nationalist Muslims remain in the Congress while the communal ones join the Muslim League. The former call the latter 'reactionary' and accuse them of disrupting the unity of the Indian people. The latter describe the former as a purely Hindu organization and condemn the secular Muslims for their lack of foresight. The atmosphere grows grave and bustles with heated arguments. Envy, hatred and violence become domi-

nant. The traditional Lucknow courtesy is completely lost:

> No one seemed to talk any more; everyone argued, and not in the graceful tradition of our city where conversation was treated as a fine art, words were loved as mediums of artistic expression and verbal battles were enjoyed as much as any delicate scintillating, sparkling display of pyrotechnic skill. It was as if someone had sneaked in live ammunition among the fireworks. In the thrust and parry there was a desire to inflict wounds. (230).

The suffering resulting from these communal differences touches nearer the heart when we witness the scene of conflict in individual families infected by communal politics. The influence on Saleem is evident: "A new type of person now frequented the house. Fanatic bearded men and young zealots would come to see Saleem." (230) Political difference between father and son and brothers leads to acrimonious discussions. Hamid criticizes the Muslim League for its reactionary element while Saleem forecefully accuses the Congress of nurturing an anti-Muslim element. In a powerful vein, spitting venom against the Congress, he says: "I believe the Congress has a strong anti-Muslim element in it against which the Muslims must organize. The danger is great because it is hidden, like an iceberg. When it was just a question of fighting the British, the progressive forces were uppermost; but now that power is to be acquired, now the submerged reactionary elements will surface. Muslims must unite against them." (233) Even the women of the family do not escape being affected by these differences. When Saleem expresses his fears that in free India the Hindu majority will acquire power and use it to take revenge for the deep grudges they harbour against the Muslims, Aunt Saira remarks: "Oh dear, there is no question, it would be better to have the British stay on than the Hindu ruling." (234) To Hamid, Saleem's fears appear to be baseless and ridiculous. His long experience has shown him that the two communities can live peacefully and lovingly together. He says: "I always found it was possible for Hindus and Mus-

lims to work together on a political level and live together in personal friendship." (234) Saleem's brother, Kemal, is also opposed to his brother's views and expresses surprise at his changed attitude: "How you've changed. . . . You used to say the British encouraged Hindu-Muslim quarrels and drove them apart in order to divide and rule," (255) and Laila adds sarcastically: "And now I wonder how far apart we will drive each other." (255) Attia Hosain shows how such baseless fears, doubts and suspicions, built up by our own minds are in fact the factors responsible for creating the great divide.

The Partition brings with it darkness rather than hope. The sunlight disappears into the gap created by the broken column and what remains is darkness on both sides. Hamid's attempt to keep his family united fails and he sees "the crumbling of all his dreams and ambitions." (282) The communal violence leads not just to the partition of the country but to that of families and individuals. Saleem opts to go to Pakistan while Kemal decides to stay in India. He too laments the family split but when Saleem warns him against the suspicion, prejudice and hatred he would have to face in India, he calmly remarks: "Perhaps I have already done that. Maybe I know better than what I have to face or have faced. But I believe in my country. I have to fight for what I believe in. . . . I cannot condone something I believe is wrong." (287) The meeting called for keeping the family together ends in disaster. While Kemal pledges loyalty to his country, India, Nadira believes that Pakistan needs their loyalty "to build it up as a refuge where all Muslims can be safe and free." (288) "Safe from what?" Kemal said. "Oppression? By whom? According to you that danger exists here—there will still be millions of Muslims here. Who is to look after them? Those whom you warned them against? Or those who prophesied doom? Are they going to stay and share it? Are you?" (288) Kemal exposes the irrationality of the communal Muslim thought and it is clear that the novelist does not see partition as the solution to communal differences. We may observe the consciousness of Attia Hosain in the life and attitudes of Asad, who like Kemal, is another Muslim free from all hatred. A staunch follower of Ma-

hatma Gandhi, Asad practises non-violence and works hard in the Eastern riot-hit areas in 1946. Even after his brother, Zahid, is killed in brutal communal violence, Asad continues to practise restraint and controls his bitterness, thus bringing forth the message of love, non-violence and tolerance. The novelist states clearly that the path of revenge and retaliation must be abandoned:

> The manner of Zahid's death had been a terrible test for Asad's faith in non-violence. He had accepted it as such, believing that bitterness and retaliation could only breed violence and start a never-ending cycle which was negation of life; but he was human and it needed a conscious effort of will to restrain his bitterness. (318)

Laila too witnesses acts of violence and ruthlessness in the towns and villages of her Province in Northern India. She too accuses the Muslim leaders for fanning hatred and violence and then running away to safety on the other side of the border, and at the same time praises the Hindus for protecting the Muslims:

> Where were you, Zahra, when I sat up through the nights, watching village after village set on fire. . . ? Sleeping in a comfortable house, guarded by policemen, and sentries? Do you know who saved me and my child? Sita, who took us to her house, in spite of putting her own life in danger with ours. And Ranjit, who came from the village. . . . Do you know who saved all the others who had no Sitas and Ranjits? . . . The only people left to save them were those Hindus against whom they had ranted. (304)

Zahra, however, attempts to make Laila realize that in her passion for praising the Hindus, she had become prejudiced against the Muslims. She observes: "What is so extraordinary about that? Do you think we did not have the same senses of duty on our side? Do you think the same things did not happen there? You are so prejudiced." (304-5)

Perhaps the novelist's greatest achievement is the maintenance of a completely unbiased view and of a complete balance of the violence and mercy of both the communities. Throughout, she remains impartial and objective, emphasizing the fact that humanism is the primary characteristic of every religion and all mankind, and that bigotism and fanaticism cannot but be detrimental to the real meaning of religion, thus making it clear that it is not religious difference but the shrewd and malicious manipulation of politicians. Attia Hosain shows how the British rulers, realizing that the end of their regime was inevitable, carefully planned the Partition, making it appear not their intention but the demand of the communal nationalists, so that they could have the last laugh, at the same time absolving themselves of the guilt of the extreme trauma caused to millions of people left to face the aftermath of the Partition, besides a more personal and traumatic division of families and loved ones. She further emphasizes the foolhardiness of the Muslim leaders, who fall prey to British politics, when she describes how many of the Muslims who were enthusiastic to leave India for Pakistan fail to find their roots in the new country. The feelings of their frustration are conveyed through a portrayal of Saleem's visit to Hasanpur after a two-year stay in Pakistan:

> Saleem was touched to find old friends unchanged in spite of the backwash of revengeful hate and suspicion that had spattered the human poetic soul of the city. He was glad of the feeling of recognised identity in Hasanpur after having lived among strangers who knew him as an individual without a background. (299)

We also observe the weakening of Nadira's aggression:

> Nadira had mellowed but in a different way from her husband Saleem. Her youthful enthusiasm, for an Islamic Renaissance was no longer aggressive. She had seen too much of the reality of suffering to trust demagogic slogans, and had learned the pity that drove out bitterness. (299-300)

A new realization has dawned on Saleem and Nadira; they seem almost repentant for their earlier belief "that partition of the country was the only solution of all its problems." (282)

Sunlight on a Broken Column is one of the few Partition novels which presents a realistic account of how this tragic event divides blood relations and composite families, wrecks loving hearts and tears as under intimate relationships. The Partition results in both physical and psychological suffering unsurpassed in the history of the sub-continent. The beautiful home, 'Ashiana,' is ruined and its members divided. Laila, the narrator-heorine, surveys the deserted nest, remembers her days spent there, feels the tremendous change, recalls the scene which had ultimately caused the parting of ways of the members of the house, and meditates on its impact. The novel so poignantly and powerfully written, directs the readers too to meditate meaningfully on the impact of such irrational thought and action in the name of religion. Attia Hosain states, in no uncertain terms, that the Partition on the basis of religion was one of the gravest blunders of history, and in a confessional tone expresses regret that the Muslims leaders should have been the initiators. The novel is a guiding light for a clearer observation and understanding of the real motives which bring about communal violence and hatred. It shows how, in colonial India, the politicisation of religion by both Hindu and Muslim communalists proves disastrous. What Attia Hosain brings into bold relief is the silver lining that emerges in the form of individuals like the Sitas and Ranjits, the Kemals and Asads, who have the inherent capacity and the instinct to demolish walls and boundaries created by prejudice. It is true that the narrow, clustered thinking of communal political leaders does influence the religious sentiment of the public, who are often swayed like Saleem and Nadira. The evidence is unmistakable: at the heart of politics is the lust for power, and in this all-consuming pursuit, forces that tear away at our composite fabric are aroused and exploited. The novel can thus be seen as a warning to guard against the dangers of mixing religion with politics.

The seeds of disorder afflicting society on communal lines

seem to have been sown centuries ago. The concept of secularism so enthusiastically espoused has been used and misused for political causes. Different parties of the same kind, based on religion, have often at one and the same time been described contrarily and opportunistically as secular and non-secular for political advantage. The bane of Indian society is that religion has never been considered for the theology of the faith it adopts but as organized institutions which follow a path in which religion lends itself to the political stratification of humanity.

Divisive politics and a deeply fissured and fractured society definitely do not warrant optimistic prognostications. We need to act in consonance with the warnings of history and the witness of present realities in order to break from the fetters of freedom reflected in the duality of the success-failure syndrome of the national movement which failed to evolve a strategy to amalgamate the aspirations and hopes of the different communities of Indian society. *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is unique in that it allows the author the responsibility of dealing with reality and interpreting experience. The narrative mediates between the substance of power politics and the value on which power politics is based, and projects a particular image of a perpetual situation. From Attia Hosain, one who has experienced the personal pain and witnessed the trauma of the great divide caused by narrow domestic walls, and who has objectively and impartially, yet with profundity, studied and surveyed the causes of apparent communalism, comes the ultimate message of understanding, love and tolerance for all mankind, as the only means of bringing about long-lasting peace and friendship, not just among individuals but in whole communities. She keeps alive the hope and faith that "from this debris we shall build again."

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Desecration of Religious Values in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* and U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara*: A Comparative Study

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That the aim of comparative study of literatures is to show the essential unity of human life is borne out by the present study of Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* and U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara*. Though both the texts depict two different religious contexts, yet one may see a few striking similarities between the two which help us to understand the common human tendencies all over the world.

Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* delineates the life of a priest against the atheistic background of Mexico whereas Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* depicts the life of a brahmin priest against an orthodox religious background. But the common theme in both the novels is the desecration of religious values. As the only priest surviving in the anti-clerical Mexico, the anonymous priest is expected to uphold the high ideals of Roman Catholicism. Similarly Praneshacharya, the head-priest of Durvasapura who was educated at Kashi and has earned the title, "the Crest-Jewel of Vedanta Philosophy," is expected to uphold the ideals of Madhva brahmanism. It is on account of the moral responsibility that these protagonists are respected by the believers of their respective faiths. The priest, though hunted by the lieutenant, representative of the Mexican Government, is looked up to by the people who are still in need of religion. Likewise Praneshacharya is respected by the brahmins of Durvasapura as a moral referee.

But the protagonists have, unfortunately, not been able to live up to the ideals expected of them. Both of them have desecrated their holy ideals, because of their weaknesses of flesh. The priest of *The Power and the Glory* has committed not only venial sins like lying, drinking, but also mortal sins like fornication. Because of his morbid alcoholism he has been nicknamed as a 'whisky priest' showing the in-built contradiction. He has committed fornication with Maria in the moment of drunken loneliness and begotten an illegal child called Brigitta. He is aware of his sins and feels contrition. He is even mocked by his own beloved Maria as follows:

> I know you're a bad priest. That time we were together—I bet that wasn't all you've done. I've heard things, I can tell you. Do you think God wants you to stay and die—a whisky priest like you? . . . Suppose you die. You'll be a martyr, won't you? What kind of a martyr do you think you'll be? It's enough to make people mock.[1]

Similarly Praneshacharya who hates Naranappa for having desecrated the brahmanical values in his life, cannot decide now whether proper brahmanical death-rite should be rendered to the dead Naranappa. Praneshacharya not only fails to take any decision about Naranappa's death-rite, but even degenerates into Naranappa's anti-brahmanical sinfulness. Naranappa who ate fish and flesh, drank liquor and slept with the low-caste Chandri had been notorious for his anti-brahmanical behaviour. But, paradoxically enough, Praneshacharya also in spite of being the Crest-Jewel of Vedanta Philosophy, stoops to the level of having sexual intercourse with Chandri. There is thus no essential difference between Naranappa, and Praneshacharya as the latter's dubious asceticism is suddenly transformed into irresistible eroticism. Hence his high idealism of brahmanism is thrown to winds. Praneshacharya enjoys the recollection of his adulterous experience with Chandri and her seductive breasts, buttocks and thighs. Adultery or fornication, thus, happens to be the common denominator of their degeneration, though the cultural contexts

leading them to the sin are different. Whereas the whisky priest was compelled to indulge in fornication with Maria by his drunkenness and loneliness, Praneshacharya is tempted to have his sexual fulfillment with the low-caste Chandri when he is fully conscious of himself. The superficial brahmanical or Vedantic discipline is shattered when the floodgates of his suppressed sexual desire are opened at the slightest stimulation by Chandri in the forest at night. After having sex with Chandri, he begins to rationalize his action and even draw inspiration from Naranappa's libidinous life, Mahabala's living with a prostitute at Kashi and Shripati's regular fornication with the low-caste Belli. He even feels tempted to visit the prostitute, Padmavati, at the Fair. Praneshacharya, thus, becomes a symbol of sudden degeneration of brahmanical asceticism and triumph of elemental sexual instinct, or of Lawrentian dark-gods.

A difference between the whisky priest and Praneshacharya which could be noted is that whereas the fornication with Maria remains in the former as a desiccated memory, that with Chandri remains in the latter as a very lush and exciting memory.

Both the protagonists of the novels have committed venial or minor sins in addition to the mortal or grand sin (Mahapapa) of fornication. Whereas the whisky priest is addicted to alcoholism and gets insulted, mocked at and imprisoned for that reason, Praneshacharya commits a similar, if not the same, crime, in the brahmanical context. After losing his invalid wife, Praneshacharya is in a mourning period. Unable to decide about the yes or no of Naranappa's funeral, but yet under the intoxicating memory of his fornication with Chandri, Praneshacharya leaves his native village for Dharmasthala Monastery where he partakes of the community meal. Though he knows that it is wrong to desecrate the Monastery by eating the meal there when he is still mourning the death of his wife, he does so only because of his inability to control his hunger. He wants to rationalize this desecration as an emergency-ethic (*apaddharma*). In both the cases, i.e. of the whisky priest and Praneshacharya, the desires of body triumph over those of spirit, thereby showing their fall from the spiritual height.

Lying is a venial or minor sin committed by both the protagonists. The whisky priest is guilty of this sin when he tells the lieutenant that his name is Montez and tells the half-caste that he is not a reverend father but only a genetic father. He has this recourse to lying in order to hide his identity and escape from dangerous or embarrassing situations. Similarly, Praneshacharya lies to the other brahmins of his own as well as other agraharas and to Putta in order to escape from their inquisitive notice.

Both the protagonists undergo an experience of metaphorical hell as a sort of punishment for their sinful behaviour. The whisky priest has a vision of hell in the prison cell where he is confined. The acrid smell of urinals and lavatory buckets, the drone of mosquitoes, shameless sexuality, criminality, agnosticism and physical discomfiture add to the whisky priest's vision of objective hell, though, of course, he feels quite comfortable in the company of other criminals. Similarly, Praneshacharya also undergoes an experience of the demonic world introduced to him by Putta when the latter takes the former through the temple-festival and fair, whorehouse and pawnshop. The demonic world is full of passion and sensation like cock fighting, eating, drinking, and whoring. But unlike the priest who feels comfortable in the company of sinners in the dark cell, Praneshacharya does not feel totally at ease in the demonic world though he is slowly hardened enough to bear with it. Thus, both the whisky priest and Praneshacharya have a temporary experience of descent into (unchristian and unbrahmanical) hell.

In both the novels, the protagonists are attacked by their opponents for their degeneration and fall from the height of ideals. The lieutenant who represents the materialistic point of view of the Mexican Government ideologically attacks the whisky priest for making a farce of the religious institution.

> "The other," the lieutenant said, "is a priest." He raised his voice: "You know what this means—traitor to the republic. Anyone who shelters him is a traitor too?" Their immobility seemed to anger him. He said, "You're fools if

> you still believe what the priests tell you. All they want is your money. What has God ever done for you? Have you got enough to eat? Have your children got enough to eat? Instead of food they talk to you about heaven. Oh, everything will be fine after you are dead, they say. I tell you—everything will be fine when they are dead, and you must help." (74)

It is because of the hypocrisy of the religious people that the materialistic or communistic Government of Mexico is bent upon abolishing all religion and killing all the priests in the State.

Likewise, Praneshacharya and his dubious brahmanism are ideologically attacked by the inimical group of people, especially Naranappa who stands for anti-brahmanical values of life.

> "O Acharya, who in the world can live with a girl who gives no pleasure—except of course some barren brahmins!"
>
> "You fellows—you brahmins—you want to tie me to a hysterical female, just because she is some relative, right? Just keep your dharma to yourself—we've but one life—I belong to the 'Hedonist School'—which says—barrow, if you must, but drink your ghee."
>
> The Acharya pleaded, "Do whatever you want to do yourself. Please don't corrupt these boys."
>
> He just laughed. "Your Garuda, he robs shaven widows, he plots evil with black magic men, and he is one of your brahmins, isn't he? . . . All right, let's see who wins, Acharya, you or me? Let's see how long all this brahmin business will last. All your brahmin respectability. I'll roll it up and throw it all ways for a little bit of pleasure with one female.[2]

Thus, in both the novels, there is an ideological conflict between the religious protagonists and the irreligious antagonist. Unfortunately, the protagonists are not able to live up to their own ideals because of their human weaknesses, thereby rightly deserving

the contempt of their enemies. In fact, they are awakened to their sins and have some kind of repentance after making a thorough search of their souls. The self-examination makes them aware of their unworthiness. The whisky priest, for example, confesses before the lieutenant in a self-analytical way:

> That other priest was right. It was when he left I began to go to pieces. One thing went after another. I got careless about my duties. I began to drink. It would have been much better, I think, if I had gone, too. Because pride was at work all the time. Not love of God. . . . Pride was what made the angels fall. Pride's the worst thing of all. I thought I was a fine fellow to have stayed when the others had gone. And then I thought I was so grand I could make my own rules. I gave up fasting, daily Mass. I neglected my prayers—and one day because I was drunk and lonely—well, you know how it was, I got a child. (196)

Like the whisky priest, Praneshacharya also is aware of his weaknesses and tries to analyze his conduct retrospectively:

> I must examine unafraid even my belief that the moment occurred suddenly by itself, without my stir, in the darkness of the forest. It's true it occurred suddenly, I didn't go after it and get it. The outstretched hands touched the breasts—desire was born—there—there's the secret. That was the moment that decided which way to turn. No, a moment when I could have decided which way to turn. The answer is not that my body accepted it, but in the darkness my hands fumbled urgently, searched for Chandri's thighs and buttocks as I had never searched dharma. In that moment, decisive of which way I should turn, I took the decision to take Chandri. Even if I lost control, the responsibility to decide was still mine. (98)

Thus, both the whisky priest and Praneshacharya have an awareness of their sins and transgressions and accept the responsibility

ity for them. But both of them cannot change their past or even the future and are in a way ready to accept the consequences of their actions. Both of them feel a mental restlessness and undergo a psychological hell, which is almost parallel to their experience of objective hell (in the prison cell), or the demonic world (in the Festival and Fair).

A comparative study of the behaviour of the whisky priest and Praneshacharya, thus, reveals the common factor of their degeneration or fall from the height of ideals. The whisky priest has not been able to live up to the ideals of a Catholic saint. Similarly Praneshacharya has fallen from the brahmanical height into an anti-brahmanical level. The degeneration of the two protagonists has, obviously, been caused by the weakness of flesh. Up to this point, both of them are equal. But a further study of their behaviour shows that both of them are not equal, as one steals a march over the other. Comparatively speaking, the whisky priest appears to be far better than Praneshacharya because the former, in spite of being a degenerate figure, serves the purpose of his Catholic religion. In spite of being the weakest vessel, he becomes an instrument of God's cosmic design. As he confesses, "But it doesn't matter so much my being a coward—and all the rest. I can put God into a man's mouth just the same—and I can give him God's pardon. It wouldn't make any difference to that if every priest in the church was like me." (195) Though the whisky priest cannot rise to the level of a saint, yet he can perform the minimum duties of an ordinary priest and popularize or maintain the Catholic faith among the believers. God's love for mankind is so appalling and His glory so great that He can use even the weakest priest for the fulfilment of his providential purpose. All this makes clear that Graham Greene has an affirmative vision of life, which recognizes the overall teleological beauty of the universe in spite of the occasional ugliness, which shows that even the weakest person can become an instrument of God. In Graham Greene's world, the whisky priest, in spite of his so-called fall or degeneration, can keep the institution of religion going, and in spite of his personal damnation, can help the other believers have their salvation. He,

thus, serves a positive role and becomes an embodiment of the novelist's affirmative vision of life.

But Anantha Murthy's vision of life depicted in *Samskara* appears to be negative and decadent. The novelist is content to show the degeneration of a brahmin from the dubious height of his ideals. Whereas Graham Greene shows the whisky priest struggling with an agnostic atmosphere for the continuation of religious ideals and solutions, Anantha Murthy shows a brahmin acharya coming from a religious atmosphere and yet becoming irreligious. Though the brahmin community, especially the Madhva sect, has put their trust in him as a moral referee, he does not live up to their expectations by subordinating his individual physical desires to the rational control and social responsibility. By his individual fall, he brings moral disaster to the entire community, which has put an extraordinary trust in him as the Crest-Jewel of Vedanta Philosophy. Instead of solving the problem of Naranappa's death-rite for the community, he stoops to sleep with the low-caste Chandri and escapes from his village Durvasapura. He has no desire to return to his native village and find a solution to the ethical dilemma faced by the community of Madhva brahmins. Praneshacharya thus becomes a symbol of fall without any suggestion of regeneration. He is more and more hardened by the non-brahmanical demonic world to accept his desecration of brahmanical values. He, thus, tries to escape from the positive world to the negative one. But the whisky priest's life strikes us to be definitely nobler than Praneshacharya's. Though the whisky priest escapes from the agnostic world of the Mexican society and Government, though he has not been the highest embodiment of Catholic ideals, yet he escapes into the religious world itself, by dying for it, thereby becoming almost a martyr. He, in spite of his weaknesses, attains the nobility if not the grandeur of a martyr. Graham Greene shows his leanings towards God's party. But Praneshacharya does not show any sign of regeneration as most of his suffering is confined only to psychic level and he never undergoes the whisky priest's physical suffering like being imprisoned, being made to clean the lavatory buckets, being betrayed by the half-caste or being made to be

shot dead by the Government in addition to his psychic dilemmas. Praneshacharya is more an observer than a participant, whereas the whisky priest is more a participant than an observer. Anantha Murthy seems to relish the acharya's fall and the hidden sudra in Naranappa and Praneshacharya.

The whisky priest, in spite of his falling short of certain ideals of his religion, enlists our sympathy by his nobility of suffering and sacrifice of his life for his faith. Thus Graham Greene's picture of a religious man's rise in spite of his fall, his death in the interest of his faith is indeed very comprehensive and conclusive, whereas Anantha Murthy's picture of Praneshacharya's life is partial and inconclusive because he does not show whether the acharya has taken any decision after the realization of his folly and repentance. The story is left dangling at the end of *Samskara*. Anantha Murthy's philosophy appears to be negative and partial, whereas Graham Greene's is affirmative and comprehensive. That is the reason why the whisky priest's fall and rise assume the importance of an archetypal image whereas the acharya's fall remains a partial and unconvincing symbol.

Comparatively speaking, the canvas of *The Power and the Glory* is very large, as it encompasses the whole of the Mexican society and Government and the entire Catholic community, whereas that of *Samskara* is very narrow as it is confined only to the brahmin, especially Madhva brahmin, community having minor bickering with other sub-sects like Smartas and the liberal brahmins of Kundapura. *The Power and the Glory* thus concerns itself with the large entities geographically, politically and religiously, whereas *Samskara* is limited to small entities of life geographically (confined only to Durvasapura, Kundapura and in between villages) and religiously (confined only to sectarian brahmins's dilemmas).

The plot of *The Power and the Glory* is double dimensional in that it can be read both as a thriller on a secular level and as a religious novel. It appeals both to the non-Catholic reader and to the Catholic one. The materialistic triumph of the Mexican Government in hunting out the last priest and killing him by way of punishment also involves the concurrent sacrifice of the priest

for his faith or ideal. Thus both the lieutenant (representative of the communist Government) and the whisky priest are triumphant in their own ways. Whereas the Government (State) triumphs over the priest (Church), the priest becomes triumphant by laying down his life for his faith. This kind of double-dimensionality cannot be found in *Samskara* which shows only the triumph of flesh over spirit, instinct over reason, sudra tendency over brahmanism, and therefore operates only on one dimension.

Both the novels contain some symbolic motifs. Whereas eagles in *The Power and the Glory* symbolize evil and death, vultures in *Samskara* symbolize death and decadent brahmanism. Likewise, mosquitoes and malaria hold a mirror to the physical disease and symbolize moral corruption in Mexico, rats and plague reflect the deadliness of the disease and fast rate of mortality in the villages around Durvasapura. In both the novels, physical disease complements the moral decadence. Anantha Murthy's description of rats and people dying on account of being inflicted by plague seems to be relatively overdone as he appears to be overtly influenced by Albert Camus's *The Plague*.

One is easily struck by the difference of style in both the novels. The general impression created on the mind of the reader is that the language of *Samskara* is more poetic and picturesque than that of *The Power and the Glory* which is relatively dry and denotes dehydration of emotion which is, perhaps, due to Graham Greene's early training in film-script writing.

Both the novels are based upon actual events that happened in life some time ago. Graham Greene points out that his whisky priest was partially based upon the life of a hunted priest in Mexico. Similarly, Anantha Murthy has confessed in the Kannada journal *Rujuvatu* that though his Praneshacharya was based upon a real brahmin of south India, he was inspired to write such a novel only after seeing a Russian film in Birmingham.

The comparative study of the two novels has shown us the emergence of a universal pattern i.e. desecration of religious values, in spite of cultural dissimilarities and particularities.

NOTES

1. Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 79.
2. U.R. Anantha Murthy, *Samskara*, trans. A.K. Ramanujan (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 21.

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R.K. Narayan's Treatment of Women in his Novels

NEERAJ KUMAR

R. K. Narayan is indeed one of the leading writers of Indian English fiction. His novels are deeply rooted in the rich Indian cultural heritage. His novels and stories have a specific fictional locale Malgudi, an imaginary town in South India. Like Hardy's Wessex and Austen's two inches of ivory, Malgudi has a life of its own. In his works, Narayan concentrates on orthodox families and incorporates their numerous features. Man-woman relationship occupies an important place in Narayan's fiction where women are helpless creatures, always to be guarded by male members of the family.

Indeed, the progress of a country is often judged by the status of its women since they constitute an integral part of the progress and existence itself. Jawaharlal Nehru has aptly remarked: "to awaken the people it is the woman who must be awakened. Once she is on move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves." A woman is treated as a goddess: the deities presiding over learning (Saraswati), wealth (Lakshmi), harvests (Annapurna), power (Durga), are all women. In order to maintain ecological balance and uproot all evils as destroyer, the Goddess Kali is also a woman. The position of woman in every civilization marks the stage of evolution which it has reached and furnishes the truest test of its civilization and culture.

R.K. Narayan is a novelist of the middle-class. He is neither a committed writer like Mulk Raj Anand, nor does he believe in exalting the importance of Indian spiritual heritage like Raja Rao, nor does he possess the vigour of Manohar Malgonkar to disparage the Indian politicians, nor does he believe in presenting the middle-class social life. He is chiefly concerned with the ana-

lysis of the character of the individual as he lives in this world. His view of life is essentially Hindu. He appears to be guided by the impulse and ideology of *Srimad Bhagwad Gita.*

In Narayan's early novels, women have a significant role to play. In *Swami and Friends*, the world is seen through the eyes of a young boy. In this novel, the members of the family, including the grandmother and the mother, have fixed roles to play—they provide a background.

The Bachelor of Arts depicts the central character from the studenthood to the stage of householder—the two stages being bridged by romantic love and courtship. Narayan's early novels are set in the Malgudi of 1930s where choice of a partner is determined by fate and astrology. Moreover, Narayan regards impossible free communication between an orthodox boy and an orthodox girl before marriage. Thus there is much fantasy in the way the boy sees the girl. Both Malathi, the girl with whom Chandran first falls in love, and Sushila whom he later courts and marries, appear quite casually in the novel and maintain distance. Although Malathi and Chandran never meet or talk, yet the latter gives the former an imaginary name which endows her with an imaginary life and virtues. The entire fantasy is attached to and grows out of carefully observed facts—the colour of her sari, the day and time when she comes to the sea-side and so on. The theme of courtship properly begins with the first formal visit of a would-be bridegroom to the bride's house. Such a scene is described three times in his novels: *The Bachelor of Arts, The English Teacher* and *The Vendor of Sweets.*

In *The English Teacher*, Narayan has portrayed the extraordinary personality of Sushila by several means: he endows her with a separateness and distance, pins down the relationship between Krishna and Sushila, and uses first person in the narrative. When the romantic love culminates in marriage, it ends in sorrow and disillusionment. The nearness reduces the warmth of romantic feeling. When Sushila dies, Krishna bursts in philosophic utterance: "We came together only to go apart again. The law of life can't be avoided. It comes into operation the moment we are detached from our mother's womb. All struggle and misery in

life is due to our attempt to arrest this law or get away from it or in allowing ourselves to be hurt by it."[1]

In *The Vendor of Sweets*, the sense of disillusionment following romantic love is strong. Jagan feels that the obsessive fondness of the first few years for his wife has lost its warmth and has gradually evaporated: "He felt fatigued by all the apparatus of sex, its promises and its futility, the sadness and the sweet at the end of it all, and he assumed, that his wife also shared his outlook."[2] Thus we find that in Narayan's world, romantic love is somehow self-destructive and ends in fiasco.

Savitri of *The Dark Room* is one of the few women in Narayan's novels who offers a fairly complete picture of woman in an orthodox milieu of Indian society. She stands in contrast with her two friends, Gangu and Janamma. Janamma behaves as a typical traditional domestic wife. She says, "I have never opposed my husband or argued with him at any time. . . . What he does is right. It is a wife's duty to feel so."[3] Gangu, on the other hand, is an eccentric whose husband claims to be a champion of women's rights, yet she is well within the demanding standards of the community. Savitri can be placed somewhere between the two. On the one hand, she is fascinated by Gangu, while on the other, she obeys Janamma. Unlike Gangu, Savitri's life is ordered and arranged around her family, but unlike Janamma she has her own forms of protest against her husband, Ramani. All these three women, however, stand in contrast with Shanta Bai, a newcomer to Malgudi, who was married young to her cousin, a gambler and drunkard whom she at the age of eighteen left because he would not change. She, then obtained a B.A. degree and kept drifting from one job to another. Her precarious financial position depends on the extent of Ramani's attachment to her. Savitri links herself to Shanta Bai in the following way: "The prostitute changes her man, but a married woman doesn't, that's all, but both earn their food; and shelter in the same manner." (117) Here, Narayan provides a contrast between the higher caste women of Lawley Extension, Savitri in particular, and the lower caste women. When Ramani beats Babu for tampering with the lights, Savitri intervenes but her main form of

protest against her husband's violence is withdrawal. Ponni, a lower caste woman, genuinely attempts to help Savitri in finding the life of independence she longs for, at the same time respecting and guarding the privacy she needs.

In *The Guide*, Narayan creates his most complex woman character—Rosie. The complexity lies in the roles she assumes. She does not hesitate in telling about her family background, "I belong to a family traditionally dedicated to the temple as dancers: my mother, my grandmother . . . even as a young girl, I danced in our village temple . . . we are viewed as public women."[4] Macro, her husband, neither understands her dance nor her needs for the pleasures of living. So he finally abandons her because of her affair with Raju. He says: "You are not my wife. You are a woman who will go to bed with anyone who flatters your antics." (134) When Rosie comes to live with Raju in Malgudi, she chooses a new name, Nalini for herself. There is a shift in her own scale of values. Now, her passion for physical love was falling and she only wanted to dance professionally. Throughout the novel, there is a continuous conflict between Rosie and Nalini.

In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Bharati is a true disciple of Gandhi. She is a 'protege of the Master' and indeed in temperament almost a projection of the saint himself. Bharati means 'daughter of India' and it was a name selected for her by Gandhi himself. She was an orphan whom Gandhi brought up. On the one hand, she represents the renascent India—self-confident, having a positive ideology and hopes for a bright future, while on the other she represents the younger generation of women in India—knowing one's own mind and with 'what a brave new world!' outlook. She had disappeared into the market like a bird gliding on wings.[5] Sriram's falling in love at first sight and her being attracted by him (though she has complete control of herself) give a tone of warmth and romance to the novel, but the romance never becomes a dominant element.[6]

In *The Painter of Signs*, Narayan portrays a social worker in the form of Daisy. She is a young lady who has just started a family planning centre in Malgudi. Raman, the hero of the novel,

tries his best to get familiar with her, but he is always discouraged by a calculated coldness in her look. She strongly detests marriage and does not respond to Raman's idea of married life. Moreover, her dedication to her work is her solemn and profound commitment to life. She moves away to carry on her social service and leaves Raman to suffer the bitter sweet pangs of separation and unfulfilled love. In a way, she is similar to Bharati of *Waiting for the Mahatma*. Both of them are devoted to their duties.

Sita of *The World of Nagaraj* presents a true picture of Indian wife. She is very much conscious of her duties as a wife. Whenever her husband, Nagaraj, calls her, she immediately responds to his call. She is very particular about his honour. She also advises him on important matters. When she finds that her husband is feeling disturbed in writing in that particular room due to vermins and rats, she asks him to come to another room and to continue his writing work there. She is always worried about his welfare. She is very close to Savitri of *The Dark Room*.

Narayan's novel *Grandmother's Tale* is somewhat autobiographical. It is the story of his great grandmother who lived in the later period of the East India Company. Bala, the central character, was married at the early age of seven to Viswa, a boy of ten. Her boldness is evident when she goes in search of her husband. She, being a traditional wife, does not participate in household discussion. But she is very much conscious of her domestic duty. Before her husband gets up in the morning, she lits the kitchen fire and prepares his breakfast. Like a true Indian wife, she does not tolerate Surma as her co-wife. She is all dominating, devious and aggressive. But the moment she is united with her husband, she is docile and all polite. Her tone becomes gentle and subdued.

Narayan believes in domestic harmony and peaceful relations, the woman is either a wedded partner or a seductive creature. Ramani's keep Shanta Bai, Sampath's vision of beauty Shanti and Raju's beloved, Rosie—all three women are married but unhappy in their family life. Therefore, they move out of

their family orbit and take help of those interested men who can help them rise. But in each case, the woman is left to herself, their lovers having proved either selfish or misfit. Besides, the public woman like Rangi of *The Man Eater of Malgudi* and Grace of *The Vendor of Sweets* do not receive sympathy for living sex life without marriage. The two other women—Savitri and Sushila—are loyal, loving and simple but their experiences are different in life. Sushila is worshipped by Krishnan, the English teacher, whereas Savitri is tortured, neglected and humiliated by her husband. All his female characters echo the Indian attitude in one way or the other.

Narayan's women are typically Indian. Sushila in *The English Teacher* and Savitri in *The Dark Room* are perfect models of Indian wife. Rosie in *The Guide* is neither meek nor submissive like the earlier women characters. She is more modern than the others. She belongs to a class of temple dancers but marries out of her caste and class. She gets no sympathy from her husband and at the height of her revolt against him, she finds in Raju an instrument for the fulfilment of her ambition of becoming a dancer. But even she shows her essential Indianness in the attitude of resignation she adopts when Raju is arrested for forgery. She tells him that she felt all along he was not doing right things. This is Karma. What can they do? Indeed, even at the height of her success, she does forget her husband. And when his book is published, she, like a true Indian wife, is proud of him. Her attachment to and dependence on Raju do not reduce her to sex crazy or morally loose woman. She remains mentally chaste and fully devoted to her husband.

Thus we find that Narayan has looked at the problems of women from different points of view and in varying contexts. And since every time the universe of discourse changes, the views appear to be contradictory though in fact they are not so Thus, from the viewpoint of family stability and happiness, the woman is to be respected and honoured but in view of the inherent psychological and biological weakness of her nature, she is conceived as one in need of protection of man and to that extent dependent on him.

NOTES

1. R.K. Narayan, *The English Teacher* (Mysore: ITP, 1995), p. 202.
2. R.K. Narayan, *The Vendor of Sweets* (Bodley Head, 1967), p. 172.
3. R.K. Narayan, *The Dark Room* (Mysore: Indian Thought Publication, 1956), p. 112.
4. R.K. Narayan, *The Guide* (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1985), p. 75.
5. R.K. Narayan, *Waiting for the Mahatma* (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1969), p. 13.
6. V.T. Patil, *Gandhism and Indian English Fiction* (Delhi: Devika Publications, 1997), p. 86.

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Arun Joshi's Use of Indian English: A Linguistic Study

ASHOK KUMAR BACHCHAN

English in India is the by-product of the British colonial rule over us. It was brought to India by the mercenaries of East India company and spread first by the Christian missionaries and later by the British administration when India became a subject nation of the British Empire. The advent of English in India coincides with its westward voyage across the Atlantic to North America in the very first decade of the seventeenth century. Indian English is a non-native variety as it is not our mother-tongue but the second language, useful both in the national and international contexts. Its importance as a language of knowledge is attested by Rajagopalachari who characterized it as the "gift of the goddess Saraswati to India."[1] R.K. Narayan calls it "the only non-regional Indian language."[2] English has now a constitutional status as one of the Indian languages. A creative writer is free to choose his linguistic medium. It is a linguistic fundamentalism to say that a creative writer should not use the language of another nation. Creative writers in India have selected English as a medium for the simple reason that they know it and can communicate the ideas too. The English-knowing Indian readers outnumber the population of England. After England and the U.S.A., India is the third largest publisher of books in the world.

II

English, the native language of United Kingdom and the United States of America, has been Indianized in our country. Several creative writers writing in English and eminent Indian

scholars of English have commented upon the propriety of the use of Indianized English and other aspects of the problem. Raja Rao writes in the Foreword to *Kanthapura*:

> 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 cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us.[3]

The above statement has proved almost prophetic and English has become one of the Indian languages. Mulk Raj Anand too has written in favour of the Indianization of English. Despite his mastery of British English during his stay in England, he has come out in favour of writing English suited to the Indian milieu:

> All the same, in my fictional writings I continued to follow the technique of word-coinage from Punjabi and Hindustani. I would transliterate dialogue almost literally from the original speech and I would, consciously, find myself inter-weaving feelings, emotions, moods and thoughts, from my mother-tongue into the texture of the narrative.[4]

Anand's efforts in favour of the nativisation of English have proved fruitful as Indian English literature now forms part of the curriculum in higher studies in India as well as in some of the foreign universities where Commonwealth literature is taught. He maintains that it has now become a by-product of our language milieu. This metamorphosis of English is a fusion of Indian language and English and it is now no less significant than some of

the native varieties of English such as Irish English, Welsh English, Australian English. He says: "the body of Indian-English writing has grown. . . . And I believe the 'changeling' has enough vitality in it to communicate the feeling of dynamic growth, both in technical expression and content." (20)

The initiative taken by Mulk Raj Anand in the thirties has been consolidated by his successors such as Kamala Das, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Arun Joshi and others. Kamala Das, in particular, writes in one of her poems entitled "Introduction":

> The language I speak
> Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
> All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
> Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
> It is as human as I am human, don't you see?[5]

The use of English in India spanning more than a century has developed a distinct variety of English "intelligible internally as well as internationally, the national identity of its own."[6] Indian English has now become almost a language which has been "enriched by the cadences of Sanskrit and a large number of words, idioms and expressions from regional languages. No one who has made a study of Indian English can fail to observe its composite nature."[7]

Arun Joshi uses almost all the linguistic devices referred to in the above quotation. Arun Joshi is pastmaster in the use of linguistic devices. However, the recurrence varies from novel to novel. *The Foreigner* was begun in America and completed in India. In this novel, there are only two Hindi words namely *Seithji* (211) and *Namaste* (235). This novel deals with the American life and characters or with the America-based Indian characters. It is perhaps for this reason that Arun Joshi avoided using words from Hindi or other regional languages, while he has done so in other novels. Joshi's second novel, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, contains a large number of Indian words interlarded with English speech. Most of these are words related to the Indian environment and the translation of these into Eng-

lish would be cumbersome. Some of these words are: 'Paan' (28), 'Yajan' (52), 'Jaimala' (62), 'Aarti' (97), 'Mahaprasad' (112), 'Bidi' (118), 'Pugree' (154), 'Panchayat' (184) etc. In *The Apprentice* some of the Indian words used are 'inquilab' (12), 'sarson' (18), 'lassi' (27), 'Tum Tum' (29), 'Mantra' (34), 'Pujari' (121), 'Janeyu' (123), 'Gayatri' (146) etc. The use of words borrowed from the Indian languages continues in *The Last Labyrinth* and *The City and the River*.

Most of these words cannot be called Indian loan words in English for most of them have not been included in the dictionaries of current and contemporary English. Some of these could easily have been replaced with their standard English equivalents. But Arun Joshi has avoided this for the sake of creating verisimilitude in the Indian context. A *banjara* conveys more than gypsy in the Indian context as does *gunia* against exorcist. Sometimes the English equivalent is given within parentheses.

Arun Joshi is fond of using collocation and compounds on the model of the Indian languages such as 'modesty act' (*The Foreigner*, 111), 'advice-giving season' (140), 'foreign-returned chaps' (141), hurt dog like eyes' (153). In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* some of the following expressions have been used: such as 'star-constellations,' (8) 'honey-mooning couples,' (36) 'song-writer uncle,' (64) 'cow-dust hour,' (99) 'hairy-fairy academic,' (138) 'sun-down' (195). In *The Apprentice* some of the following compounds and collocations are based on those in Indian languages: 'Butcher-Police,' (12) 'betel-spit,' (13) 'right-hand man,' (22) 'cot-farewell stage,' (25) 'Tea-man' (60) etc. In *The Last Labyrinth* the expressions such as 'mate-selection,' (67) 'money-man,' (84) 'peacock-carpet,' (168) 'the mountain-road' (177) etc. are a few examples of collocations on the Indian model. In *The City and the River*, 'brick-colonies,' (12) 'mud-colonies,' (20) 'brick-people' (20) and 'asthough-attitude' (38) are a few examples of collocations on the Indian model. Some of the expressions combine both Hindi and English expressions such as 'vilayati stuff' (114) and 'vilayati-blood' (114) in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and 'Paan-red lips' (29) and 'ash-smeared

sadhus' in *The Last Labyrinth.*

Many of these compounds and collocations reveal tendency in Indian English towards pre-modification rather than post-modification. 'An act of modesty' becomes 'modesty act' (111) and 'women working in stone,' 'stone-women' (147) in *The Foreigner*. Some of these compounds have instances of conversion as a conjunction: 'asthough' is converted into Adjective in 'asthough-attitude,' referred to above.

Arun Joshi is fond of translating Hindi sentences literally into English. The following is an instance of a characteristic Indian utterance in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*:

> "What happened to my expedition!" he exclaimed.
> "Ask me what did *not* happen to it." (66)

Dhunia, a tribal, requests the District Collector, "you are our mother and father." (155) Such literal translations from Hindi are found almost in all the novels of Arun Joshi.

Besides translating Hindi sentences into English, Joshi also transliterates Hindi sentences in Roman alphabet giving their English equivalents within parentheses. Most of such utterances are found in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*: 'mati ke putle' (163), 'sone ka dil,' (227), 'pagal mat bano,' (228) 'bal nahin banka hoga.' (230) These transliterations with their translations have their own earthiness because of their being rooted in the Indian soil.

Joshi's Indian psyche makes him feel, think and write as a typical Indian. He recreates the Indian situation of a traditional wife lamenting on the dead body of her dead husband. Bilasia, the tribal girl, screams and cries seeing the dead body of Billy, her husband, as most of the Indian women do in similar situations:

> She waited for us in her hut. She had undone her hair and thrown away her bangles. She was entirely composed until she saw Billy's body. Then she let out a wail that was more like the roar of an enraged gale than the cry of mor-

> tal men. "I told you not to go," she waited, "I told you not to go."[8]

Joshi's characters are mostly educated in Britain and the U.S.A. Joshi convinces us that his characters talk in English. Sheila in *The Foreigner* did not want Babu to marry an American girl because of the language problem. To this Sindi replies:

> "We all know English; don't we?" I asked. "Even now we are speaking English; aren't we?"[9]

But this is hardly true in the case of tribals in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and the boatmen in *The City and the River.* In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Meena Chatterjee "talked almost entirely in English in that unique, rather flat, accent that is to be found in young ladies taught in convents." (37)

III

The linguistic influence upon the fiction of Arun Joshi is in the various fields of English language such as vocabulary, syntax and usage. English is the native language of the U.K. It has spread as a first language in the U.S.A. and as a second language in India. The British English transplanted in America and India in the seventeenth century has subsequently been coloured by the local cultures and thinking and as such "English language in America and India has undergone the process of Americanization and Indianization respectively."[10] Joshi's use of British English is modified by his use of Americanisms and Indianisms. Americanisms and Indianisms are in their turn, coloured by their local cultures and ways of thinking. In the case of Indian English, there are loan words from Indian languages, hybridized expressions and new coinages. Joshi's idiom is guided by the Indian psyche. His characters think and feel in English but the idea is typically Indian on many occasions. He gives English clothes to Indian way of thinking.

NOTES

1. Qtd. M.K. Naik, *The History of Indian English Literature* (New Delhi, 1982), p. 126.
2. *A Writer's Nightmare* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1990), p. 26.
3. Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* (Delhi, 1971), pp. 5-6.
4. Ramesh Mohan, ed., *Indian Writing in English* (CIEFL: Hyderabad, 1978), p. 15.
5. V.K. Gokak, ed., *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry: 1828-1925* (New Delhi, 1970), pp. 239-40.
6. V.Y. Kantak, "The Language of Indian Fiction in English," in Ramesh Mohan, pp. 192-93.
7. K.C. Nambiyar, "Stylistic Studies in Indian Writing in English—A Suggested Framework," in Ramesh Mohan, p. 158.
8. Arun Joshi, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1987), p. 235.
9. Arun Joshi, *The Foreigner* (New Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1972), p. 60.
10. M. Hari Prasad, "Indian English and the American Language," *Indian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Summer 1990, p. 90.

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Postindependence Indian English Writing: Concern, Quest, Achievement

PRADIP LAHIRI

Indian English literature written since Independence may be said to be born in FREE INDIA indeed in a restrictive sense. But some reasonable time span was really required for this "curious cultural phenomenon"[1] in order to be able to breathe a Keatsian "pure serene." Indian English Writing as it firmly stands today reflecting a rich diversity having been able to find in its fold some of the most representative talented Indian English authors who have helped to shape the later twentieth century Indian Writing in English what it is today, having given to "the airy nothings a local habitation and a name." But the road to success has as usual been difficult. Today at the day-break of a brand-new century opening up in a brand new Millennium, having been comfortably accommodated in its own rightfully acquired sprawling manor house set aside exclusively for the Indian English author, on account of the fact that Indian Writing in English has been showered with considerable accolades from the cross-section of the international literary communes, and also because of its having been endeared by the educated Indian readers of all hues as well as the serious foreign readers, Indian Writing in English cannot afford to be oblivious of an uneasy rather debilitating past. Even since 1947 till around the early sixties, Indian Writing in English had to bear continuedly the brunt of trials and tribulations, difficulties and dangers, brow-beat and mistrust, apathy and animadversion from its own people who had been able in the very recent past to shake off the yoke of the White rule after multifold heart-breaking sacrifices, with anguishing blisters and burns on their bodies and bad scars on their minds.

Indian Writing in English had to tide over the very initial stage in the wake of India's winning freedom, that was forced to see a divided political territory of the common skies but separate horizons, along with its traumatized experience of an immediate communally engineered macabre manslaughter, majority hitting the two large, progressive, self-respecting, sensitive states of Punjab and Bengal where it hurts, rendering countless peace-loving innocent Indians homeless, hopeless, helpless in the throes of untold suffering and unrecorded misery. A make-shift hurriedly installed native Govt. put up on the ill-support of a British jack found itself in a quandary, a dilemma with a feeble political will badly needed at that critical cataclysmic historical moment.

A nascent Indian Writing in English had to have its upbringing during this juncture, aiming at proper growth and covetable development—a brown study at the given hour. On the other hand English literature, and anything to do with 'English' was no more anybody's blue-eyed boy. Yet writing in English was as much a compulsive necessity for the sake of a new-born sovereign nation, as was that of writing in the regional native languages. India offering unity in diversity, the call of the hour was that English had to be the link language along with Hindi which faced serious antagonism from the no less resourceful regional languages spoken in every other state outside the so-called Hindi belt. English therefore could be the major apparatus with which to slowly and steadily carve out a united India thickly inhabited by multilingual, multicultural, multi-apparelled people who have to invariably interact closely with one another.

Regional languages and literatures, with their own stable moorings, had their own tasks to perform. Now it was the high time to forge a new lingual communion. Hindi fell far short of achieving this integrity. It could hardly amalgamate language segments, carrying out the duty of an amanuensis, from Gilgit to Tuticorin, from Kandla to Kohima, free India needed, political gimmicks apart, a working language, which even the Indian Constitution avowed.

What we all needed was our *own English* for purposes at

> odds. For our *creative* writings English had to be fallen back upon in our own way. After the initial dither and hesitation, the fact was brought home to the enlightened mass that an Indian English having its own nuances and a differently spelt out character was no more to do anything with the Whiteman's legacy. Indo-Anglian original writings date back to early 19th century, if not the late 18th. (cf. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's *Letter on English Education* addressed to Lord Amherst in 1823)

It was only after 1947 "that the Indian psyche, poised comfortably on an independent sovereign pedestal, approved by degrees, the charter of accession of the Indian Writing in English through an impartial evaluation of the genre."[2] By the sixties Indian Writing in English has been successful to an amazing extent to douse the flames of the basic conflict between the 'mother' and the 'other' tongue.

Devy observed in 1995 that "in reality, Indian English Literature is the newest and the least developed branch of Indian literature." (Preface) We may agree with the word "newest," but we would accept the word "least developed" with a grain of salt, desiring to replace it with "considerably well" developed branch of the leviathanic Indian literature as a whole. Indian Writing in English has already been able to have significantly delved in its well-oiled loom dexterously textured, richly coloured, strong literary fabric of attractive indigenous patterns.

Along with the stalwart triumvirate of Indian English fiction—Mulk Raj Anand (b. 1905), Rashipuram Krishnaswamy Narayan (b. 1906) and Raja Rao (b. 1908)—there emerged such remarkable Indian English creative writers as Bhabani Bhattacharya (b. 1906), Khushwant Singh (b. 1918), Nissim Ezekiel (b. 1924), Kamala Markandaya (b. 1924), Nayantara Sahgal (b. 1927), Jayanta Mahapatra (b. 1928), A.K. Ramanujan (b. 1929), R. Parthasarathy (b. 1934), Kamala Das (b. 1934), Keki N. Daruwalla (b. 1937), Arun Joshi (1939-93), Adil Jussawalla (b. 1940) and some others. These Indian English creative writers had a vision of their own and a dedication. Indian Writing in English

started getting percolated very fast with the vast corpus of indigenous literature, having duly received the long-awaited credential from the cross-section of the conscious, sensitive, educated and well-informed Indian readers who smelt Indian soil, breathed Indian air, ate Indian food and spoke various Indian languages. By degrees, the rank of the Indian English creative writers swelled over all the five turbulent decades since the Indian tricolour fluttered for the first time from the ramparts of the Red Fort in Delhi, India having made its mid-night tryst with destiny once and for all. All these writers showed their individual and even collective literary concerns. One with a patient observation finds conclusive proof of a virile thematic quest in the context of the contradictory tendencies of globalism alongside localism, new-found decolonized nationalism, ethnic identities as to roots and origins of the diasporic multitude exchanging subjective signals over world-wide communication channels. We may make a passing reference here with regard to the expatriate Indian English creative writing involving Bharati Mukherji, Rohinton Mistry, Uma Parameswaran and others.

We may peep at two of these post-1947 Indian English women authors in the context of their work. The novels of Nayantara Sahgal (b. May 10, 1927, Allahabad) from *A Time to be Happy* (1958) to *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) had political overtones in almost all of them, which could have originated on account of the live political surrounding of her elitist home, and for the very time-frame within which she chose to write her novels along the trajectory of some political-historical happenings like the bifurcation of Punjab into two separate states (*Storm in Chandigarh*, 1969); or of the socio-political happenings subsequent to the passing away of Prime Minister Nehru in 1964. Though she may not be categorized as an eminently gifted Indian English novelist, it may nevertheless be pointed out that Nayantara Sahgal displayed in her work a concern for the domestically confined traditional status of Indian women. She tried to portray, even if on the surface, the restlessness, the percipiently accumulated ire, personal screams and simmering revolt in the minds of the women characters she tried to create. Maya (*A Time to be*

Happy) refuses to carry the corpse of a relationship on her shoulder of an unsuccessful marriage and breaks into an illicit love affair. Rashmi (*This Time of Morning*) hates the idea of bearing with a "wrong marriage," whereas Uma with her over-sexed libido gives vent to her disapproval of the institutionalized marriage system. At the thematic level, the post-1947 novels of Nayantara Sahgal show a pointed concern for the cabinned, cribbed Indian women compulsively spread-eagled on the floor-board of a labelled marriage, and no one cares if it succeeds or fails. We get a hint how these hapless women inwardly bled. A woman herself, the novelist wanted to support a forward step towards a liberated world even if by means of an affair beyond wedlock. She scored by bringing to the foreground the inner reality of an individual belonging to the female species, seeking to be free in Free India, from the cobwebs and tentacles of false social taboos, and desiring to tentatively tear away from her household role, in order to search for a sexual freedom, self-respect and a satisfactory inner realization.

Anita Desai (b. June 24, 1937, Mussoorie), daughter of Dhirendra Nath Mazumdar of Bengal and German-Jewish Toni Nime of Germany, possessing oriental and occidental chromosome within her, which "created" for her, as she herself expressed "a synthesis which is the base of work and I did not have to strive for (this). . . . I'm sure this is what makes my writing whatever it is; I see India through the eyes of my mother, as an outsider, but my feelings for India are my father's, of someone born here,"[3] is a creative writer sitting under the canopy of Indian Writing in English whose work of fiction, bearing evidence of rare sensitivity and technical brilliance, is considered to be a corner stone of the Indian English literature. Anita Desai earned global encomiums as a rare and original voice, having been considered as a major imagist Indian English language author on account of her excellence in evoking both character and mood by means of telling visual images. Her "quiet writing" (Victoria Glenndinning's comment) is capable of being "more impressive than stylistic fireworks" having the "gift of opening up a closed world and making it clearly visible and,

by end, familiar."[4] When in 1963 *Cry, the Peacock* came to light (published simultaneously by Peter Owen, U.K.; Rupa, India), Indian English literary world had an instantaneous shot in the arm. Readers, scholars and critics immediately knew that something had happened, elevating the genre to the height of a laudable excellence. The novel, with its unmistakable poetic, richly symbolic intensity, sought to artistically explore the inner reality of a sensitive girl obsessed by a childhood prognostication of disaster to befall her in the course of her life. With her deep concern for the journey into the interior of an individual, Anita Desai has since been recognised as a powerful and original Indian English author shot through with an intense, perceptive, natural literary talent.

Four inter-textured narratives in the backdrop of Calcutta came out in the form of *Voices in the City* in 1965 (Peter Owen, U.K.; Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi) seeking to record and recreate the seminal atmosphere of this emotionally sensitive Indian metropolis into an almost palpable visceral experience. *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* (1971, Orient Paperback, New Delhi) records Anita's concern for the search for identity, individual as well as national, grounded on immigrant experience in a postcolonial context, woven around the theme of relationships involving Euro-Indian characters. In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1973, Vikas, and Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi), the novelist seeks once again to explore the psychological reality of Sita in the island of Manori. *Fire on the Mountain* (1978, Heinemann, U.K.; Harper & Row, U.S.A.; Penguin Books and Allied, India) has been critically considered to be Anita Desai's best fictional creative work, making it possible for her to win Winifred Holtby Prize of the Royal Society of Literature, London, and also the Indian Sahitya Akademi Award. The author's concern once again was with the inner perturbation of the human self. The evocative story bearing evidence of a psychological insight moves around the aged Nanda Kaul living in her isolation in the small hill town of Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh, along with her great granddaughter Raka. Nanda's consciously built-up fantasy world wants inwardly to endear the child, rousing her interest in her granny. The effort

fades into insignificance owing to the fact that Raka "could not bear to be confined to the old lady's fantasy world when the Reality outside appealed so strongly." (100) The novel maps some contours of solitude, underscoring the author's interest in the interior spiralling pathways of human mind where a man or a woman has to take a compulsively solitary walk up and down many dark corridors over which shadows numberless are cast, the walk is pretty much agonizing.

In Custody (1984, Heinemann, U.K.; Harper & Row, U.S.A.; Penguin India) similarly makes it possible for the readers to look within—into the twilight region of the buried self, enabling one to tear through the diaphragm of one's disillusionment, and many a time one has no other way but to come to terms with the earlier eschewed ideas. As she writes in *In Custody*:

> He did not want the day to dawn. He had hoped to stretch the night endlessly by walking on and on. Day would bring with it the board meeting, an enquiry, an interrogation, exposure and blame . . . he knew that this was what he would have to recover to retrieve. If he could do that, it would give him a reason, and strength, to survive whatever came. He had to believe that.

In her own words, the novels she creates "deal with what Ortega Y. Gasset called the terror of facing, single-handed, the ferocious assaults of existence."[5]

With Anita Desai, Indian Writing in English has been distinguished by a greater technical sophistication, stylistic control and narrative economy. It has also been distinguished by continuous concern for the inner being, always intuitively apprehended and finely suggested. "The eternal verities are always present in her work, however muted they may be, or distilled through image or symbol—the transience of life, the certainty of death."[6]

Both Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai, in their post-1947 creative writings have shown, in their different ways, a concern for a New Morality, an interpretation of the vision of the self involving the New Woman's new consciousness in the context of

a new freedom vis-a-vis a new quest for identity about themselves and their milieu.

NOTES

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4. "Meet the Author," Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, June 14, 1992.
5. Anita Desai interviewed by Yashodhara Dalmia, *The Times of India*, April 29, 1979.
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Accommodating Sufferers of Jean Rhys: An Insight into *Good Morning, Midnight*

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I am empty of Everything.
I am empty of everything but the thin
Frail trunks of the trees and the thin
frail ghosts in my room.

Native of Caribbean islands and settler of British soil, Jean Rhys died in the spring of 1979. All her novels were published till 1966 but it is through the sensibility of seventies that the greater truths about the life of woman in present-day society find revelation in Rhys's themes. Naipaul relevantly observes: "Jean Rhys thirty or forty years ago identified many of the themes that engage us today, isolation, an absence of society or community, the sense of things falling apart, dependence, loss."[1] It was through her novels that Rhys's moral propensities responded to predicament of woman as she herself viewed and lived. Her contemporaries perceived as dark and depressing her delineation of exploited women victims but it holds a deeper significance for the present-day reader and critic. Modern consciousness, specially that of the Seventies onwards, was truly understood and it shared the world of Jean Rhys.

Sometime before her death, Rhys had an intense desire to write her autobiography because, as she confided to David Plante, an American novelist staying in London, "everything they say about me is wrong. I want to tell the truth."[2] It was the truth about her life as a woman with "predominance of loss and prevalence of longing" in her "world of fear and distrust,"[3] that found expression in her last work *Smile, Please*, an unfinished autobiography, published after her death in 1979. The autobiog-

raphy explains and justifies Rhys's obsession with the plight of her unhappy heroines. She transformed the dismal disasters of a chaotic, disordered life into perennial classics. Rhys's marginal woman—sad, solitary, cut off from the mainstream—forms the crux of the society. Her very failure is a representative symbol for the world we inhabit.

Jean Rhys's last early published work for almost thirty years *Good Morning, Midnight*, is a dark and depressing novel, coming at a time when the Europe was to view the heinous scenes of World War II. The title suggests a welcome greeting to ensuing darkness. Helen Carr observes: "The colonial-bred Rhys' terrified consciousness must certainly have sensitized her to the violence and her fear behind European respectability, but the paranoia she evokes is not just, in Mellown's terms, that of 'a psychological type,' but of an epoch. She is describing the febrile nightmarish world of Europe on the eve of the II World War, with its anti-Semitics, its racişm, its class-machinery, its nationalistic posturing."[4]

In *Good Morning, Midnight*, Sasha Jensen, in her forties, is oldest of Rhys's heroines. She knows that a woman, as she grows, loses her grip over life and its situations. She had loved, married and lost Enno. They had a child too, but conciliatory gesture of Nature—motherhood—was not to be her share: child was still-born. "They never last." Sasha ruminated, "the golden days."[5] Later on, Enno had broken off saying, "You don't know how to make love. . . . You are too passive, you are lazy, you bore me." (107) It was then that "She would often wonder: Did I love Enno at the end? Did he ever love me? I don't know." (119)

In her autobiography, *Smile Please*. Jean Rhys reminisces about her unfriendly nurse who would babble unendingly about the horrors of natural and supernatural world to frighten the little girl out of her wits. Rhys concludes: "Meta had shown me a world of fear and uncertainties—that Rhys weaves around the heroines of her novels. One cannot but admire the brutal honesty with which Rhys depicts the isolation and paranoia of feminine consciousness, the hopeless and the lost women who yearn for a

straw to stick on to. But, eventually, they crumble down in their attempt to survive.

Too passive to commit suicide, Sasha plans to die slowly by drinking herself to death. But an old friend contributes more money to her family inheritance and convinces her to go to Paris, perhaps in the hope of a fresh start. She begins to call herself Sasha thinking that change of name would bring change of luck. Life in Paris, for Sasha, is nothing but a retake of past failure in England. Rhys reiterates the familiar descriptions of "smell of cheap hotels" (9) while narrating grim tales of female exploitation. Sasha's major gains in Paris are, "a place to eat in mid-day, a place to eat in night, a place to have a drink after dinner." (9) This is how she has 'arranged' her life. Being able to forget the "dark streets, dark rivers, the pain, the struggle" (10) of England, she is content to be an "automaton" in Paris. Helen Carr calls *Good Morning, Midnight* "a city-story, not an island story . . . a story of the middle age rather than the end of childhood." (46) Paris brings back the memories of Sasha's early failures in the city that are embodied in the person of Mr. Blank who is an archetypal symbol for the forces that keep crushing her time and again. She contemptuously tells him: "Mr. Blank, you who represent society, have the right to pay me, four hundred francs a month. That's my market value for I am inefficient member of society, slow in the uptake, uncertain, slightly damaged in the fray: there is no denying it. So you have the right to pay me four hundred francs a month, to lodge me in a small dark room, to clothe me shabbily, to harass me with worry and monotony and unsatisfied longings." (25)

In Paris a young Gigolo [Rene] is an important entry in Sasha's life. Taken in by her old fur coat, he thinks of her as a bored, wealthy woman who would gratefully pay him for his company. In Gigolo's erroneous identity of her, she still hopes for some warm intimate relationship but which eventually ends in almost rape and robbery. Meeting Rene brings about a transitory transformation in Sasha. Instead of shutting herself off from the world, she goes about with Delmer, a Russian friend. Delmer takes her to his friend Serge, a painter. Listening to music in

Serge's studio, she reverts back into the memories of the Caribbean landscape and her lost love. In her exal'ed mood, she even buys a painting. All these events are Rhys's efforts to prove the power that money exerts over the society, "where values and roles are dependent upon the economic order."[6] The Russian-Jewish painter, Serge, is the only most admirable male figure in Rhys's fiction.

Here, for the first time, is Rhys's heroine who does not have to search for security in a male for monetary reasons. Sasha, therefore, can well afford to be genuine in her emotional responses to Gigolo. She can even patronize him, as she has the money he needs. But Rene does not want the charity. He forces himself on her sexually, which she resists. Here the roles are reversed and Rene goes away. But his "gaiety and ebullience have lifted her out of herself," (93) and even if it is for a short while, she becomes extremely extrovert and cheerful. As Rene departs, Sasha's original bitterness and cynicism get revived and she finds herself once again, in deep depression. Lying lonely in her room, she seems to pronounce her acceptance of life as it comes. It is due to this that Arnold Davidson calls *Good Morning, Midnight*, Rhys's "most affirmative novel."[7]

Sasha, later on, stares into the older man's eyes only to "despise another poor devil of a human being for the last time." (159) It seems to be such a philosophical, resigned attitude wherein as "human being" as if saying in blessing, "forgive them God for they do not know what they do." Very benevolently, she puts her "arms round him and pull[ed] him down on the bed saying: "yes-yes-yes. . . ." (159) Ford Maddox Ford rightly said that Jean Rhys had "a bias of admiration. . . . And of sympathy," for everyone that includes even the criminals and prostitutes. (49)

Good Morning, Midnight is an expansion of the thematic range of previous novels—the emotional life of woman. Vulnerability and unprotectiveness of Rhys's heroines make them the victim of "the malignancy of the faceless and nameless oppressor." (86) These women hopefully look forward to men for their protection and put themselves at the mercy of those who have

none. Rhys tells us that Sasha is "Like one of those straws which float round the edge of whirlpool and is gradually sucked into center, where everything is stagnant, everything is calm." (36)

The very title of the novel has its source in Emily Dickinson's poem, that makes it suggestive of the female agony:

> Good Morning, Midnight;
> I'm coming home.
> Day got tired of me—
> How could I of him
>
> Sunshine was a sweet place.
> I liked to stay—
> But Morn did not want me now
> So good night, Day!

Sasha's life process in the novel, as Elizabeth Abel puts it, is the case of "progressive degeneration"[8] that overtakes all Rhys's heroines, which began with Marza Zelli, continued with Julia Martin and Anna Morgan to reach upto Sasha Jensen. Sasha till now has been considered by men, like Rhys's other heroines, as sexually available. But now her plight is still desperate, she is even eager to pay, if only to maintain her self-respect. Rene becomes a painful reminder of her past, "the cruel, reversed mimicry of her own life,"[9] as Mellown terms it. She, therefore, assumes a position that formerly males in her life had assumed. It is Sasha's attempt at the reversal of female role. With Rene in her arms, she feels, for a moment, she had everything she thought she had lost—love, youth, spring, happiness; and all on her own terms. But does it really last? Thought of her reputation and growing years suddenly induce in her feelings of indifference and loneliness. Rene does pick up the cash from her dressing table, but only very nominal, not all of it. Later on, Sasha realizes Gigolo's honesty and wishes him back. Waiting for Rene in the darkness of her room, she gives to the older man what was to be Rene's share. 'Yes' to the older man has been arrived at through

'No' to the younger one. It is through the rejection of life that the state of salvation has to be attained.

Davidson calls Rhys's female protagonists "accommodation sufferers" who "knowingly participate in their victimization." (134) They keep crying over the injustice of society but continue to fall into the trap. Defeated woman's psychology in Rhys is too complex to be assessed. We can either analyze the victimizer's angle and understand limitations of the later, or we assess the victimizer from the victim's point of view. Both, however, betray a bias of some kind, but what is obvious is that there always is some kind of tyranny in every privilege. Society that enjoys the privilege of male orientation, naturally enough acts tyrannically towards weaker individuals. Davidson concludes the argument effectively: "Sexual politics and class oppressions both naturally produce their natural victims. What is 'natural' cannot be helped." (139)

NOTES

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3. Jean Rhys, *Smile Please* (Oxford: ISIS Large Print, 1966), p. 17.
4. Helen Carr, *Jean Rhys* (U.K.: Northcote House, 1966), p. 17.
5. Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (England: Penguin, 1978), p. 120.
6. Thomas P. Staley, *Jean Rhys: A Critical Study* (London: MacMillan, 1919), p. 89.
7. Arnold. E. Davidson, *Jean Rhys* (New York: Fvedrik Ungar, 1985), p. 93.
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In Defence of New Critical Historicism

RAVI KUMAR SINHA

The most pronounced charge against the New Criticism as practised in England and America during the Forties and Fifties, relates to its 'anti-historical' or 'historical' approach to literary issues. Some of the New Critical pronouncements—that a work of art obtains by sheer control of literary techniques an 'autotelic' and 'ontological' status, the experience that it seeks to communicate is unique and complete in itself and that its 'truth' refers to no order but to itself—have not been taken favourably by many writers. Lionel Trilling, Philip Ray, Robert Adams, Stanly Edgar Hyman and even Rene Wellek who otherwise is sympathetic to many of the new critical assumptions, complain that in the new critical system, 'history' is almost completely neglected.

However, the charge itself, ironically enough, seems anti-historical because it does not take into account the fact that the New Criticism is wedded to the contextual realm of its time and place. The New Criticism intended to rescue literary sensibility from 'logical positivism' and 'scientific relativism' and literary texts from their reductive reading practised by such critics as were influenced by the historicism of Marx and Angels or by the psycho-analysis of Freud and Jung.

Critics influenced by 'historicism' of Marx and Angels propose to establish "a universal point of view through which the meaning and value of any particular event is determined."[1] They recommend historical 'reconstruction' by amassing information about the social, political, religious and intellectual background of the age in which the writer produces his work. They gather all these kinds of information that must hope to persuade, they offer evidence that undertakes to prove; against the dogma of auton-

omy, they offer the arguments of origin and consonance."[2]

This new 'historicism' based on the scientific concepts of determinism and relativism has not been found critically valid by the New Critics because of its failure to account for some of the passionately individual utterances like Emile Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. There is no denying the fact that literature forges a constant interrelation with all other activities of man: social, political, religious and intellectual. But on this account, literature cannot be regarded a passive reflection or copy of these activities.

The applicability of the method of historical reconstruction is not tenable on two accounts: Firstly, it is an indisputable fact of psychology that in literary criticism we are bound to have a point of view. Even if this point of view is controlled by historical knowledge, it remains undeniably our own. Wimsatt contends: "Our judgement of the past cannot be discontinuous with our experience or insulated from it. To evaluate the past we have to penetrate it with our own intelligence."[3]

Secondly, in the process of historical reconstruction, the capability for 'transportation,' often demanded by the Romantic critics from the critic and reader alike, is rather difficult to cultivate. It is because "feeling is so inseparable from the pulse of immediate experience that when its temporal context is altered the feeling itself is lost."[4] Thus, the business of historical reconstructionism is often uncertain and unreliable. Moreover, the discoveries of the past, even when accurate and reliable, are not always a relevant help to the true task of literary criticism. Instead of illuminating some aspect of the work of art, it is more likely to distract attention from the true literary problem. Many studies on Shakespeare and some recent studies on the Romantic poets amply illustrate the point. In such studies, the work of art becomes "too easily an excuse for extended excursions, into all conceivable realms of cultural history."[5]

The above arguments do not suggest that the New Critics evince any aversion to historical awareness or historical insight. Contrary to the popular assumptions, they are always willing to accept the relevant assistance that historical knowledge about a writer and his works is likely to offer to their critical pursuit.

Ransom, though he generally treats pure historical scholarship as merely an aid to the critical evaluation of a work of art, asserts that the critic must know "the precise beliefs and ways of thought that were extant in the day of the poem's composition."[6] Even Cleanth Brooks, who has been charged with having adopted a 'monist' approach to literature, treats literary criticism and literary scholarship as "natural allies" in their concern to understand the literary phenomena. He accepts that these two "may at point coalesce."[7]

Moreover, assistance from literary and historical scholarship does not mean that the critic should adopt two approaches to literature: one based on historical relativism and the other, on exclusively aesthetic criteria. He should cultivate a proper critical attitude so that he may be in a position to use the assistance in illuminating some aspect of the work. For this, he is required to assimilate the literary and historical scholarship into the critical perspective. This is what Ransom means when he refers to the "accuracy of Eliot's scholarship and its pointed application to the niceties of criticism."[8] Instances of how 'scholarship' could be turned to 'pointed critical use' are available in the critical essays of Blackmur, as contained in his *Language as Gesture*. Allen Tate has also provided us with such an instance in his essay on Emily Dickinson. He observes: "Although the intellectual climate into which she was born in 1830, had, as all times have, the features of a transition, the period was also a major crisis culminating in the war, in New England as well as in the South, spiritual crises were definitely minor until the first world war."[9] Tate's essay, thus, exemplifies the New Critical concept of the application of historical information to the elucidation of the character of a writer and the essential qualities of his work.

It is important to note that the New Critics were also known by names such as the 'Fugitives' and the 'Agrarians'—these terms which clearly have extra-literary 'socio-cultural' associations, situate them on an altogether different plane. Ransom and Tate and later on Warren and Brooks were troubled by questions of tradition, order and stable society. They followed the line of T.S. Eliot in their concern with the 'evil' consequences of the

spirit of modernism and scientism. Modern man seemed to have lost his capacity for total experience. 'Logical positivism' and 'scientism' incapacitated his 'sensibility' to appreciate the particularity and individuality of life and nature. The New Critics were concerned to restore the 'cognitive' and cultural significance of 'poetry' (or, literature, in general) because literature alone can meet the new challenges of life.

In terms of critical approach this meant to see, as Cleanth Brooks would say, "what residuum, if any, is left after we have referred the poem (or text) to its cultural matrix." This was to examine the way the text transcended its historical limits and achieved what J.C. Ransom would claim "an elemental, cosmic and eternal appeal." The New Critics, in fact, were never averse to taking relevant assistance that historical knowledge about a writer and his age was likely to offer. They only demanded that such knowledge should be assimilated into proper critical perspective.

NOTES

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3. W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., *The Verbal Icon* (London, 1970), p. 258.
4. Melvin Rader, "Art and History," *Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, Winter 1967, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, p. 159.
5. Edgar Lohnar, "The Intrinsic Method: Some Reconsiderations," *The Disciplines of Criticism*, ed. D. Peter, G. Thomas and Lowry Nelson, Jr. (New Haven and London, 1963), p. 155.
6. J.C. Ransom, *The World's Body*, pp. 339-40.
7. Cleanth Brooks, "Literary Criticism: Poet, Poem and Reader," in *Perspectives in Contemporary Criticism*, ed. S.N. Crebstein (New York, 1963), p. 97.
8. J.C. Ransom, *The New Criticism* (Norfolk, 1941), p. 135.
9. Allen Tate, *On the Limits of Poetry* (New York, 1948), p. 198.

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Corbett: The Conservationist

REKHA MAHAJAN

In the story of Indian civilization, the awareness of wild life is as old as the rocks; the myths and legends, the epics and scriptures, the sculptor and architecture, all suggest an appreciation of these humble denizens of the forest. The Indus valley people immortalized some animals on their seals. In the ancient Hindu texts, the inhabitants of the forest were recognized in the form of Jatayu, the golden deer and the 'Vanars' (monkeys) of the *Ramayana*. The Buddhist Jatakas refer to the various births of Buddha. The fact that Buddha appeared as an animal in his previous incarnations shows the importance attached to animal life in Buddhist thought. This finds expression in the stone railings around the Sanchi Stupa. During the time of the Mauryas, animals appear in treatises on statecraft and in fables. In Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, severe punishment is prescribed for trapping, killing or molesting deer, bison, birds and fish in protected areas. The great Mauryan emperor Ashoka, in his fifth pillar edict, emphasizes the same theme i.e. giving protection to fish, forests and animals. It was during the Gupta period i.e. in the first half of the first millennium, that animals were introduced as characters in stories—the famous *Panchatantra*. This same awareness is conveyed in some works of Kalidasa, who too belonged to the same period.

With the establishment of the British Raj, understanding of wildlife took an entirely different dimension. The 'Shikari,' the hunter with his gun, did the greatest damage. 'Shikar' expeditions incidentally happened to be one of the greatest attractions of the colonial era. Ceremonial, royal shikars for big game trophies were arranged to celebrate vice-regal visits. Although certain laws were passed to protect wild life, the damage done was

considerable. However, it was not all that bad, the importance of wild life from the scientific point of view was recognised along with an appreciation of its richness as conveyed by men like Jim Corbett.

In 1944, Jim Corbett, born and brought up in Naini Tal, created bestseller out of his adventures with the *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*: stories about how he tracked and shot man-eaters in the Garhwall hills during the early years of the last century. Corbett's "Jungle Lore," deals quite simply with the close relationship he shared with Nature. He learnt from big brother Tom how to handle and fire a gun. He set himself, even as a young boy, to gain an intimacy with the jungle and developed a rare understanding of the sights and sounds of the forest. He also acquired that unique combination of speed and accuracy with the rifle.

Corbett however reached a turning point in the 1930s, when having taken three officers out for a duck shoot, he was 'sickened by the senseless slaughter of 300 birds. ("Introduction, *Jim Corbett's India*, 6) Reminiscent of King Ashoka at the Battle of Kalinga where after he resolved never again to shoot an animal except for food or if it was a 'dangerous' beast.

Corbett had a great compassion for the animals he shot. He understood why tigers became man-eaters. In his 'Author's Note' to *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, he defines a man-eater as a tiger that has been compelled through stress of circumstances beyond its control, to adopt a diet alien to it. (9) The stress of the circumstances is mostly wounds and, sometimes, old age. The wound that has caused a particular tiger to take to man-eating might be the result of the tiger having lost his temper when killing a porcupine or the result of a carelessly fired shot and failure to recover the wounded animal.

Leopards, however, Corbett says, become man-eaters for entirely different reasons. Although very beautiful, they are scavengers and will eat any dead thing they find in the forest. During epidemics, when the number of dead waiting to be disposed off rises sharply, the hill people simply place a live coal in the mouth of the deceased and cast the body into the valley below. It is extremely easy for a leopard to acquire a taste for human

flesh in such circumstances, particularly when his natural food is scarce.

Greater damage however has been done by the destruction of the very habitat of the tigers. Corbett is well aware that the felling of trees and denudation of forests disorganized the normal life of the jungles. Extensive denudation of forests to meet the increasing demands for fuel wood and timber for domestic and industrial purposes, encroachments by mining and mineral exploration activities have led to a great loss of forest cover.

Corbett draws our attention not only to the indiscriminate felling of trees but also to the collection of minor forest produce which is responsible for the destruction of forests, In "Jungle Lore," Corbett describes the foothills of the Himalayas where the forests were "as Nature made it" for there was little timber of commercial value.

There were however, Shishum trees which provided the hillmen with the best timber for furniture and cartwheels. The red runi berries provided the kamala powder used for dying wool and also boiled in mustard oil was used to treat rheumatism. The khair trees in addition to providing the villagers with plough shares, also provided catechu and the dye known as khaki used for dying cloth and fishing nets. The dhak (Butea Giondosa) trees produce the ruby coloured gum used for dying silk. The sweet jelly found in the seed pods of the amaltas (cassia fistula) is used as a laxative. Kapoc, the white silk-cotton of the samal trees, is used in life belts.

The collection of these products in itself does not disrupt forest life greatly. It is the method employed, the thoughtless stripping and cutting down of branches. Sometimes whole trees, in an attempt to rake in as much in as little time as possible, has caused the damage. The forest is given no chance to regenerate itself.

In the "Thak Man-Eater," Corbett gives a vivid description of Thak village. This village had been gifted hundreds of years ago by the Chand Rajas of Kumaon to the priests who served the Purnagiri shrines. From a collection of grass huts, the village had grown into a very prosperous settlement. The land was fertile

and the temples brought in considerable revenue.

Temples are still the most important source of employment for priests, temple owners and others worshipping the deity. Pilgrims and tourists constitute a major chunk of human traffic through the jungles. The economics of the region depends to a large extent upon them. Recent development like the promotion of tourism without adequate measures of conservation have led to the degradation and destruction of the environment.

In *Man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayag*, Corbett describes the beautiful pilgrim road, starting from Hardwar, through Rishikesh and across the Lachman Jhula over the Ganges to the age-old shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath. The temples are popular and attract pilgrims and tourists from all over the world. They also provide the socio-economic cultural base of the people.

Corbett spent 32 years in regular pursuit of man-eaters. He killed the Rudraprayag leopard at the age of 52 and the Thak man-eater at 63. Neither his energy nor his courage had flagged over the years. By the year 1938, Corbett had renounced the gun in favour of the camera to shoot tigers. Only when he was convinced that the tiger was indeed killing human beings, not accidentally, or in anger, but for food, did Corbett agree to shoot it. He found far greater pleasure in taking a photograph than in acquiring a trophy. As he said, "while the photograph is of interest to all lovers of wild life, the trophy is only of interest to the individual who acquired it."

Corbett was an environmentalist long before it was recognized as a science. He is a conservationist when he appeals to the people of his village, Haldwani, 'not to betray the sacred trust that is a country's fauna.' (*Jim Corbett's India*, 212)

According to Corbett, more and more tigers are being killed each year due to the balance in nature being disturbed by unrestricted slaughter of game and due to the tigers being driven out of their natural habitats.

Today much of the forest, where Corbett roamed, is gone. The foothills of the Himalayas, the Shivaliks, are bare, denuded of trees, ravaged by erosion, almost empty and devoid of tigers

and other game. The Himalayas themselves are being described as the most threatened ecosystems of the world.

Corbett entreaties us to get to know, understand and use to mutual advantage the riches of our wild world. In language beautiful as the land he describes, Corbett lays before us the panorama of Nature's bounty, exhorting us to protect and conserve it for future generations.

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Jim Corbett's India, selected and edited by R.E. Hawkins.

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In Response to the Third Universe: Issues Relating to Translation

NISHAMANI KAR

At a lecture, the noted writer Isaac Bashevis Singer was once asked what he would do, if he were to meet God face to face, to which he retorted forthwith that he would ask God to collaborate with him on some translations as he would not trust God to do it Himself.[1] In fact, translation, by the very nature of work involved, is more difficult and complex. It is an act of inter-lingual communication that is essential for the creation of rapports among different linguistic groups; while bridging the gap not merely between languages, but also literature and culture. While we are on the threshold of the next millennium and there is large scale explosion and dissemination of knowledge, ideas, opinions and information, there seems a strong case for developing translation as a regular discipline, more so in a multi-lingual context like one of ours.

It has been observed that in all histories of the world, translation as culture preceded national change; the Italian, French or English Renaissance saw a spate of translations flooding the mind of its people towards change. To create true spirit of India, for that matter, translations of not only our ancient Sanskrit classics, but in all our regional languages be made available to the people at large. It is paradoxical that English has made it possible for an Indian text to be read or, what Sujit Mukherjee says, 'discovered' in translation more widely than it could be in any other language earlier. We admit, English may not be certainly the most suitable language for translating Indian literary texts, but it offers "the widest area of discovery through and in translation."[2] This, perhaps, resulted in the proliferation of translation in the 60s and 70s from regional languages into English:

Thakazhi Sivasankar Pillai's *Chemmeen*, translated by V.K. Narayana Menon (1964); F.R. Allchin's *The Petition to Ram* (1965)—a translation of Tulsi Das's *Vinayapatrika*; Deben Bhattacharya's *Love Songs of Vidyapati* (1963) and *Love Songs of Chandidas* (1967); A.K. Ramanujan's *The Interior Landscape* (1967); Bibhutibhusan's *Pather Panchali* translated by T.W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherjee (1968); Premchand's *Godan*, translated by G. Roadarmel (1969); George L. Hart's *The Poem of Ancient Tamil* (1975); U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara*, translated by A.K. Ramanujan (1976); Prabhakar Machwe's *Tukaram's Poems* (1977) and the latest, Gopinath-Mohanty's *Paraja*, translated by Bikram K. Das (1987). In the same stride, a number of publishers took active interest and remained instrumental in producing a number of books in translation: *Hymns of Guru Nanak* (Sangam Books, 1978), *Speaking of Siva* (Penguin Books, 1973), *In Praise of Krishna* (Anchor Books, 1967) are a few cases in sight. Sahitya Akademi, in its effort in a similar direction, gives us the reading experience not only of isolated individual authors and their works, but it also helps to flesh out a sense of regional language literatures. However, all these give us a notion of the linear development of any particular regional language and through it we begin to be aware of Pan-Indian lateral connections.

Through works in translation, a sense of regional Indian identity, of parallels and connections between regional languages, can be established. For example, eastern Indian identity can be realized, if the parallels and connections among Bengali, Oriya and Assamese can be studied, which can only be pursued through a study of works in translation. Similarly, through works in translation, a sense of southern Indian identity, of parallels and connections between the southern languages has begun to be established; particularly between Malayalam, Tamil and Kannada. Lakshmi Holmstrom, therefore, concludes: "It would certainly not be possible to chart these new maps of modern literary histories without having read works in translation."[3] Now the question is: What, then, is a good translation? What new functions have been bestowed over the years on the act of translating?

This short paper analyses in detail the issues relating to translation and how effectively a literary text yields its full meaning through this activity.

A good translation may be described as one which contains the spirit and ideas of the original. The commonly understood senses of translation in India are *rupantara* ('changed in form'/ 'in changed form') and *anuvad* ('speaking after'/ 'following after') and neither of these terms demands fidelity to the original. But the triumph of translation lies in the extent of appropriation into translator's own language or, what we may say, the naturalization by transfer of an alien quantity. We can here take the example of numerous Indian editions of *The Bible* in most of the leading vernaculars, which was ordained by the need felt by Christian missionaries. The primary intention in such an effort was, of course, religious, but the effect is significantly literary; if we take note of the work's domestication into the native culture. Basing on such a realization, Tagore, perhaps, accepted translation as new writing. His English *Gitanjali* was rather a pale shadow of the original Bengali *Gitanjali*, which was later raised by Reverend Edward Thompson, who could discover the wide disparities between the original and the English version.[4] Obviously, the question is not one of denigrating the uniqueness of the English *Gitanjali*, but exploring something spectacular. We can now assume the play of a subtle reality in the process of the author endeavouring to be his own translator; he perhaps went beyond the bounds of translation and achieved something which must be regarded as 'transformation.' This case refers to the prevailing Western practice, which swings back and forth between close fidelity (to the original) and utter freedom (from original). Modern Indian practice, influenced unavowedly by the West, also swings between the said extremes, but it fails to maintain the sharp distinctions Western literature generally makes between original writings and writings derived (by translation/ adoption/ plagiarism) from other texts. Let us now analyse this issue in detail. We encounter different versions of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* in Indian regional languages, which prove to be self-contained and complete literary works, irrespective of their

sources. But when literary histories tell us that Sarala Das wrote the *Mahabharata* in Oriya, or Pampa wrote the same in Kannada or that Kashiram Das in Bengali, we are suddenly conscious that such writings are not divorced from the act of the original composition, i.e. Sanskrit *Mahabharata*. New literary texts derived from *itihasa* or *purana* sources, for example Vishnudev Khandekar's *Yayati* adopted from the *Vishnu Purana*, are obvious examples of this process. In all these cases, we confront the practice taken up by the authors using an existing story and making it to suit their own purposes. This may not be accepted as translation proper, but it can never be approached as an original composition either, as much allowance is made in them to suit contemporary cultural mores and to accommodate the current literary preferences of the language into which the text is being rendered.

Should we call it 'transcreation'? It is because, we have noted how there is the mingling of translation with large measure of interpretation. In his endeavour to present ancient texts, P. Lal adopts this method of seeking maximum readability within the confines of faithful rendering. He believes that absolute literal translation is impossible in literature, especially with the ancient texts. Therefore, the translator has to take ample freedom in order to transcreate, as he has an identified audience in mind. In the introductory note to *Shakuntala*, he confides: "The translator must edit, reconcile and transmute, his job in many ways becomes largely a matter of transcreation."[5] Of course, Lal's method carries the onus of criticism on the ground that it permits excessive divergence from the original, while encouraging liberty to the point of practically abandoning it; a suitable tool indeed in the hands of translators, less scrupulous and less sensitive. Yet, translation and transcreation are mutually exclusive modes and whether one translates or transcreates, the original work is renewed by being rendered into another language. In this context, the words of George Steiner appear relevant. While deliberating on the aim of translation, he states: "At its best the peculiar synthesis of conflict and complicity between a poem and its translation into another poem creates the impression of a third language, of a medium of communicative energy, which somehow

reconciles both languages in a tongue deeper, more comprehensive than either."[6] Since it aims at liberating a text from the confines of spatio-temporal and cultural cage, it must capture the elusive, indefinable aspect called the spirit of the original. To put it differently, in the interaction between the source language and the target language, a third element is born, an alien element that shines through the target language and lends a presence of its own to the translation. Steiner calls it "a third and active presence showing the lineaments of that pure speech which precedes and underlies both languages." (89)

Inevitably, the translator's ability and aptitude are of vital importance and he should have the bilingual sensibility with adequate command over the source and target language. He should also apply his mind thoroughly and fully, while actualizing the traffic of ideas from one language to the other, to the extent that the translation must give the impression of a crystal pool through which the land-mass underneath can be perceived without being aware of the surface water. But these pioneers of the said 'third universe' are much maligned, they are not taken very kindly: often viewed as 'traitors' (Italian proverb), a busybody with vanity (Shelley), thieves and sellers who champion the cause of nineteenth century European colonial enterprise.

Grave doubts have been expressed about the feasibility of translations of literary works, especially poetry. It has been maintained that it is not possible for anyone to combine in another language the thoughts, emotions, the style and form of an epic, a lyric poem, a poetic drama or even a prose novel. Coming to poetry proper, all poetry does not express emotion, sensibility or awareness of truth; sometimes poetry can be simply an unusual juxtaposition of words or imagery. A poet might sometimes manipulate words as a painter uses daubs of paint, interesting not for their meaning, but for their coloration. Translation in such cases would be most difficult. Again, the organisation of content and form, which are harmonized into a compact and organic whole, is typical of every individual poem and in no case can that be captured in the target language. Therefore, he comments: "A translation in verse . . . seems to me something absurd and

impossible" (Victor Hugo); "Poetry is what is lost in translation" (Robert Frost) and "What is translation? On a platter/ A poet's pale and glaring head,/ A parrot's screech, a monkey's chatter,/ And profanation of the dead." (Vladimir Nabokov)

Taking these views to their logical extreme, we can now ask whether translation as a branch of literary enterprise be let down for ever, whether it should be taken as 'an art of fascinating failure.'[7] Singer saves us from the dilemma with the admission: "My translators are my best critics. . . . Also, translation undresses a literary work, shows it in its true nakedness. . . . Translation tells the bitter truth."[8] It is, of course, true that a translation which is at once artistic and faithful is very rare, the verbal organisation is bound to be lost, the source structure of a language or its phonology can never be reproduced in another language, for languages have their typical nuances and stylistic, syntactical and structural parameters. The idiom of one language cannot be satisfactorily replaced in another language, there can either be loss or gain. The purists, therefore, argue that translation is a literary impertinence. Should we then be carried away by such arguments? Of course, no, and we have to translate in order to communicate with other linguistic groups.

Our major concern, thus, is the dialectical clash between the claims of grace and fidelity. Dryden effectively conveyed the difficulty involved, He compared the very act to dancing on ropes with fettered legs. The early Roman writers, while translating numerous Greek words into their mother tongue, cared more for aesthetic excellence. The translators of the *Bible* insisted on fidelity on the ground that any deviation would amount to profaning and prove to be sacrilegious. All these trickle down to the point whether translating is a creative or an imitative art. It is not creative, as it does not follow the inspiration of the translator, but rather undertakes to create in the manner of another, that which is already created. It is not imitative either, for it must not only convey the idea of the work translated, but must also transform it. The translator is expected to be creative; he should be 'a maker' and, at the same time, he is supposed to submit to the reality of the writer whom he is translating. Hence, the art of

translation is a matter of continuous and conscious association with the original, a meditative discerning through which "two spheres of languages move closer together through the medium of the translator to fuse at the moment of the contact, into a new form, a new gestalt."[9] Of course, perfect fusion may not always be reached, but the very process contributes to the cause of a perceptual reorganization of the field. Therefore, it should be, what Gokak calls 'our legitimate concern,'[10] especially on the part of those of us, who are gifted with temporary visionary gleams, to take up translation as a mission in our bid to promote the traffic of ideas and values across the contours of spatio-temporal context and thereby, champion the cause of creative continuity.

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Humanism: A Quest for New Paradigm in Modern American Literature

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Humanism, a profound philosophy, has dominated the literary horizon of modern American literature. Humanism, in its strict sense, is the Renaissance literary cult of the so-called New Learning, a revival of Greek and Roman studies. "It was 'new' mainly in that it approached the classics for their own sake, rather than for their use to Christianity, and in that it believed that such studies, rather than religion, were the highest expression of human values and a means to developing the free responsible individual."[1] The term derives from the fifteenth century *Italian humanista* or teacher of the *Studia humanitatis*, or humanities. Humanism, in its broad sense, is a concept as old as classical Greece and as modern as the twentieth century.

The basic ideals of Renaissance humanism, summed up in the dictum of the Greek philosopher Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things,"[2] are a part of the rich legacy of Greco-Roman antiquity. That heritage was transmitted to the western world partly through Byzantium and by Arabs in Spain but chiefly by the medieval church. Literary Humanism took firm root in the early Middle Ages and was given new vigour in the twelfth century. It has remained a vital ingredient of western thought. In the eighteenth century Enlightenment, Humanist Rationalism, Individualism, and Secularism were given a new dimension by their association with political and scientific outlook. Not until the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, in response to the dominant role of science and in reaction against the growth of naturalism did humanism reappear as an articulate movement. It assumed a bewildering variety of forms. Scientific

humanism aims to supplant religion and make scientific knowledge the instrument of freeing man and enhancing his life. To this end, science and technology must be humanized and socialized, and man must be educated to respond positively to rapid change.

Humanism in all its expressions, considering education as man's single and most important enterprise, means education in the humanities no less than in science and technology. Thus, the living tradition of human knowledge and wisdom alone can give direction to scientific development and prepare people for a change.

Humanism, in its strict sense, is a study in the Renaissance of ideas of the ancient Greeks and Romans not concerned with religious principles. As the highest expression of human values meant to develop free and responsible individual, it emerged as a philosophy of mankind. But "Humanism" in general is not merely a philosophy. It is for the average men and women a way of thinking and doing for a happy and useful life, concerned with the dignity and worth of individual, and his capacity for truth and virtue. It believes in the goodness of man subscribing to the welfare of the whole community. It is not a new dogma, but is developed as a system of beliefs and human standards subjected to testing in the light of newly discovered facts and more rigorous reasoning.

Renaissance humanism, concerned with the dignity and position of man in the Universe, and becoming part of the study of classical imaginative and philosophical literature, as against natural science, emphasized moral and practical rather than purely aesthetic values. It insisted on the primacy of reason as opposed to the instinctual appetites and the animal passions, in ordering human life. Many humanists also stressed the full need for development of man's diverse powers—physical and mental, artistic and moral, as opposed to merely technical or specialized training. And the contemporary humanist has often based the truths on human experiences and human nature rather than on the truths and sanctions of supernatural creed.

Matthew Arnold, the great exponent of humanism in the Vic-

torian period, strongly defended the significance of human studies in general education. Many of Arnold's prominent studies are adaptations of the tenets of the older humanism—his view, for instance that culture is a perfection "of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality" and that it consists of "harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature,"[3] his emphasis on knowing "the best that is known and thought in the world" and his assumption that much of what is best is in the classical writers and the conception of poetry as essentially a criticism of life.

Robert Frost's poem, "The Tuft of Flowers," that speaks of the spirit of human participation, reflects some sort of Renaissance humanism:

> Men work together, I told him from the heart
> Whether they work together or apart.[4]

And Robert Penn Warren, like Renaissance humanists, speaks of the reality of evil in human nature, and presents in his narratives the 'original sin' through some of his most memorable characters and episodes, for example, in the two hatchet-wielders, Lilburn Lewis and Big Billie Potts. He has dramatized self-discovery and makes his character realize his deeper self enclosed like a beast in a cage.

In Ethical Humanism, human interest is preponderant. It has emerged as a movement for survival and social justice of minorities. Frost is a humanist par excellence and has centred his world view on man himself. His is the ethical humanism. Like Wordsworth, he is affected by 'the still sad music of humanity.' His poem "Mending Wall" expressed his philosophy of brotherhood and tolerance, the twin virtues of honest living, against the neighbour's dogmatic assertion that "good fences make good neighbours." The poem is a symbolic interpretation of the modern situation where national boundaries are fast disintegrating facilitating international understanding, though at the same time in certain quarters, militant nationalism is also showing up its head, and thus damaging the spirit of internationalism. We do not like

to be taught that we must not be islands unto ourselves, though we prefer understanding and universal brotherhood to tension and misery. This seeming paradox is at the root of human existence, which is the theme of "Mending Wall."

Philosophical Humanism is sometimes used for pragmatism, as elucidated by Charles S. Pierce and William James. William James has contended that since pragmatism is concerned with man and his action and since all philosophical endeavours are connected with man and mankind, that the term philosophical humanism could be termed as pragmatism, even though some of its ideas are opposed to humanism.

Sociological humanism tries to define close human relations between families, common members of small community, etc. and their relation to larger impersonal groups. The ideals of sociological humanism are achieved when loyalty, pity, mutual service, and love outline the relationship between members of small group. In this respect, sociological humanism becomes almost identical with what is more generally called humanitarianism.

Regarding man's relations with his fellow beings, Frost said that these relations should be imbued with the spirit of service and dedication. Since human life is not perfect on this planet, human relations should be guided by the principles of 'love and need.' Most of Eliot's poems are set in some metropolis, the hub of modern individual life.

Socialist humanism is consistently materialistic and historical. It is based on the working class society, resisting the influence of upper classes and pinning hopes for the progress of humanity on the development of consciousness, organisation and power of that social force and on the success of working class struggles. Socialist humanism believes firmly in the power of intelligence and clean cultivation of consciousness and believes no less strongly than any other creed in human decency, dignity and fellowship. But just as it is rational without being rationalistic, so it is moral without falling into empty moralizing. A genuine and progressive morality cannot be separated from the actual conditions, contending forces and basic issues of class society.

The ultimate aim of the new socialist order is to bring about conditions that will make both individual and the entire class become conscious of the new milieu.

Liberal Humanism is essentially liberal, expressing the ethical attitude of middle class individuals violating religious practice progressivism. Like Marxism it is humanistic in approach, and deals with the middle-class workers's common interests and also defending science and modern education. But liberal humanism, strictly speaking, is a philosophy of the working class, either in origin or in intent. In fact, it explicitly repudiates any philosophy founded upon the facts of economic life but upon allegedly universal ethical standards which are binding upon all people because of their common human nature. This viewpoint conforms to the abstract individualism that is an axiom of the ideology of bourgeois democracy.

Religious Humanism is a movement developed from unitarianism and is best defined in the *Humanist Manifesto* 1933: "Religion consists of those actions, purpose and experiences which are humanly significant. Nothing human is alien to the religious." There is no metaphysical motivation for ethical behaviour. Anyway of life, as Christian humanists think, is based on human values; even future is not held out as a reward or a punishment for ethical behaviour.

Literary Humanism, an intellectual movement, started in 1910 in America, popularly known as 'New Humanism' was pronounced and propagated by Irving Babbit and Paul Elmer More. Stuart Sherman, Norman Forester and the rest of their group later became known as 'the New Humanists.' They contended that man's free will is guided by intuition and he might strive for his own progress, and his community unhampered either by theological or scientific determinism. Thus he has to fight against the so-called modern mechanistic materialism. It is logical to say that these ideas of classical art and the philosophy of antiquity as human expressions of their convictions also constitute the cultural value system. Further the New Humanists had also objected to the romanticism and materialistic naturalism of the enlightenment, since both made men become irresponsible.

Foerster opined that "in its broadest signification, it denotes a belief that the proper study of mankind is man, and that this study should enable mankind to perceive and realize its humanity. Since man may be conceived as being on three planes, the natural, the human and the religious, the content of the middle term will frequently tend to be invaded by that of the extremes—the word humanism should be conformed to a working philosophy seeking to make a resolute distinction between man and nature and between man and the divine."

T.S. Eliot in "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt" (1928) and "Second Thoughts about Humanism" (1929) attempts to refute the views of Babbitt and Forester on this vital doctrine 'humanism' pronouncing his own formulations about its nature and function.

Existentialism preaches that the glory of the free individual lies in rebelling against the tragic human condition even though defeat is inevitable. A major voice in existentialism that has deeply affected the recent critical theory is that of Martin Heidegger whose monumental but seemingly contrary writings on 'Dasein' (existence), time, death, and poetic language profoundly influenced structuralistic and deconstructive criticism in France and later in the United States.

Humanism places humanity, rather than God or nature, in the centre of consideration and makes the lot and destiny of our species on earth its prime concern. The materialist Ludwig Feverbach expressed the priorities saying, "My doctrine or view can therefore be summed up in two words 'nature' and 'man.' The being which, in my thinking man presupposes, the being which is the 'cause' or 'ground' of man to which he owes his origin and existence is 'not God'—a mystical, indeterminate, ambiguous word—but 'nature,' a clear, sensuous, unambiguous word and thing. And the being in whom nature has become personal, conscious and rational is man. To my mind, unconscious nature is the eternal, untreated being—first, that is, in time but not in rank, physically, but not morally; man with his consciousness second in time but in rank the first."[10]

The twentieth century existentialists have made the sense-

lessness of human life the corner stone of their creed. They proceed from the premise that there is no objective basis for discerning any meaningful direction to human development. They destruct both natural and social science and disparage their findings as guide to life. G.E. Moore, the parochial Cambridge philosopher asserted in Principia Ethica that the most valuable experiences of human beings are the pleasures of friendship and the enjoyment of beautiful objects. A conception of the highest good that does not equip humanity and thereby to rationalize human relations so that all people can be friends and create as well as enjoy things of beauty.

American humanism as envisaged by Howard Mumford Jones conveys that people in America became more self-conscious and aware of human dignity rights, liberty and fraternity, pursuing real happiness. In the words of Howard Mumford Jones, the new republic of the United States became "the best single gateway . . . to the manifold hopes than stirring the minds of men and reason and justice could be substituted for authority and superstition in guiding human affairs."[11]

There is a great deal in the American tradition that is fundamentally humanistic in character. America's belief in democracy and progress, its buoyant optimism and idealism, its relevance on science and invention, all fit into the Humanistic pattern. Current Humanism reaffirms the spirit of cosmopolitanism, of international friendship and essential brotherhood of man. The cosmopolitan outlook of this profoundly democratic and militant humanism was best exemplified in the life and work of Tom Panine, Franklin's protege, who profoundly proclaimed, "The world is my country and to do good is my religion."

Humanism has finally emerged as a profound philosophy of mankind. Corliss Lamont says: "Humanism believes in the beauty of love and the love of beauty. It exults in the pure magnificence of external Nature. All the many sided possibilities for good in human living . . . the Humanist would weave into a sustained pattern of happiness under the guidance of reason."

NOTES

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Stylistics: An Approach to Contemporary Literary Theories

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What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.

T.S. Eliot "Four Quartets"

In literary studies these days there is an endless debate about stylistics and literary theories. Numerous theories seem to have eroded the boundaries of disciplines and subjects. The basic problem is whether the students/teachers of literature should or should not concern theory/theories. But which theory/theories? They argue that theory creates confusion. Most of them seemingly believe that there is a rift between stylistic analysis and theoretical interpretation. It is also argued that an analysis of the language of a text requires reading and interpreting it; while conversely reading and interpreting a text itself is a kind of analytic exercise. To them, stylisticians are vainly engaged in the counting of words, phrases and sentences. "Many have asserted that because of the advent of theory, stylistics as a study has died."[1]

There are those, by contrast, who reject such arguments. They argue that theory is present in every reading, analysis and interpretation. Stylistics and theory, in this view, have been seen as an interdisciplinary discipline. To them, stylistics inherits its theoretical foundations from contemporary literary and linguistic theories. To Roger D. Shell, "literary stylistics taps the theories and methods of linguistics wherever they appear to suit its primary objective, which is to relate aspects of literary critical interpretation to relevant linguistic features."[2] However, stylistics

seems to be remarkably resilient and has taken on board some of the findings of literary theories and critical linguistics. It has now moved into the area of 'literary linguistics,' 'poetics and linguistics,' 'contextual stylistics,' and 'discourse stylistics.'[3] Stylistic analysis is, therefore, based on the aesthetic judgement of the stylistician as well as contemporary theoretical norms.

Instead of prolonging such a debate, we should try to discuss some basic questions. The first question is 'what is theory'? Theory seems to have never been without debate. It is a discipline of constant debate and confrontation. Theory is believed to have originated from debate itself. W.K. Wimsatt Jr. and Cleanth Brooks say, "When Homer begins his epic with an invocation to muse, he is uttering a theory about his poems . . . which has played a considerable role in the subsequent history of poetics."[4] Despite such an old tradition, theory does not appear to be a set of methods. It is described as a body of thinking and writing whose limits are infinite and, therefore, hard to define. Jonathan Culler, however, describes, "Works that become 'theory' offer accounts other can use about meaning, nature and culture, the functioning of psyche, the relations of public to private experience and of larger historical forces to individual experience."[5] It is said that what we take as truth is in fact a historical construction. A theory may seem so natural to our common sense that we don't even see it as a theory.

What is the theory of stylistics? may be asked here. Charles Bally, the founder of modern stylistics, in his book published in 1909, *Traite de stylistique francaise*, describes how an individual's impulse tries to preserve his personal expression in encountering the restriction of common convention imposed by the need of the constraints of language. He argues that there is a perpetual "conflict between the dialectically opposed poles of the speaker's impulse towards personal expression and the restrictive conventions imposed by the requirements of inter-personal communication. . . . They are never in total harmony with each other. The successful speech act might attain an equilibrium . . . but never in one aspect so dominant that the other will disappear entirely. . . . Man's ego will always be in conflict with his desire and

need to live and interact with other men. Interaction is a form of mediation between the personal and the social."[6] Stylistics should be the study of the methods of personal expression that a language makes available to its speakers. If literary stylistics takes literary theories into its account, its task would be to describe the systems of convention that enable readers to identify literary genres, themes and plots, and also to determine the place of the character in a literary text. It has to develop an awareness of learners to recognize the importance of the structures of the language of a literary text from a contemporary theoretical perspective. It is more concerned with literature as an arena of ideological and cultural struggles than it is with the personality, ideas and beliefs of an author. It may appear to be strange for us. But literature is also not less strange itself.

An author, traditionally, is considered to be the creator of his work. He knows the end before he begins his work. He controls the narrative structure (form/style) and meaning (theme). He is therefore the centre of his work. This concept appears to be natural and appeals to our common sense. It is called theological monism. The author of the *Bhagavad Gita* portrays this view: "The whole cosmic order is under me. Under My will it is automatically manifested again and again, and under My will it is annihilated at the end."[7] It is described further that the living entities (ideas) are impregnated into this material nature, and as a result of their past deeds, they take different positions. It may well be argued that 'the living entities' /self, in this view, has a fixed idea/sense that is controlled by the creator. There is, thus, an intimate connection between the author's intention and form. This monist view is the bone of contention between the monist and dualist. Controversy on this issue strikes us back to the beginnings of literary theory: to Plato and Aristotle. The controversy has not yet been settled.

The philosophers and the linguists of the world, therefore, have assumed that the idea precedes the production of form/style. A grammar is considered to be the map of the universe. It is, therefore, considered that the message, which is encoded in language, is exactly the same as the message which is decoded.

M.M. Bakhtin argues, "Philosophy of language, linguistics and stylistics . . . have all postulated a simple and unmediated relation of speaker to his unitary and singular 'own' language and have postulated as well as simple realization of this language in the monologic utterance of the individual."[8]

This is certainly interesting and may well be true for it is assumed that language is a transparent medium, which is used for communication. The relation between the words and the things in the world they refer to is supposed to be unproblematic. The language of a literary text like world has been seen as an organic structure, as guided by a single being and a single idea. It is considered to be a coherently harmonious whole with a centre, therefore, completely united. David Birch writes: "Literature, like the world, like the plants was considered to be an organic whole containing within itself all that was needed to constitute as literature. The theory of organic unity—'text-in-itself'—does not permit speculation or discussion on anything than the meaning 'inherent' in the text."[9]

This concept seems to have been reinforced and followed by S.T. Coleridge. And it has become the crux for the modern and postmodern literary theories. In his book *Stylistics*, Richard Bradford says, "The Formalists and New Critics are mainly textualists in that they regard the stylistic features of a particular literary text as productive of an empirical unity and completeness. They do not perceive literary style as entirely exclusive to literature—rhythm is an element of all spoken language, and narrative features in ordinary conversation—but when these stylistic features are combined so as to dominate the fabric of a text, that text is regarded as literature."[10] It is assumed that the structure of the language of a text plays a pivotal role in determining the theme of a text.

Like Anglo-American New Critics, the Symbolists seek literariness in a literary text. Symbolist critics lay much stress on rhythm and imagery in poetry and plot construction in the novel. Image, to them, is far clearer and simpler than what it represents. To them, without imagery, there is no art, and in particular no poetry. But symbolists do not distinguish between the language

of poetry and prose. They identify literariness with imagery. The Formalists also accept imagery as one of the literary devices used to produce literariness but it is not the sole device at the disposal of the artist. To them, an image is not a permanent referent for those mutable complexities of life which are revealed through it; its purpose is to make us perceive meaning, and to create a special perception of the object. It creates 'vision' of the object instead of serving as a means of knowing it. It is because every word is originally an image, but with the passage of time the image is effaced and the word is left with an abstract meaning that is used also in common prose writing.

The Russian Formalists seem to decentre metaphors and turn to sound-pattern and phonic dimension of poetry. To them, poetic language is distinguished from the language of common communication by the perception of its structure. Thomashevsky argues, "poetic speech is organized in terms of its sounds."[11] In poetry, sound pattern is deliberately exploited in order to draw attention to it. The acoustical, articulator or semantic aspects of poetic language may be felt. Sometimes, one feels the verbal structure, the arrangement of the words rather than their texture. A structure, therefore, means the sound-pattern and a texture means the semantic content in poetry. The sense of poetry can be felt through sound-pattern. Meaningful words without poetic rhythms do not come within the purview of poetry. They may, in this view, be seen akin to the ancient Sanskrit scholars.

In the study of *Vakrokti*, Kuntaka seems to establish the relation between the non-semantic features like sound/rhythm and theme/sense in the language of poetry. He has described that poetry has its own order that generates aesthetic pleasure and sense, it is strikingly strange from the common use of language. Versification in poetry is primarily based on the rhythmic pattern generated by the sounds of the words arranged in a particular order. In poetry, Kuntaka argues that the language is deformed for the sake of rhythm. To him *Vinyasa* is a deviation from the common use of language. K.P.K. Nair cites, "The nature of that beauty is a novel propriety of pattern. In other words, the real will appear in a fresh artistic light, and will also possess a unique imagina-

tive propriety."[12]

The modern stylisticians are considered to be the progenitors of a number of contemporary literary theories. They have established the requirement of different forms for the different literary genres. The technique of defamiliarization applies to both poetry and prose narratives. The difference is that in poetry language is deformed to produce certain aesthetic effect or sense but in prose narrative theme is defamiliarized. They propound a theory of how the subject matter of the novel is the awareness of form and how story is changed to plot through the use of various literary devices like time shifts, digressions, decorous conversation, second parallel story and the technique of discovered manuscript. The plot of novels is the aesthetically constructed form endowed with emotional effect. Story aims at information, whereas plot produces aesthetic effect.

In his book *The Mythology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp argues that in a fairy tale several characters may be involved in a single function. He shows how social and behavioral structures influence and determine functional narrative. In novel, linguistic selections maintain a parallel relationship between what is said and what is represented. Thus the stylistics of prose fiction is concerned with the ways in which the different forms of prose narratives are assembled as a single text. It also gives due attention to localized effects. On the whole, it tells a story and establishes a mode of formal coherence, which is the crux of the novel.

The literary theories insistently focus on the debate of paradoxes in literature. Cleanth Brooks says that the essence of the language of poetry is paradox. In fact, binary position is seen as fundamental to the Western modern thought. It also appears to be fundamental not only to human thought in general but in some cases to the natural order itself. William Empson, Cleanth Brooks, I.A. Richards and even T.S. Eliot argue that opposites simultaneously present in the text do not cancel each other out but resolve into a higher unity. They also argue that a literary text has a core/centre where all paradoxes resolve. Even "T.S. Eliot developed the idea of talking about 'still point'—a moment

of energy, a centre—where 'all opposites are reconciled—the complete vision perceived, complete reality experienced and complete being, attained.'"[13]

But contemporary theoretical debate often shatters commonsense attitudes towards language and literature. It is being said that there is no one centre/one truth, and one author who controls the end of his literary text. The author is not present in the text. Notions of pristine purity, natural, universal, original, authentic and presence—all have been lost in the sand of rational thought. The autonomy of a text has been questioned. The presence and control of one author in her/his work is denied. The centre is decentred. As W.B.Yeats writes:

> Things fall apart: the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

Barthes, like other modern stylists, especially like T.S. Eliot, pronounces the death of the author. In his essay "The Death of the Author," Barthes argues, "Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance of writing, just *I* is nothing more than the instance saying *I*: language knows a 'subject,' not a 'person.'"[14] It is language that speaks, not the author. The meaning of the text exists in the system of rules and conventions of the structure of that language; not in the text as believed. "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the 'message' of the Author God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writing, none of them originally, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture."[15] Thus, the author centred humanist efforts to establish an autonomy of rational thought is destroyed. The centre has become a mechanic centre; a primary necessity for order and dominance. The centre is assumed to be an artificial construct; a source/instrument of power and control.

It is because the relation between the words and the things in the world they represent is considered unproblematic. But Ferdinand de Saussure argues that the relation between the linguistic system and the continuum of objects, events and ideas that it

represents is arbitrary. That linguistic signs are arbitrary had been said by thinkers like Aristotle and Coleridge but Saussure finally established it. To him, every language has a close system. It produces meaning in difference not in reference. A language is self-referential or differential. If words stood for pre-existing concepts, they might have some equivalents in meaning from one language to the next. Each language is a system of concepts that organizes the structure of the language, literature and the world. Like Saussure, Derrida accepts language as not referential but differential and self-referential. Meaning is produced by the differences between linguistic units or binary oppositions. Derrida also agrees with Saussure that in each sign present, there are traces of signs absent. For example: 'a' is 'a' because it is not 'b' or 'c' or 'd' etc. The traces of absent signs in the signs present constitute what Derrida names *erasure*: what is said is erased by the traces. Thus, a text is assumed to be a metaphor for understanding the struggle for meaning beyond referential language. It is a concept/theory that presents a mode of writing without presence and absence—without history, cause and origin. Derrida argues that the West has always privileged one phenomenon over another. It has considered *one* (self) to be superior/primary and originative and the *other* to be inferior/secondary/derivative. He, therefore, says that the logic of opposition is the logic of supplement/*differance*.

Tzeventan Todorov also refuted the concept of paradoxes or binary oppositions. He also describes it as a logic of difference. He portrays a graphic picture of how the conqueror calls himself 'superior' and the conquered or the colonized people 'inferior.' The conqueror is called the 'self' and the conquered the 'other.' Todorov, therefore, recommends the logic of differences based on cultural relativism. He argues: "All deny the autonomous character of the literary work and regard it as the manifestation of laws that are external to it and that concern the psyche, or society, or even the 'human mind.' The object of such studies is to transpose the work into the realm considered fundamental: it is a labor of decipherment and translation; the literary work is the expression of 'something' and the goal of such studies is to reach

this 'something' through the poetic code."[16]

Stylistics, therefore, should not see language as a static structure, existing regardless of social, historical, cultural and psychological considerations. A good deal of contemporary theories can be seen as an attempt to sort out the problems of the language of literature whose values shift in response to these factors. The subject is also not seen, as an autonomous identity but always in process. Our intuitive understanding and perception is based on split subjectivity, divided between "being" and "The social speaking self." The self/subject is constructed by the perception of objects; it is not 'in' anything, it is a construction. Human reality even for both sexes is constructed reality by the discourse. Discourse is described as a collection of different purposes which transmit and maintain institutionalized values. The various discourse of a period and society promote and institutionalize its fears, hatreds, obsession and ideas. "Sex" is said to be constructed by the discourse linked with various social practices and institutions. It is an effect rather than a cause. Sara Mills argues, "Within psychological theory and much literary theory, language is perceived as the medium though the self is formed and which shapes the way that we think about the world." According to this view, analysis of language can thus tell us a great deal about the production of self or subject.[17]

There may be a general view, emerged from this study, of theory that it gives a lot of hypotheses but does not give rise to harmonious solution to literary studies. John R. Willinghan argues, "Eventually Eliot, of course, became the guru of modernist formalism. . . . But even Eliot produced no systematic theory, no 'practical' system for close, critical reading, of texts."[18] Literary stylistics, on the contrary, considers literary activity as a contextual communicative process. It should shift the attention of studies from the situation of the utterance to the words of the text and context. For convention and habits of the heterogeneous socio-cultural groups of the world influence on and permeate through the stylistic features of the text. In reading we should keep in mind that a text/discourse is the expression of either the writer's ideology or the class whom the writer represents. We

may be entrapped by the ideology/intention from which the text is produced. Style has become a relational concept. For an objective and implicit interpretation, we should take all the available evidences into account in arriving at conclusions. Intuitive interpretation of a literary text/discourse is like a hypothesis which can be checked and verified by the stylistic analysis. Sanskrit literary theories take note of such linguistic/stylistic analysis. It has been proved conclusively that Sanskrit poetics being a science of literature gives due consideration to its linguistic aspects while dealing with various elements of literary composition.

NOTES

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3. Sara Mills, p. 8.
4. W.K. Wimsatt Jr. and Cleanth Books, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (Calcutta: Oxford Book, 1964), p. 34.
5. Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 4.
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7. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagavada-Gita* (Mumbai: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International, 1972), p. 463.
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11. Boris Eichenbaum, "The Theory of the Formal Method," *Russian Formalist Criticism*, ed. L.T. Leman and Marian J. Reis (Lincoln Nebr. 1965), p. 126.
12. K.P.K. Nair, "Deviance and *Vakrokti*," *Journal of Literary Criti-*

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13. E.F. Cornwell, *The Still Point* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1962), p. 4.
14. K.M. Newton, *Twentieth Century Literary, A Reader* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 19.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
17. Sara Mills, p. 14.
18. John R. Willingham, "The New Criticism: Then and Now," *Contemporary Literary Theory*, ed. G. Douglas and Laura Morrow (Macmillan, 1989), p. 26.

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Indianization of English

G.S. GAUTAM

In his monograph on *Bilingualism* (published in 1926), Michael West says: "Man needs two kinds of languages; he needs an expression of the 'dear and intimate things,' a language of the home, the fireside, the motherland—a language of emotion and of unexpressed association. He needs also a language of fact, knowledge, exact argument, and scientific truth—a language in which words are world-current and steadfast in their meanings. The small languages of the world fulfil the first purpose, but as time goes on they prove more and more insufficient for the second, insufficient for the complexity, the variety, the international teamwork of languages."[1]

With a spurt in international activities, a marked explosion in the field of knowledge and the introduction of new modes of communication and transport, the expanding universe is fast moving in the direction of becoming a nation of nations using different tongues. This has created the need for one or more international link language(s). For historical reasons, we in India have found it advantageous to use English as our international link language.

As English crossed the English shores, it could no longer retain its original garb in its entirety even in countries like America and Australia where the original settlers were native English speakers. In the Asian and African British colonies, the immediate compulsions of communication between the rulers and the native inhabitants and the influence of mother tongues gave rise to different varieties.

To confine ourselves to the Indian scene, we have come a long way from the Babu, Butler and Kitchen Englishes of colonial times but what we vaguely call Indian English (IE) still remains in a melting pot, torn between the need to cope with local

requirements and the desire for greater approximation to standard English (SE). Kachru defines standard IE as the English used by 'educated Indians.'[2] These are the people who shape Indian English through literature, newspapers, journals, radio, television and government communications. According to Verma, "By Indian English we mean English in India. English in India is used by a vast body of educated people as their second or third language."[3]

We should never forget that we are teaching and learning English in the socio-linguistic setting of India. English has its own phonological, syntactic, morphological, and lexico-semantic systems. These systems have been functioning in our socio-cultural and socio-linguistic setting for more than two hundred years. The systems of English have interacted with the systems of the major Indian languages. The socio-cultural systems underlying English have interacted with the socio-cultural systems underlying the major Indian languages. These interactions have generated a new variety of English with its own sub-varieties. In the process of using English, which has been a vehicle of western culture, as a tool of Indian culture and Indian pattern of life, we have been slowly but definitely reshaping the language. It is the setting that gives a language its distinctive colour and flavour.[4]

There is no reason to feel that English in India is or will be less efficient as a system of communication than English in the United Kingdom or the United States of America but there is every reason to say that it is and will continue to be different from the other varieties of English. Gumpez, highlighting the Indianness of Indian English, says: "An Indian may speak English with control, he may read it and lecture in it with great success. But when he uses English in India, his speech will share some of the features of the other Indian codes with which English alternates in the daily round of activities. Indian English will thus deviate considerably from the norms current among the native speakers of English in the American Midwest. This kind of deviation represents not a failure to control English, but a

natural consequence of the social conditions in the immediate environment in which Indian English is spoken."[5]

The problem of teaching and learning English in such a situation is similar to that which a learner whose mother tongue is black English faces in learning the standard variety. For learners in these situations, the 'authentic' target language materials are not those written overseas but those which they find all around them—in the daily newspapers, journals, radio, television—to which they are exposed in their daily lives. This non-native variety naturally clashes with the standard variety to which they are exposed in the classroom, e.g. English used in the professional journals or as a subject. It is then the non-native form which comes naturally to them both because of their daily experience and the pull of the mother tongue. Besides, this non-native form may have come to be associated with their identity and any attempt to imitate the native form may be regarded as pedantic.

Thus the prolonged contact between English and Indian languages has brought in its wake the inevitable effect of linguistic convergence. This linguistic convergence has manifested itself in different ways. One consequence of convergence has been the so-called Englishization of Indian languages, in as much as certain linguistic features of the English language have crept into Indian languages, leading to certain marked phonological and morpho-syntactic adjustments in the Indian languages. On the other hand, English itself, through its prolonged contact with Indian languages, as well as due to its use by Indians with varied linguistic background and varying levels of competence in English, has been 'Indianized,' in as much as there have been phonological and morpho-syntactic adjustments in English, adjustments that can be attributed to the influence of Indian languages and culture. Both these processes, the Indianization of English and the Englishization of Indian languages have received considerable scholarly attention. A third, and perhaps more crucial, dimension of the linguistic contact and convergence has been the emergence, widespread use and acceptance of certain

mixed-codes of usage where inwords, phrases and clauses of English are freely inserted in sentences which have the general grammatical rubric of one or the other Indian language.

The mixing of English and Indian languages is no longer confined to everyday common, informal inter-actional episodes, but has come to dominate even semi-formal interpersonal inter-actions, publicity blurbs, class-room interactions, public addresses, T.V. and radio interview and creative literary pieces.

NOTES

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3. S.K. Verma, "Swadeshi English: Form and Function," Paper Presented at International Conference held in New Delhi, 1978.
4. S.K. Verma, "A Functional View of Mother Tongue," Presidential Address Delivered at Nagpur University, 1985, p. 19.
5. J.J. Gumpez, "Hindi Punjabi Code-Switching in Delhi," Proceedings of the 9th International Congress of Linguistics (London: Mouton, 1964), pp. 1116-17.

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Book Reviews

***Studies in Contemporary Literature: Critical Insights into Five Indian English Novelists*, Editors: R.S. Sharma, S.B. Shukla Associate Editor: S.B. Talwar. Sarup and Sons, New Delhi. 2000. Rs. 475.**

Indian English literature has come of age. It has now been recognised as one of the most significant literatures of the contemporary English-knowing world. Several writers, especially Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande, have received international recognition. Accordingly, there is abundant critical response to Indian English Writing. The present book, edited by three eminent scholars, comprises critical articles on five leading authors who, as the preface states, "appear to be most representative—Amitav Ghosh and Shashi Deshpande, among novelists, Jayanta Mahapatra, among poets, Ruskin Bond, the story writer, and Girish Karnad, the dramatist; more than one article on each author has been included with a view to exposing different aspects of his/her writing."

The opening chapter "The Question of Indianness," by veteran scholar and critic R.S. Sharma, provides foundation to the edifice of the entire book. He begins with the subject of treatment of genuine Indian reality in English, for it "has been a bone of contention among writers and critics for more than two decades. He identifies three cognitive sources of knowledge applicable to the treatment of reality in Indian writing in English. These are: personal experience, direct observation, and information through books and media. The basis of the present anthology of critical articles on five authors, he argues, is their rootedness in the Indian tradition and their familiarity with the Indian reality as the principal means of cognition behind their work. Amitav Ghosh is best in exploration of Indian character,

particularly Bengali. Shashi Deshpande offers most authentic accounts of Indian women's life in family and in workplace; Jayanta Mahapatra is obsessed with the past and the present of Orissa; Girish Karnad's work arises from the very depth of the Indian tradition, and finally Ruskin Bond, lover of Garhwal hills, whose work is the flowering of his Indian experience.

C.D. Narasimhaiah, in his article "On Literature in English," traces the rise of the Indian novel. This makes a useful study to comprehend the basic premise of this area. Following this, there are three articles on Amitav Ghosh. Brahma Dutta Sharma writes that in the novels of Ghosh, especially *The Shadow Lines* and *In an Antique Land*, there lies embodied in them the view that the Hindus Muslims can have friendly relations in spite of their religious differences provided unhealthy feelings are not allowed to germinate themselves in people's hearts. Rama Kundu interrogates the multi-layered "lines" in Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines*. She holds the view that in the novel, the author captures the historical moment we are living through, with its enigma and uncertainty, and in a remarkable way captures blurred lines and mystery shadows. Another critic Aruna Mukhopadhyaya discusses Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*, illuminating the myth-making quality of the author in this novel. There are a cluster of myths in it which contribute to the richness of the text.

The next two articles are devoted to the fiction of Shashi Deshpande, a leading contemporary Indian-English novelist. Scholar P. Soumini discusses the technique of focalization in Deshpande's novel *A Matter of Time*, which employs a combination of classical and modern narrative techniques. In the brilliant article "Beyond Gender Consciousness," Prabhat K. Singh argues that the fiction of Shashi Deshpande be better read as a writing dealing with the dilemmas of contemporary life rather than mere women's studies. Basing his argument on this premise, he holds that a novel like *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is not about a woman or about feminism but about life and living. The critic's approach breaks a new ground and offers fresh insights to the reader.

Ruskin Bond is best known for his depiction of nature and

his stories have a great appeal for children. In his article on *The Room on the Roof Revisited*, Ravi Nandan Sinha explores two prominent elements in this volume. The entire work of Ruskin, he states, is coloured by a sense of adventure and an accompanying longingness and romanticism. Bond's cognizance of Indian reality, holds Ruby Gupta, is the most ubiquitous of all his writings. Exploring this theme in Bond's stories, she says that it is this quality that makes them extremely effective. In another article, Vanashree Tripathy discusses that the reading of the fiction of Ruskin Bond is rewarding for its portrayal of love, loss, pain and struggle, and also for its irresistible quality, what she terms as "mythology of landscape." All these articles on Bond are followed by an interview with the author by Ruby Gupta which throws light on Bond as a man and as a writer.

Jayanta Mahapatra is a leading contemporary poet; the anthology includes four articles on his writing. The first one is by Ashok Kumar Jha who discusses Mahapatra in relation to Neo-Modernism in Indian poetry in English, and building his argument finds the poetry of Mahapatra, along with that of Ezekiel, Kolatkar and Ramanujan, essentially neo-modernist. The second article by Sumanyu Satpathy explores the "glocal" element in Mahapatra's poetry. The essay begins by looking at his recent poetry volume entitled *Shadow Space* and goes on to analyze his poetry, taking note of the poet's concern for the suffering Indians, and wonders with other critics whether "Mahapatra is catering to the western obsession with poor India?" Anuradha Banerjee finds in *Relationship* Mahapatra's search for a new direction. Mahapatra is a poet who evokes the historical past with a mythical intensity, and therein lies his poetic strength. In the last article on Mahapatra, Shashi Bala Talwar discuss "Hunger," a study in binary oppositions. She brilliantly applies the theory of binary oppositions to the work and helps us in finding a new meaning and depth to it.

The last section of the book is devoted to Girish Karnad who, along with Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar, is truly representative of the contemporary Indian drama. M.K. Choudhury, in his article "The Theatre Idiom of Girish Karnad," argues that

Karnad has helped to change the direction of Indian drama from mimicking of the western dramatic themes and forms to the traditional Indian folk theatre. In an illuminating article, Lalji Misra offers an analysis and interpretation of Karnad's play *The Fire and the Rain*. Building a strong argument, he holds the view that it is a multidimensional play; and in his words, it is "a mythical play, an existential drama and a symbolic play of contemporary reality." In the last article on Karnad, S.R. Jalote discusses the theme of hypergamous marriage in the play *Tale-Danda*. He holds that it is a 'thesis' play and has a social, religious and didactic purpose. It talks about the ills of caste system and marriage system which plague Indian society.

In all, the anthology introduces us to the major Indian writers and takes within its purview a large segment of Indian writing being published. The book is representative of the literary scene in Indian writing and equally of Indian scholarship in the area. It makes a welcome contribution to the corpus of critical studies on Indian English writing.

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Amar Nath Prasad, ed. *Indian Novelists in English: Critical Perspectives*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2000. Rs. 400.

The present anthology of critical essays makes an attempt at asserting critically and analytically the works of some leading Indian novelists. These include, amongst others, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Shashi Deshpande, Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry. The articles, more than twenty in number, have been contributed by eminent scholars in this area of study. In the introduction to the volume entitled "Indian Novelists," a comprehensive background of the subject is offered by the editor Amar Nath Prasad. He highlights the contribution made by Indian writers to the world fiction. This is followed by articles on various Indian writers. U.S. Rukhaiyar's paper on Mulk Raj Anand ex-

plores the narrative technique in the novel *Untouchable*. This is followed by two more articles on Anand by V. Thanuvalingam and S.G. Vaidya.

Saryug Yadav, in his article entitled "*The Guide*: A Journey to the Soul of India" explores this novel and finds that the narrative makes a journey into the soul of the country. Narayan's discovery of the Indian mind, with all its comic undertone and ironical approach, is an authentic account of the way of life of a people having a rich tradition of mythology and religion but fallen into superstition and prone to believe in the supernatural in the day-to-day life.

Apart from Anand and Narayan, the anthology includes scholarly studies on Raja Rao. S.M.R. Azam, in his article on Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*, explores the use of ambiguity in the novel. Gajendra Kumar, in a scholarly paper on *Kanthapura*, extols the language and stylistic quality of the novel. Rao employs, he says, a daring and meaningful language, a language deliberately adopted from the archaic Sanskrit tradition of story-telling.

There are three essays on Manohar Malgonkar. S.I. Noorani offers an analytic study of *The Princess*. G.D. Barche, in his brilliant paper on *Men Who Killed Gandhi*, makes a study in existential irony. R.A. Singh argues that most of the novels of Malgonkar deal with religious tolerance by the Hindus and the Muslims.

Bhabani Bhattacharya's fiction was at its zenith in the Seventies and Eighties. Ashok Kumar Bachchan, in his article on *Music for Mohini*, explores the theme of synthesis at several levels in the novel. It makes an ardent plea for synthesis, that is, the past should not be rejected as irrelevant, nor the present be accepted in its totality.

Feminist studies have become extremely popular in the recent years. Rama Kundu, in her scholarly paper "For a Story of My Own," examines the issue of women's quest for identity in the postcolonial context. She discusses this theme with reference to two major Commonwealth writers, namely Margaret Atwood and Githa Hariharan. In his scholarly article "Victor-Victim In-

teraction," Pashupati Jha examines the feminist quest for identity in Kamala Das's novel *My Story*. The woman that emerges out of the interaction of the tradition and surge of the self is the one who is absolutely liberated and independent.

In yet another essay on feminist studies, Krishan Mohan Pandey analyses Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Binding Vine* from a female point of view. He closely examines the novel and concludes that Deshpande is not a radical feminist but one who has a pragmatic approach to women's problems. In yet another essay, Shubha Tiwari presents a feminist analysis of Saru's character in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. These are universal qualities in her as she undergoes transformation in due course of time and the final picture that we have of Saru is appealing, for she confidently waits for what used to be the greater horror of her life, her husband. She is ready to face him. She is ready to face life.

Existentialism is one of the major themes of modern Indian fiction. Birendra Pandey in his study of Arun Joshi's *The Last Labyrinth* analyses the novel in the light of this philosophy. Rama Kundu, in her brilliant paper "The Transcultural Voyage," examines Anita Desai's adept use of artistic-philosophic frame in her novel *Journey to Ithaca*. K.V Surendran explores the theme of identity crisis in Anita Desai's earlier novel *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*.

Travelogue is a common mode of contemporary writing and has been used by writers like Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul and R.K. Narayan. Amitav Ghosh's *Countdown* has come in for detailed evaluation by Amar Nath Prasad, who is also the editor of the volume. He has also written a refreshing article on Arundhati Roy who upholds the Dalits.

Diasporic writer Rohinton Mistry's novel *Such a Long Journey* has been critically analyzed by Charu Chandra Mishra. He avers that it is through modes of resistance that Mistry's fiction problematises the diasporic dilemma.

Apart from fiction and travelogue, the anthology has a brilliant essay on Nirad C. Chaudhuri's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. In this essay, S.P. Swain offers a full-length

critique on this prose-work. In "Refashioning the Self," Nagendra Kumar explicates three stories of Bharati Mukherjee.

In fine, the anthology serves multiple focus on Indian writing, and intends to be a great asset for students and scholars interested in the area.

Mata Sundari College **VINOD BALA SHARMA**
University of Delhi

Suresh K. Agarwal, *Hopkins and Syntax*. Bohra Prakashan, Jaipur, 135 pp. Rs. 250.

By its very nature, poetry is largely deviational, not only in its thought content but even in its employment of language. Since syntax is the basic and abstract component of language and phonetics and semantic the interpretative, it too quite often tends to be deviational. Hopkins has by now been adequately acknowledged as a unique and untraditional poet. As a corollary, his syntax is boldly deviational. Hopkins was not unmindful of it and seeks to justify each instance when pointed out. The present writer has wisely isolated this single aspect of the poet's language for a specific study and deserves commendation. One should expect much freshness of discussion from the treatment of a recondite topic in the case of a recondite poet. From this point of view, the second chapter of the book entitled "Hopkins' Recognition of the Importance of Syntax" should be considered quite important.

Hopkins as a theorist and critic was highly critical of the contemporary canons of taste and the poetic practice of his contemporaries and no less so of his poet friend Bridges in particular. It is equally significant that his own poetry is by no means wanting in all those defects which he points out in the poetry of his contemporaries and friends—inversions, coinages, syntactic variations, poetical paddings and the rest. A fresh line of research could be to juxtapose these concrete contradictions leading to a justification, if any, in the case of Hopkins and not in other

cases. There is no doubt that such an approach, though important, could be very insipid from the reader's point of view which a writer in India who wishes to reach a wider public can ill-afford to do unless he is willing to be his own publisher.

In order to be accessible to his wider public and particularly the student community, for Hopkins is now a favourite of poetic anthologies and university syllabi, the writer has widened the scope of syntax. Thus what he has lost in depth he has gained in breadth, and justifiably so, for syntax in practice cannot for long be isolated from its interpretative components. The first chapter entitled "Hopkins' Ideas of Poetic Language" bears testimony to it. This is not to say that syntax has been forgotten. In order to reach his public, the writer explains in the Appendix, for the non-initiated, such basic stylistic concepts as syntax, deviation, foregrounding, cohesion, etc. which is all in place. Poems which are anthology and syllabi favourites like the "Windhover," "The Carrion Comfort," "Pied Beauty," "Felix Randal," "Spring and Fall," have been exhaustively analysed and explained. In all, the book makes a rich contribution to the corpus of Hopkins criticism.

University of Rajasthan **D.C. AGRAWAL**
Jaipur

Gajendra Kumar, *Indo-Anglian Novel Criticism: Tradition and Achievement.* Patna: Novelty, 1999. 140 pp. Rs. 300.

In the critical perspective, much has been written about Indo-Anglian novel theory but Gajendra Kumar's *Indo-Anglian Novel Criticism: Tradition and Achievement* is a welcome addition to the realm of growth and maturity of novel criticism. It argues that a work of art is no longer to be regarded as an object, a product ready to be consumed, but as an active composition which needs to be understood in relation to other related social practices as well as in relation to its conditions of composition. Novel criticism is a significant branch of criticism in a multi-

cultural and multi-lingual country like India. Throughout in the book, it has been pinpointed that literary criticism is firmly rooted within cultural studies and therefore has been approached in a much broader manner. It too reveals the quest for the poetics of the novel and the relationship between novel and society, in cultural, sociological, mythic and stylistic perspectives. This study embodies the structural analysis of critical venture of Indo-Anglian theorists and critics, and their literary approaches. The author offers a panoramic view of every possible effort to highlight the whole range of issues pertaining to theory, pedagogy and analysis.

There are six chapters in the book, viz. (i) Prologue, (ii) Roots, (iii) Novelist-critics, (iv) Twice Born Fiction Theory, (v) The Critical Kaleidoscope and (vi) Epilogue. Some of the topics in this book present seminal ideas which can easily be extended into major projects like M.Phil., Ph.D. and post-doctoral research. This study, however, deals with Indo-Anglian novel criticism which has been relatively a delayed manifestation of the modern Indian sensibility. It focuses on author's profound and scholarly study which is specially designed to promote a greater, more active awareness of India's intellectual tradition and to provide what is naturally a meaningful alternative to Euro-centrism and Anglo-Saxonism of the Indian scholarship. A close reading of this book stresses the fact that modern Indo-Anglian theoretical criticism of fiction focuses mainly on the structure of the novel and the symbiosis of its component parts, and not on the novel as a representative of mimetic reality and morality. It is centred upon the aesthetic basis of the art of narrative and not upon the writer's moral intention. He bemoans the fact that, despite its enormous growth in the recent years, Indian writing in English has not helped in shaping a critical theory or concept of its own that may be acceptable to critics the worldover.

Gajendra Kumar has discussed at length how the Indo-Anglian novel criticism has all along been motivated, apart from the basic creative urge. He has candidly analyzed the colonial impact and the impact of the peculiar Indian environment on the language that the Indian writers have used with such skill and ef-

fectiveness. The author brings to light the sparkling commentary of different novelists which add a new meaning to novel criticism. The book is also informative, stimulating and thorough in its useful details. The book, I am sure, will prove highly useful and inspiring for both the students and scholars of Indian English literature in India as well as abroad.

Saurashtra University **JAYDIPSINH K. DODIYA**

R.S. Pathak, ed. *The Fictional World of Arundhati Roy*. Creative, New Delhi, 2001, 200 pp. Rs. 500.

Arundhati Roy has emerged as the foremost Indian novelist on the contemporary literary scene. Once *The God of Small Things* received the Booker Award, it became the best seller. The novel evoked enormous response and within a year of its release, critical books on the novel by R.S. Sharma, Shashi Bala Talwar, R.K. Dhawan and Indira Bhatt were published. Now that the media hype has subsided, we are in a better position to make a true assessment of the novel. The present volume, edited by eminent scholar-critic R.S. Pathak, is a welcome addition to the ever-growing criticism on Arundhati Roy. The essays contained in it, the blurb states, "thrash threadbare various issues pertaining to Roy's debut novel from diverse theoretical positions." The novel has been subjected to various interpretations. Indeed it would be interesting to see if the novel is "the East India Company in reverse." Like Rushdie's fiction, the novel has been linked to history, for Roy draws upon historical facts as the raw material of her writing. Again, Roy presents the predicament of woman through her female character. She reveals an immense love for women and environment.

The God of Small Things is a complex novel. The most striking aspect of the book is the treatment of the dalits in the novel. Velutha, the protagonist, truly represents the untouchables. Another feature of the novel is forbidden love affair between Ammu, an upper-caste woman, and Velutha, a lower-class un-

touchable Dalit. It is, however, in the area of language and style that the novel has excelled.

In his scholarly essay on the novel, renowned critic R.S. Sharma compares *The God of Small Things* with Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and concludes that Roy is indebted to Rushdie in many respects in the writing of her novel.

In his article on Nature-Culture opposition in the novel, the scholar M.P. Sinha adds a new dimension to our understanding of the book. According to him, Arundhati Roy discusses in this novel the larger issue of nature-culture opposition. In other words, she has exposed the inherent weakness of the Indian culture, whatever may be the community or region, which has gone against the universal laws of nature. Shashi Bala Talwar, another Roy scholar, discusses in her article "Similizing Imagination of Arundhati Roy, the novelist's favourite trope, that is, simile. The novelist perceives the world, both internal and external, in terms of likenesses. We may assign a thematic and structural significance to the main thrust of the novel, if we analyze the adept use of the device of simile by Arundhati Roy.

Apart from these, there are other illuminating essays by scholars including M.K. Ray, Anita Singh, Meena Sodhi, K.M. Pandey, A.N. Dwivedi and Sudhir Kumar. The book adds to our understanding of the novel *The God of Small Things* and makes a fruitful contribution to the criticism on Indian women's writing.

S.B.S. College
University of Delhi

R.K. DHAWAN

C.L. Khatri, *Vivekananda, Speeches and Writing: A Critical Study*, Prestige, New Delhi, 2000. 167pp. Rs. 400.

Although Swami Vivekananda is a great saint of the nineteenth century India known for his philosophical writings, he has been unduly neglected by Indian English critics. So far there has been no systematic study of his writings. C.L. Khatri's critical venture into this virgin field of research is, therefore, a very welcome ac-

complishment. He has rendered pioneering service in offering a very comprehensive picture of Vivekananda's writings, both philosophical and secular.

In the first two chapters, he introduces the readers to the life of Vivekananda and the formative influences of *Vedas*, Upanishads, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the Bible, the Buddhist thought and the Bhakti movement on his sensitive mind. Then he offers an incisive analysis of Vivekananda's oratory, the rhetorical quality of his speeches and his charismatic influence on the Indian and the European audiences. He demonstrates how Vivekananda was deeply steeped in the Advaita Vedanta and tried to assimilate the essence of the major religions of the world, thereby seeing the unity of all the human life. His systematic analysis of the tenets of Vedanta preached by Vivekananda is very satisfactory.

The last two chapters dealing with Vivekananda's poetry and prose style are the most important ones, as they deal with a neglected area and therefore very useful to literary critics. He rightly points out how Vivekananda's poetry is comparatively little in quantity, but it is infused with fine spirituality and tender lyricism. He highlights the characteristic features of his prose style like its poeticality, decorum, ornateness, dialectical balance, epigrammatic nature, verbal economy, virility, allusiveness, Sanskrit quotations, argumentativeness and didacticism etc., with apt illustrations. The spiritual/romantic ebullience of Vivekananda's style makes him easily comparable to Carlyle and Cicero. C.L. Khatri deserves our congratulations for showing a path to the future scholars to attempt similar studies of other neglected prose-writers of India like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, J. Krishnamurti, R.N. Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Srinivasa Sastri etc.

Karnatak University
Dharwad

BASAVARAJ NAIKAR

Bookshelf
Notes on New Books

Bijay Kumar Das, *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism.* Atlantic, New Delhi. Rs. 350.

In this book, an attempt has been made to outline the growth and development of literary criticism from Eliot to our time. In part I of the book, the author has drawn attention to various schools of criticism that are prevalent in India. In part II of the book, he has analyzed two seminal critical essays (Eliot's "Objective Correlative" Theory and Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play") that have influenced the critical trends in the twentieth century. He has included an essay on the comparative study of T.S. Eliot and Sri Aurobindo as critics because they represent the Western and Eastern point of view respectively in the field of Modern Literary Criticism.

In the second edition of the book, six new chapters were added on six important essays by critics like Eliot, Leavis, Krutch, Barthes and Foucault, keeping in view the currents and cross-currents in literary criticism in recent years. In the third edition of the book, five chapters are added on five important essays by critics like Eliot, L.C. Knights, Raymond Williams, Northrop Frye and Ronald Barthes. In part III of the book, recent schools of criticism like Deconstruction, New Historicism and Issues in Twentieth Century Criticism have been discussed with new insight. An invaluable book in the field of literary criticism in the 20th century.

Mohini Chakranarayan, *Style Studies in Anita Desai.* Atlantic, New Delhi. Rs. 295.

The book is a pioneer study in objective criticism of the novels

of Anita Desai. An electro-cardiogram records the vibrations of the heart, stylistics does the same for literary texts. Words are the symbols of the vibrations of a writer's thought. Modern criticism acknowledges that form and idea in any literary text are inseparable. This study successfully proves that the objective and the subjective merge into one another to make a complete whole. The detailed textual analysis of the beginnings of the eight novels of Anita Desai is both revealing and enjoyable because the findings are objectively based and are in concord with the opinion of other critics on the subject. The chapters on Form and Structure and the Rhetoric of the novels including Fictional Sequencing, Discourse and Discourse Situation, Types of Narration, The Narrative Voice, Tone, Speech and Thought Presentation, and Point of View, are equally penetrating and illuminating. The book combines sound scientific approach with keen critical and aesthetic judgement in literary art.

A.N. Dwivedi, *Kamala Das and Her Poetry*. Atlantic, New Delhi. Rs. 350.

This book traces the origin and growth of Kamala Das as a poet through successive stages. Mrs. Das, who received no formal education, no pompous university degree, stands on her own merit and is placed on the pinnacle of reputation and distinction among Indo-English poets of today. Her scintillating verse has that irresistible force and tilting rhythm in it which captures the reader's attention immediately. The reader often feels that he is in the presence of a writer who is highly gifted and skilful, largely emotional and subjective, and who is ever celebrating the charms of the body and the hungers of the sex, without getting him bored even for a while. The poetess admirably comes through the dictum of William Wordsworth when he pronounced that poetry is 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.' It endeavours to combine biography and criticism and makes a critical analytical study of Mrs. Das's verse to date. It is not so much a chronological survey of her literary output as an inves-

tigation into the aspects of her poetry. There are already books, articles and reviews on Kamala Das, but this one is unique in evaluating her poetic worth in the light of her work and in ascertaining her position amongst contemporary Indo-English poets. This may well claim to be the first of its kind in making a pointed approach to diverse subjects of her verse, to her being a 'confessional' poet, to her conspicuous 'tragic vision' of art, and in critically examining some of her significant poems and in undertaking an appraisal of her novel, *Alphabet of Lust* (1976), and of her prose works. It is, thus, designed for the benefit of the teachers of English literature and the taught alike.

Birendra Pandey, *The Novels of Arun Joshi.* Atlantic, New Delhi, Rs. 250.

The book threadbare examines the salient features of all the four novels of Arun Joshi. As an existentialist, Arun Joshi is popular among the writers of fiction today. This study on Joshi probes clash of culture, aloneness, rootlessness and mixing of fantasy and reality in separate chapters. An exhaustive note on the fictional art and vision is also added. It is a full length evaluation of Joshi's fiction.

R.A. Singh and V.L.V.N. Narendra Kumar *Critical Studies on Indian Fiction in English.* Atlantic, New Delhi. Rs. 300.

The essays in this anthology focus on many aspects of Indian Fiction in English. It seeks to probe, discuss and analyse the issues arising out of the novels and offers deep insight to the readers. Important novelists covered in the volume are: R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Anita Desai, Geeta Mehta, Salman Rushdie, Kavery Nambisan, Nayantara Sahgal, Arun Joshi, Shobha De and Arundhati Roy.

Rajendra Singh, *Hitting Home* (limericks). Writers Workshop. Calcutta. Rs. 80.

A gallery of ninety-nine limericks on the current conditions in the country, it aims to present a criticism of public life and undermine by ridicule the politicians, their postures and tactics, scams and crimes. To establish responsibility and rehabilitate man's mind through a knowledge of right and wrong, it brings into action the forces of correction by means of satire, not on the individuals but the social institutions perverted by the individuals. It also aims to blend idea and art through juxtaposition and contrast, and harmonise verse with rhyme and metre.

Sunny Singh, *Single in the City, The Independent Woman's Handbook.* Penguin India, 2001. Rs. 295.

Sunny Singh draws on her own experience as well as that of other single women all over the country—the never-married, the divorced and the widowed—to put together a witty and insightful book that is as much a guide for single women as it is a commentary on modern, urban society in present-day India. The stories related here with frankness and humour cover a range of subjects such as:

* Power, promotions and passion at the workplace
* How to ensure safety in the house and on the road
* Identifying sexual harassment and fighting it
* How to make money work
* Single motherhood Being Single among couples
* How to unclog drains, fix leaking taps and punctured tyres
* Romance, its joys and sorrows

Single in the City: The Independant Woman's Handbook, an unusual and path-breaking book which explores the meaning of being a single woman, illustrates once again her special talent and versatility. An illuminating read to empower yourself and celebrate the joys of living alone.

Creation I

First a speck,
then a sprout,
then bursting of cells,
and opening up of life,
stirring steadily
before his bright eyes—
unfolding itself
in stems and twigs,
in flowers and ferns,
in fruits and roots,
in colours and kinds.

The old gardener looks on,
with glint in his eyes,
at what he finds.

Creation II

He had started
life as a huge rock
on the sand dunes of a shore,
braving the stormy wind
and the incessant waves.

But the dashing waves,
briny and corrosive,
in months and years
started corroding his base.

He staggered, stumbled and
struggled; finally balancing himself
on himself, his root and reserve.

Years rolled by,
and the striking waves
and the raging storm
went on, and on, and on—
they were not to be outdone;

his stones turned scraggy,
his bones became brittle.

Once, brooding over his past
and looking across his present,
something suddenly welled up inside
and surged to his eyes,
will he whimper like a child?

Oh no, never perhaps;
he drew a blank white sheet,
scooped out those salty pearls,
and engraved them firmly on it.

The waves intensified their fury,
and the storm uprooted many a thing,
but the sheet went on increasing.

University of Roorkee **PASHUPATI JHA**

Death

What is death?
It is divine will,
A reality that has to come,
When earthly bodies separate,
And have to live apart.
Is that death?
But the soul is immortal, that remains;
Remains; the everlasting memories,
Memories; that are sealed in heart,
That no waves can ever wash.
Remains, the scar, formed in life,
That no time can ever heal,
And also remain, the silent tears,
That are helpless and dumb.
And that is death.

Bhilai **MERRILY ROY**

Appetites at Kalahandi

(Being a poem on the hunger deaths at Kalahandi)

In cities, delicious lunch kills one half;
Rich cuisine at night, the other:
But the native appetites at Kalahandi
Run more novel and putrid enough
To act distasteful and hurtingly enduring
To a deft menu for an undergrown taste.
They eat air, chew sun and drink moonlight
In the shadow of their country's dwarfed freedom,
Hollow integrity, fading morals and synthetic pride.
To give their silhouettes some figure of identity
They search for their twisted roots
In the cracked folds of their dry skins
And the long parched slim-bellied fields:
Their dim souls searching sustenance
In the shrunk tunnels of their dull intestines
Saying prayers to their native gods
Holding ballot papers in shaking hands.

They wet the dry puddles of their needs
With the tears of their half bent women
And the sunburnt sulking of their ghostly children
To harvest more dream crops and drizzle
To feed the desperate gnawing hunger
Hung waspish by their choked throats
Eyes marbled with silent expectations
In flawed moulds.

Yet, squeezing the last hope and guts
From the marrow of their brittle bones
They dream of chopping old rocks and hard stones
To eat with the sauce of paper sugared manifestoes
Like rodents looking for their rice bowls
Voodooing dreams of the new age
Haunting their exorcised souls.

Unaware of the tall and distant promises made distant
By frequently adjourned assemblies
And smugly dissolved parliaments
Like a horde of pigeons set aflying for thoughtless fun.
Their hunger now whets more hunger; Death more deaths
Revealing the mystique of fundamental rights
Solemnly laid down and archived
In the hardbound constitution of this Vedic land
With rishis sitting at the top of the mountains
Chanting political mantras with magic wands
Hunger stalking poetic images
In the magic realism
Of battered lines.

The Turn of the Century

Like sun, the self-illumined self
Which, once used to smile
Like easy cheer in marigold
And guard the hostilities
Of both—evil and good, weak and strong
Mending ruptures of conduct
Now stands split and crumbled
Like river banks in flood
Bristling with grey uncertainties
And the comic, in dark doubts:
If Buddha was a tamarind style nihilist
And Christ, a de-caffinated lover of compassion:
If Shahjehan was just a recycled prodigal
And Napoleon, a leg-break rishi:
If Einstein was the ancient scholar.
Ravana, by rebirth: And Stalin
By his moustache, a late Gita fan.

All this is serviette to wipe clean
The slush and waste of long-lousy conduct
Made deadly even for normal

Living-relationship and growth.
That's why uneasy feels the head
With a Maruti-dent in the conscience
That wears modernity for a mask
And hides the shortcomings stuffed
In the restless graves of old-spice souls
Convulsing with much painful anxiety
Of unrelieved pains: Living or dead
Relive the time of change
Like light or dark present
Both at dusk or dawn.

With leaping forest fires and rumbling volcanoes:
Crippling earthquakes, devastating tornadoes
And persistent floods
The turn of the century closes in like octopus
Drawing peace, harmony and happiness
To damning convulsions of misery, turmoil
And unrelenting grief, lamenting
What man has made of existence and man:
Groping for a future into which
One may let one's country awake:
Light discover its face.

In this age where doubts overcome solutions
Questions overpower answers; Drought, rains:
People may be happy with magic
Or make-up for inspiration
To plug fissures and divides
Spring cleaning their cordless souls
To live really, not just virtually
Battling truths from the sunbaked cultures
Of tired times: Combing winds from the skies
And waves from the sea.

O.P. BHATNAGAR
New Delhi

Anti-Pollution Mask

O darling dear, I can't bear to look at you,
I'll suicide by standing at a Delhi crossing
For half an hour in a pall of smoke
Or divorce you, no third alternative left.

Great God! where's your nose
The envy of many otherwise lovely ladies
I swear it was the pinnacle of Beauty's mount:
So straight and geometrically symmetrical
With line and curve as regular as my fate.
Your nostrils, when they throbbed the god of love
Gasped for breath.

Where are the lips, cherry-red and moist
Your mouth like Marilyn Monroe's
Tantalizingly half-open half-close? I used
To be blinded and wouldn't mind the make-up.
But what is this: no nose, no lips, no mouth?
Only something padded, patched and tubed,
Fashioned, sure, by the best designer.

What has man done to wifeman? Destroyed
Whole beauty's self and love's altar.

Come, darling, I've made up my mind.
If you agree, we'll end together mouth-to-mouth
Daring air-pollution, the horrid beast,
We shall die asphyxiating:
Die martyrs to the cause of human face.

Matter and Mind

Berkeley had destroyed matter
Hume demolished mind;
And yet we keep destroyed matter
And think with demolished mind.

English in India

It has made progress in the country's side
Since its owners and promoters
Left the land with a litter
Of lickers of tongues and mouth-makers
Who, clinging to the bottom of the top
Would force her down every throat.

So they grasp 'father' with both the lips,
And go with satchel to 'suck-Cool;
Find 'sheeps' 'selling' on the sea
And bring out the crux of 'Sexpeare';
When maddened by the 'mugic' of Milton
Teacher and taught, they murder him in the class.

A fitting revenge with a vengeance
For ruling over us so long, so well,
Allowing us no time to spell ourselves
And learn the sense of independence.

So we're entitled to twisting their tongue,
To tell them we're also 'tinkers' once
We 'wapan' our mouths and 'ispeak'
We can write of 'Eats's poetic 'carrier'
When examiners insist. And give the test when we must.

We do not leave our seats until
The chief guest has 'passed away,'
We can 'lay eggs' in the fridge
And sitting in the cage, we watch the tiger.

The English language makes our creative writing
Float on the surface with some grease
While children of the heart and mind
Enact the motions of our mothers' lips.

R.S. SHARMA
Varanasi

The Indian Journal of English Studies

Volume XXXVII 1998-99

Editor-in-Chief: Dr. R.K. Dhawan

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