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The Indian Journal of English Studies

Chief Editor: Dr. R.K. Dhawan

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Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Poscolonial Theory

BIJAY KUMAR DAS

Edward Said was born in West Jerusalem and named Edward after the Prince of Wales. His Palestinian father, Wade, after serving the First World War took American citizenship and his mother Hilda (an admirer of Edward, the Prince of Wales) was born in Nazareth of Palestinian and Lebanese parentage. He left Palestine for good in 1947 just before the creation of Israel out of the territory of Palestine in 1948 and settled in U.S.A. where he worked as a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Being a Polyglot (he knew such language as English, Arabic, Spanish, German, Italian and Latin), he had inwardness with European languages and culture. He became conscious of Western attitude to the East embedded in the term 'Orientalism.'

If postcolonial aesthetic owes its origin to Frantz Fanon's book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), postcolonial theory is based on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Said's contribution to postcolonial theory can be understood in its proper perspective against the backdrop of his concept of Orientalism explained and developed in his major works such as *Beginnings* (1975), *Orientalism*, *The Question of Palestine* (1979), *Covering Islam* (1981), *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and *The World, The Text and the Critic* (1983). The term 'Orientalism' occurs in Said's magnum opus *Orientalism* which refers to "the historical and ideological process whereby false images of and myths about the Eastern or the 'Oriental' would have been constructed in various 'Western discourses, including that of imaginative literature."[1] Orientalism which is based on the cultural superiority of the west over the East paved the way for imperialism. In other words, im-

perialism, an upshot of Orientalism, refers to "the authority assumed by a state over another territory—authority expressed in pageantry and symbolism, as well as in military power. It is a term associated in particular with the expansion of the European nation-state in the nineteenth century. Colonialism involves the consolidation of imperial power, and is manifested in the settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands."[2] Postcolonialism, refers to the period after colonialism and helps the native inhabitants to take their place by gaining independence and overcoming political and cultural imperialism. Thus, these four terms (i.e., 'Orientalism,' 'imperialism,' 'colonialism' and 'postcolonialism') are interrelated and interdependent. In order to understand Said's contribution to postcolonial theory we would do well to understand these terms in their context clearly.

Before explaining Said's 'Orientalism,' it is imperative on our part to understand the major influences on him in the global context. Though critics tend to evaluate Said on the basis of his works beginning with *Orientalism* and after his first major critical work, *Beginnings* (1975) cannot be glossed over easily. It is here that Said turns to the eighteenth century Italian philosopher, Vico for new ideas. Rajnath gives an interesting account of Said's indebtedness to Vico in the following words:

> The very concept beginning is derived from Vico who distinguishes between origins and beginnings saying that the origins are divine, whereas beginnings are human. The world is created by God, but the social world is the handiwork of man. Explaining how Vico's concept of beginning makes him a modern thinker, Said remarks, "Vice is the prototypical modern thinker who perceives beginning as an activity requiring the writer to maintain an unstraying obligation to practical reality and sympathetic imagination in equally strong parts." Said learns from Vico that any attempt at beginning requires not only grounding in reality but also imagination which can sympathetically formulate it. This emphasis on imagination marks Vico as well as Said off from the Vulgar Marxists who emphasized political content to the exclusion of imaginative re-creation.[3]

Said made use of Vichian idea of the distinction between filiation, and affiliation, the first being instinctual, and the second, social.

> Filiation is the outcome of sexual relationship which leads to procreation and repetition. Sexual relationship gives rise to the institution of marriage which in turn brings into being legal institutions and so on. All these institutions, which are called by Vico affiliation and which are meant to protect filiation, join people together in a non-genealogical, non-procreative but social unity. In the modern age, says Said, filiative relationships have been displaced by affiliative relationships.[4]

Apart from Vico, Said was also influenced by Foucault's concept of power and the correlation between knowledge and power. In *Orientalism*, Said writes "I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse, one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European Culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period."[5]

And again Said was also influenced by the Marxist Italian philosopher, Gramsci, particularly the latter's concept of hegemony, "which is the exercise of power through the consent of the ruled by, 'incorporating and transforming' their ideologies." The domination of the rulers over the ruled (i.e., the colonial power over the colonised) was done at two levels—first, at the level of administration through military power and second at the social level through education in schools and institutions like Church and other social organisations. The colonial power had exploited the colonised both politically and culturally and sought to establish the superiority of the West over the East. This kind of Orientalism paved the way for imperialism which Said contests in his works. Said quotes the following extract from Macaulay's 1855 minute to show how the west has tried to brainwash the Indians and Africans to accept the superiority of the occident: "I

am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European Library was worth the whole native literature of India and Africa."[6]

It is clear from Said's writings that he has made use of ideas of Vico, Foucault and Gramsci to formulate his theory of Orientalism. And I concur with Rajnath when he says that, "Said's postcolonialism has its roots in his Beginnings and that Orientalism is best viewed as the culmination of the earlier work rather than a new beginning." (76)

Orientalism is taken as a source book which gave a sense of identity and status to the marginal (i.e., the colonised) in the eyes of the West. Orientalism as Aijaz Ahmad rightly points out, "marks such a radical break in Said's own intellectual career precisely because the writing of this book was an attempt at coming to terms with what it meant for him to be a Palestinian living and teaching in the USA, armed with not much more than a humanist intellectual training, a successful career as literary critic, and a splendid mastery over wide areas of European literary textuality."[7] Edward Said also makes it clear in the "introduction" to *Orientalism*:

> My own experience of these matters is in part what made me write this book. The life of an Arab Palestinian in the West, particularly America, is disheartening. The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny. (27)

As Gayatri Spivak Chakravorty has rightly pointed out, "the study of colonial discourse, directly released by work such as Said's has . . . blossomed into a garden where the marginal can speak and be spoken, even spoken for. It is an important part of the discipline now."[8] Leela Gandhi goes a step ahead when she says:

> *Orientalism* is the first book in a trilogy devoted to an exploration of the historically imbalanced relationship between the world of Islam, the Middle East, and the 'Orient' on the one hand, and that

> of European and American imperialism on the other. While *Orientalism* focuses on the well-rehearsed field of nineteenth century British and French imperialism, the two subsequent books in this series, *The Question of Palestine* (1979) and *Covering Islam* (1981) foreground the submerged or latent imperialism which informs the relationship between Zionism and Palestine and that of the United States and the Islamic world.[9]

Said argues that the Western attitude towards orientals is based on ignorance of the Eastern culture and literature. Hence, the colonisers imposed their culture and literature on the colonised people through various means. Said tries to show that the West was wrong to treat the East as inferior both culturally and intellectually. In his works Said has successfully demonstrated the values of Oriental Culture and brought the marginalised 'Other' to the centre stage. I am inclined to agree with Leela Gandhi when she makes the following observation on this subject:

> Orientalism is the first book in which Said relentlessly unmasks the ideological disguises of imperialism. In this regard, its particular contribution to the field of anti-colonial scholarship inheres in its painstaking, if somewhat overstated, exposition of the reciprocal relationship between colonial knowledge and colonial power. It proposes that 'Orientalism'—or the project of teaching, writing about, and researching the Orient—has always been an essential cognitive accompaniment and inducement to Europe's imperial adventures in the hypothetical 'East.' Accordingly, it claims that the peculiarly 'Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (Said, 3) is inextricable from the peculiarly Western style of studying and thinking about the Orient. In other words, its answer to the way the East was won suggests that we reconsider some of the ways in which the East was known. (67-68).

The Orient is the place geographically adjacent to Europe and was its former colony with a rich cultural heritage. It has several rich languages and literatures of comparable standard with the West. It is not the 'Other' in the sense (i.e. the attitude of dismissal) that the West understands it. That is why, Said in his

book, *Orientalism* explains the term Orientalism to dispel ambiguity about it. He says:

> It will be clear to the reader (and will become clearer still throughout the many pages that follow) that by Orientalism I mean several things, all of them, in my opinion, interdependent. The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. Compared with Oriental studies or area studies, it is true that the term Orientalism is less preferred by specialists today—both because it is too vague and general and because it connotes the high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European colonialism. Nevertheless books are written and congresses held with 'the orient' as their main focus, with the Orientalist in his new or old guise as their main authority. The point is that even if it does not revive as it once did, Orientalism lives on academically through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and the Oriental.[10]

Said has made a significant contribution to literary criticism by emphasizing the wildness of the text. He questions the new critical position (i.e. the stand taken by the New Critics of America in the 1940s) of reading a text as a self-contained unit without any reference to the world (i.e., the culture and milieu in which it is written) and suggests that the text is of the world and about the world. It exists in the world and for the world. He asserts in *The World, the Text and the Critic*: "the point is that texts have ways of existing that even in the most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place, society—in short, they are the world and hence, worldly." (16) Said believes that the text is affiliated with the world and therefore questions the insular approach of the New Critics and some post-structuralists who believe that the text is what it means to the reader (Reader-Response Critics). Thus criticism should go beyond the text and take inter-textuality as its province. Therefore Said emphasizes,

"Criticism cannot assume that its province is merely that text—not even the great literary text." (*Ibid.*, 225).

In the twenty-first century when we look back to the past and particularly to the origin of post-colonial theory, we cannot help saying that Said's *Orientalism* is one of the chief sources of it. Said's *Orientalism* brings out the binary opposition between the West (i.e., Europe) and the East—the occident and the orient. Ania Loomba makes a pertinent point when she says,

> Orientalism can be said to inaugurate a new kind of study of colonialism. Said argues that representations of the 'Orient' in European literary texts, travelogues and other writings contributed to the creation of a dichotomy between Europe and its 'others,' a dichotomy that was central to the creation of European culture as well as to the maintenance and extension of European hegemony over other lands. Said's project is to show how 'knowledge' about non-Europeans was part of the process of maintaining power over them, thus the status of 'knowledge' is demystified, and the lines between the ideological and the objective blurred.[11]

The West has misrepresented the Orient in certain aspects to which Edward Said draws our attention in no uncertain terms. R.K. Kaul brings out these aspects in the following words:

(i) It was assumed that the West is rational, developed, humane, superior, the Orient is aberrant, underdeveloped and inferior.
(ii) The Orientalist was guided by the classical texts in his attitude to the orient rather than modern oriental realities.
(iii) The orient was considered to be unchanging and uniform.
(iv) Finally since the orient is incapable of defining itself, an objective assessment of the east must be made by the Western Orientalists.[12]

Edward Said has been instrumental in bringing post-colonial theory to the centre stage by marginalizing formalist trends in Anglo-American criticism. No wonder that some people charged him with West-bashing. Said is not against the West but he wants the West and the East to come closer for better understanding. Further he wants to do away with the binary opposition between the West and the East so that one cannot claim superiority over the other. His central thesis is that "the study of the Orient (i.e., Orientalism) was a political vision of reality whose

structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (European, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')."[12] Towards the close of *Orientalism*, Said pleads for the extinction of both the terms Orientalism and occidentalism. He writes:

> I hope to have shown my reader that the answer to Orientalism is not Occidentalism. No former "Oriental" will be comforted by the thought that having been an Oriental himself he is likely, too likely—to study new "Orientals"—or "occidentals" of his own make-up. If the knowledge of Orientalism has any meaning, it is in being a reminder of the seductive degradation of knowledge, of any knowledge, anywhere, at any time. Now perhaps more than before.[13]

Said is of the opinion that since all cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous, the complete separation of the West from the East is well nigh impossible. In the concluding paragraph of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said says,

> No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than starting-points which, if followed into actual experience for only a moment, are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively white, or black, or Western, or Oriental. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, natural languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness as if that was all human life was about. Survival in fact is about connections between things; in Eliot's phrase, reality cannot be deprived of the "other echoes [that] inhabit the garden." It is more rewarding—and more difficult—to think correctly and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about "us." But this also means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all not constantly reiterating how our "culture" or country is number one (or not number one, for that matter). For the intellectual there is quite enough of value to do without that.[14]

Rajnath makes a perceptive comment on the passage just quoted above in the following words:

> This is addressed as much to the West as to the East. The passage contains a warning and a suggestion. The West must not repeat its past error and the East must take its imperialist phase as a historical experience rather than permanent divide between it and its other. Cultural hybridity, a term frequently used by Said, has come to stay and no amount of effort can fence off the East and the West. Hence Said's rhetorical question:
>
> > Who in India or Algeria today can confidently separate out the British or French component of the past from present actualities, and who in Britain or France can draw a clear circle around British London or French Paris that would exclude the impact of India and Algeria upon those two imperial cities. (Culture and Imperialism, 15)
>
> Cultures are so mixed up that we are slowly moving towards one culture which will have the components of both, the East and the West. He rejects the very idea of purity. We live "in a world of interdependent mongrelised societies. They are hybrids, they are impure," says Said in an interview. He inveighs against nativism which will entail Occidentalism, an inverted form of Orientalism. He regrets the two directions in which Orientalism has been taken, anti-Westernism and nativism. (84)

In conclusion, it can be said that Edward Said has heralded an interdisciplinary movement called postcolonial studies (i.e., theory) by exposing the West through his famous term and theory known as Orientalism. He has made the marginalised East the focus of Anglo-American Studies. Furthermore, he has challenged the critical theories of the West beginning with formalism through deconstruction for their lack of 'worldliness' and brought postcolonial theory to the forefront of critical studies in the English-speaking world.

NOTES

1. Murfin Ross and Supriya M. Ray, *The Bed Ford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1998), p.262.

2. Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1995), p. 2.
3. Rajnath, "Edward Said and Postcolonial Theory," *Journal of Literary Criticism*, 9:1 (June 2000), p. 75.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 3.
6. Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 12.
7. Aijaz Ahmed, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 161.
8. Gayatri Spivak Chakravorty, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 56.
9. Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 66.
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11. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 44-45.
12. R.K. Kaul, "Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Abbe' Dubois," *Contesting Postcolonialism*, ed. Jasbir Jain and Veena Singh (New Delhi: Rawat, 2000), p. 62.Ibid., p. 47.
13. Rajnath, p. 83.
14. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p. 408.

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Some Aspects of Postcolonial Translation

T. SAI CHANDRA MOULI

Translation is an integral part of Indian psyche. Translations of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have shaped the lives of millions of Indians through the centuries. In a multilingual nation like India translation of classics in Sanskrit into various languages has led to emotional integration of the people with divergent backgrounds.

"Translation is the wandering existence of a text in perpetual exile." (J. Hillis Miller, 1988) Here, one can infer the reference is to the Christian myth of the fall, exile and wandering. According to the Western viewpoint, translation is an exile, a fall from the origin. The mythical exile is a metaphor for translation. Now, we can understand why translations are not accorded the same respect as the original works. The temporal sequentiality of translation coming after the original is considered a proof of its diminution of the authenticity and acceptability.

Though 'form' and 'meaning' have been emphasized upon in various translation theories, the concept of 'translating consciousness' has gradually assumed significance. The use of two or more languages in translation in countries like India may look meaningless exercise in monolingual contexts.

Andre Lefevere and Susan Basnett announced the cultural turn in translation studies. "Neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes operational 'unit' of translation." This heralded a great break-through in the field of translation studies. Subsequently, a rapprochement between cultural studies and translation studies has become inevitable. The exploitation of postcolonial studies in literature has resulted in the cultural turn in translation becoming intercultural and multicultural.

"What is theoretically innovative, politically crucial is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes in the articulation of cultural differences. These in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new science of identity, innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself." (Homi K. Bhabha 1999) The notion of hybridity is built on the concept of in-between spaces. Bhabha tries to offer a variety of definitions:

> Hybridity is sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities. It is the revaluation of assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. . . . Hybridity is the deployment of value from symbol to sign that causes dominant discourse to split along axis of its power to be representative, authoritative. . . . Hybridity is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures, or two scenes of the book (English and Colonial fiction) in a dialectical play of recognition. . . . Hybridity reverses the final process of disavowal so that violent dislocation of fact of colonization becomes the conditionality in colonial discourse.

In brief, post structuralism rests as:

1. a conservative notion of language and misreading of Saussure
2. an (elitist) exaggeration of indeterminacy in meaning making.
3. an autonomous, agent less textuality and intertextuality.
4. an untenable anti-humanism (neglect of actual author and actual reader/s); and
5. a constructionist view of man (emphasis on nurture, neglect of nature)

Postcolonial Translation in Theory and Practice

Lawrence Venuti advocated foreignizing (as against domesticating) translation at all costs. It may look paradoxical that the translator should be 'visible' and employ 'foreignizing' features at the same time. Foreignising features were primarily intro-

duced into the target language from the source text, not by the translator's invention. Douglas Robinson (1998) enquires:

a) Whether the impact of foreignizing versus domesticating translations on a target culture is as different as has been claimed.
b) Whether the impact of either type of translation (if such a naïve division should be made at all) is as monolithic as has been supposed.
c) Whether foreignizing translations is not inherently elitist; and
d) Whether the stable separation of source and target languages in the assimilating-foreignizing distinction is tenable.

Robinson further suggests that acts of translation should be contextualized. Arguing against linguistic equivalence in translation studies he states, "translation in its multifarious—social, cultural, economic and political contexts is impossibly more complex a field of study, than abstract linguistic equivalence (which is already complex enough); but the chance of caring to understand how translation works in those contexts, how translation shapes cultures both at and within their boundaries, offers a powerful motivation to push on despite the difficulty of the undertaking."

Descriptive Translation Studies

Polysystem Theory

The term Polysystem was coined by Israeli cultural theorist Itamar Even-Zohar in the 1970s. Strongly influenced by Russian formalism, Even-Zohar regarded literature as a complex and dynamic system rather than a static collection of independent texts. According to this framework, all texts within a given literature enter into a permanent struggle for domination. Translated literature is only one of the elements in this battle. "It is necessary to include translated literature in the polysystem."

Translational comparisons between one source text and its translation become less dominant in this context. Corpus projects of various kinds are encouraged because they facilitate comparisons of series of texts or translation problems, for example, of

several translations of one source, different stages in the translation of a text, entire production of individual translators or scholar of translators, and above all translations of corpora of T.L. originals. This approach allows room for micro-level textual studies. It also throws light on the significance of macro level sociological expansion of the field.

Thus, one can gain perception of many other factors that characterize and determine translation products. The polysystematic claim is that this is possible, only with the framework of a target oriented approach.

Target Orientation

"Translations are facts of target cultures; on occasion facts of a special status, some times even constituting identifiable (sub) systems of their own but of the target culture in any event" (Gideon Tourey 1995). Equivalence becomes a descriptive, dynamic term. Features are retained and reconstructed in target language texts. Importance so assigned is to facilitate the audience only. Within the target-oriented framework, anything is included as a literary translation that is regarded, as such, by a certain cultural community at a certain time. Gideon Toury recommends investigating what translations are, rather than what they fail to be.

He speaks of translation norms at three levels—preliminary, initial and operational. Preliminary norms relate to textual issues like the position of translation within the polysystem of a target culture and option of languages and texts, to be translated. The opposing poles of adequacy and acceptability constitute initial norms.

According to Toury, adherence to some text norms determines a translation adequacy as compared to the source text.

Subscription to norms originating in the target culture determines its acceptability. At times a translated text need not be consistent in its adequacy and acceptability. Actual translations operate between these two poles.

A translator's responsibility lies in notably translating a text, but in translating a non-native audience into a native one. While

translating a poem from an Indian language into a foreign language like English, a translator invariably desires to translate a foreign audience into a native one.

In conclusion, it may be stated that translation is a well-established activity in India. Translation studies is no longer viewed as a mere linguistic exercise. It has become a dynamic activity encompassing multi-disciplinary studies.

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Vedic Themes in T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*

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To remember T.S. Eliot is to recapitulate the complete ethos of twentieth century because in writing himself he wrote his time more than any other man of letters. English literary historians have acknowledged him to be the greatest modern American-British poet. Therefore there is no exaggeration in saying that to understand modernism is to understand Eliot. In the present paper the endeavour is made to show that T.S. Eliot is one of those representative poets like W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, and Henry James of the modern period of English literature (1910-1936) who not only brought English literature of Europe into the full stream of the European literary movement, but also participated as much as possible in the process of assimilation of art and religion of the East—more particularly the Hindu doctrines (which are Vedic in origin and Upanishadic in content) of *Bhagvadgita* and Patanjali's *Yoga Darshan* which had already made a considerable headway.

Eliot declared in 1927 that he was "classicist in literature, Anglo-Catholic in religion, and royalist in politics."[1] It tends to point out Eliot's religious position that he was an Anglo-Catholic; but it too can be demonstrated in the tone of plainest evidences from his poetry that some more religious trends have made indelible impressions on the art and mind of Eliot than mere Christianity. Of these trends mention may be made of Hinduism, or Brahamanism, Buddhism, and even Hebraism. The assimilation and operation of Hinduism—more particularly the doctrines of *Upanishads* and *Srimadbhagvadgita* in *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets,* both the representative poems of Eliot, are to be examined and understood in this paper.

Like W.B. Yeats, Eliot was highly influenced by the Indian spirit and tenets of *Srimadbhagvadgita, Upanishads,* Patanjali's *Yoga Darshan,* and the teachings of Buddha.[2] There is copious evidence to show "that Eliot had studied Sanskrit and Pali," delineates A.N. Dwivedi, "at Harward for two years under the able guidance of Charles Lamman."[3] There, at the self-same Harward University, he was almost overpowered "by Buddhism and the philosophy of *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Upanishads* through the lectures of Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmore More—the two great savants of oriental wisdom."[4] At the same time he learnt Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* intensively for one year under the able guidance of James H. Wood (5). In his *After Strange Gods* Eliot says:

> Two years spent in the study of Sanskrit under Charles Lamman, and a year in the mazes of Patanjali's metaphysics under the guidance of James Wood, left me in a state of enlightened mystification.[5]

and also he admitted: "My own poetry shows the influence of Indian thought and sensibility."[6] To find and examine explicit references to and examples from Vedic scriptures like *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita*[7] one may turn to Eliot's poetry: *The Waste Land* (1922), *Four Quartets* (1935-42), and *The Indian Who Died in Africa* (1943).

Looking to the insufficiency of space and certain other limitations of the nature and form of a paper like this which has been devised in the contextual perspective of this academic meet for attracting the attention of the scholars of Vedic literature towards the assimilation and operation of Vedic themes in the poetry of T.S. Eliot without expounding the contents of the poems in detail, the present writer endeavors to focus on the explicit allusions, examples and glimpses from the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita* which have been incorporated in the poems under study with a view to fulfil the dire necessity of peace and salvation in the mechanical, subsistential, and lifeless survival of the modern men in alienation from God and spirituality.

The Waste Land runs into five movements. In the first movement the modern world is pictured as modern waste land,

as 'stony rubbish,' universe of death where spiritual fertility has shrunken hard and dry. It projects the chaotic urbanity of the modern world where humanity is surviving in isolation from God, and, therefore, has been succumbed by vacuity, boredom, draught, sterility and dread. In such a wasteland there is very little hope for peace and salvation of mankind, and scant possibility of regeneration and rebirth.

In the second movement the poet proceeds to unravel the main facets of this spiritual dreadfulness. In this regard it is worthwhile to remember that the foundation of healthy spiritual life of an individual as well as of the society depends on a healthy sexual relationship—a relationship governed by moral discipline and self-control. When sex becomes devoid of self-control and moral discipline, it—by causing perversions and abnormalities—breeds frustration, neurosis, and failure of conjugal amity.

In the third movement, which is captioned after Buddha's "fire sermon," the image of fire in Eliot's mind is associated with that of Lord Buddha and St. Augustine. In Buddha's teachings, one can look for the possibility of the way out of waste land only by overcoming the lust of 'the shady pleasure of sex' and passions, and thereby becoming free from attachment and by practising happy detachment.

In the fourth movement the focus of attention shifts from the element of fire—consuming fire—to the element of water which was once an embodiment of God's blessings, love, spiritual purification, and rebirth.

In the fifth and final movement the element is 'air,' just as in the first and second it is 'earth,' in the third 'fire' and in the fourth 'Water.' In this movement the protagonist, the blind seer Tiresias, is said to have travelled through the "frosty silence in the garden" and the "agony in stony places," and now he hears the thunder of spring over distant mountains which refers to possible rain, that the possibility of life or the water of life that the protagonist has been seeking all through the arid plains and 'rocky mountains' of the waste land, but he fails to find the water of life—love as we read in the poem;

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses
If there were water
And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water.

In the end of this movement Eliot recapitulates the waste land which is devoid of real love, fertility, virtue, and life by establishing an analogy between this rocky, dry, and barren life in the waste land of the western world and the barren country and libidinous life of the mythical Fisher King. But he does not choose to be surrounded by the murk of disappointment ever encircling the thoughts with frustration; rather he looks forward for the sunshine of life and kindles hope that the modern society can be liberated from the curse of waste land only by seeking shelter in the shrine of oriental philosophy of *Upanishads*. In that Eliot has

intensively exerted to survey the world literature to a great extent for seeking the hope for peace and salvation of the modern society; but in the last resort he had no choice except fishing in the deep waters of *Vedas* to set the 'waste land' in order. The poet tries to consult several cultural resources going back to the earliest origin in the Sanskrit *Upanishads*. And he draws the formula of three keys for the triple peace of mankind in the eternal truth of *Vrihadaranyakopanishad*, 5, 2, 1-3.

> Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata
> Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.

"Give," "Sympathise" and "Self-Control" are the three keys with which triple peace and salvation—the birth of higher self—is possible. These closing lines are the core of the poem. This three-fold message Da, Da, Da, which signifies give, sympathise and self-control—is given through thunder by Prajapati to his three kinds of disciples—men, gods, and demons. Man himself is the microcosm of the three peculiar properties, human, angelic, and demonic. This formula should be taken together to form the three-fold path of deliverance of humanity from the darkness and sterility of spirit. Also this formula can be a path for social salvation which will make the blessings of Heaven descend on the tormented humanity like the refreshing gentle rain—Shantih Shantih Shantih—and lead to a state of peace which is beyond the finite ken of human understanding.

Again, to examine and understand how much Eliot was influenced by Indian philosophy, one may turn to *Four Quartets* which takes recourse to the Upanishadic knowledge presented by *Bhagavad Gita*. A reading of the second movement of "The Dry Salvages" in *Four Quartets* reveals that "Time" the destroyer is Time the preserver which verily recounts to the Vedic concept of Time in relation to eternity—timelessness. It explicitly alludes to Mahesh and Vishnu of the Hindu Trinity. Further, in the third movement of "The Dry Salvages" we come to the exhortation of Lord Krishna to Arjuna regarding *Karma Yoga* when he is in the grip of faint heartedness and attachment for his kinsmen. The Lord says:

And do not think of the fruit of action
Fare forward (cf. *Bhagavad Gita*: 2:4 7)

O voyagers, O seamen,
You who come to port, and you whose bodies
Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea
Or whatever even, this is your real destination.
So Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna
On the field of baffle.
Not fare well
But fare forward voyagers.

From these examples it emerges that Eliot attaches greater significance to the philosophy of *Karma Yoga* than any other type of yoga. Sunil Kumar Sarker rightly observes: "Eliot also needed some spiritual influence. He wanted some sort of spiritual emancipation from the drabness of the dry civilization and he found a glimpse of spiritual emancipation particularly in the philosophy of *Bhagavad Gita*." (24)

Bhagavad Gita was so dear to Eliot that he called it "the next greatest philosophical poem to the *Divine Comedy* within my experience."[10] There are recurring references of *Bhagavad Gita* in the poems under study and more particularly in the "Dry Salvages." Hence Eliot's philosophy was not different from the Indian philosophy of *Karma Yoga.* Lord Krishna's demonstration to Arjuna is almost a carbon copy of the philosophy of *Karma Yoga* in *Bhagavad Gita.* Incorporation of allusion and examples from Sanskrit and other foreign literatures in the poems like *Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* is not a mere pointless assemblage of other poets and writers, rather it demonstrates Eliot's point about English people's loss of tradition. Though he was predominantly a Christian, yet he acknowledges his indebtedness to Buddhism and Brahmanism, in his notes to the *Waste Land,* to secure peace and salvation for the rebirth of a civilization.

NOTES

1. T.S. Eliot, *Lancelot Andrews* (1928; London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. viii.

2. Eliot's contemporary poet, W.B. Yeats was also influenced by the spirit of the same Indian scriptures "through his two Indian friends and mentors Mohini Chatterjee and Purohit Swami (Sarker, p. 5).
3. A.N. Dwivedi, "Religious Trends in Eliot's Poetry," *New Responses to T.S. Eliot: A Birth Centenary Tribute,* ed. Narsingh Srivastava (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 1989), p. 10.
4. Sunil Kumar Sarker *T.S. Eliot: Poetry, Plays and Prose* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 1995), p. 5.
5. T.S. Eliot, *After Strange* Gods (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), p. 40.
6. Satya Prasad Sengupta, *T.S. Eliot* (in Bengali) (Calcutta: Employees' Comparative Industrial Society, n.d.), p. 3. Qtd. Sarker, p. 5.
7. It is clear from an oft-quoted *sloka* that *Bhagavad Gita* is inseparably one with all the *Upanishads*, i.e., the *Vedas.*
8. Saroupanishado garo dogadha Gopalnandana Partho vatsah sudhibhokta dugdham Gitamritam mahat.
9. Similarly the four sections of *Four Quartets* correspond to the four elements—earth, water, air, and fire.
10. Qtd. A.N. Dwivedi, p. 11.

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The Quest for the 'Good Place' in the Essays of W.H. Auden

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How to make a world better for men to live in has fascinated the minds of thinkers, philosophers and writers in every age. From Plato to the present day, men have been thinking and writing about what the world would be like if men could create an earthly paradise. Plato's *Republic*, Thomas More's *Utopia* and other such works are sometimes visions of good and possibly attainable systems—social, economic, political—and other times, fantasies of a desirable but unattainable perfection. The urge to write utopias is a constant product of social idealism, revulsion at inefficiency, waste and disorder, and a desire to do something about these evils even though the envisioned remedies are of a magnitude which engenders as much pessimism and frustration and reforming zeal.

Auden's quest for the *good place* made him journey through innumerable societies starting with the Greek to his own contemporary England. The Great Depression of 1929 made him realize that the diseased society could be diagnosed in economic terms. With the English middle-class being greatly affected by the mass unemployment, and with hunger taking on more hands every month, Auden was naturally led to see in the vision of Stalinist Russia a viable cure for all social maladies. The 'Giant Sloths' and the 'Giant Despairs' could be conquered through the reorganization of national life in Marxian terms. Although he had come to believe that society was sick both from within and without, he felt that it was imperative that a political revolution should precede a psychological cure:

> What is the use of trying to remove complexes from individuals when the society in which they will go demands that they should

> have them? It is no time to talk of educating the young until you can guarantee them security and livelihood, interesting work, and a rational amount of leisure . . . education succeeds social revolution, not proceeds. You cannot train children to be good citizens of a state you despise.

A state founded on the ideals of Communism presented a tempting picture of the 'Good Place' because of its coherent philosophy and also on account of its practical success in Russia. As Auden looked outward to the economic and political landscape, he found that the sickness of society was the result of direct human failure to control industrialism. It was a folly for man to accept the machines to be his masters rather than instruments to be controlled by human reason. The capitalist fallacy could be corrected by the 'diktat' of Communism which taught man to control as well as use judiciously the instruments of production. Auden offers convincing explanation for the failure of the machines in increasing man's happiness: "The question is, what you really want? You want I think two things. First security, not to be afraid that you might lose your jobs. To be certain that other people like you and respect you, not only your friends, but the people you see in trauma, or the policeman at the corner. Secondly, you want to prove to yourself and others by your skill or brains that you are worth something, in fact, to give your existence a material meaning."[2]

Auden argues that since human desire is intermittent, variable, and many sided, the machine should not be allowed to lure or dictate human desire. In this he does not ignore the fact that the machines have made it possible for everyone to reach a standard of living which was hitherto unattainable even by the very rich. Auden's suggestion regarding how man can be the master of the machine borders on the socialist viewpoint: "If you are to make the theory fact, you must first establish a Socialist State in which everyone can feel secure, and secondly, have enough self-knowledge and common sense to ensure that machines are employed by your needs, and not your needs by the machines."[3]

Through "How to be Masters of the Machine" Auden reflects the Marxist view which emphasizes that machines be em-

ployed by human needs, and not otherwise. By suggesting that man should have the necessary freedom to control the world in order to satisfy his needs, Auden seems to imply that man must have knowledge of these material laws and the ability to make these laws work towards definite goals.

Auden's vision of the 'Good Place' does not culminate in the Marxist Utopia alone, for the Marxist Utopia caters only to the transformation of the external environment. In order to make his 'Good Place' a perfect embodiment of a perfect society, it was necessary to supplement it with the cure of the human individual who suffered from psychological repression. According to him, "As soon as a Socialism attains power, it must learn to direct its own energy and will need the psychologist."[4] Auden saw man as a victim of a run-down civilization. Unless man was made free of his own 'neurotic dread,' the 'Good Place' could not be realized. Repression of impulses, instincts and desires has rendered man into a sick creature. Referring to D.H. Lawrence's *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, Auden writes in the 'Good Life':

> Adam and Eve fell, not because they had sex or even because they committed the sexual act, but because they became aware of their sex and of the possibility of the act—When sex became to them a mental object—that is, when they discovered they could deliberately enter upon and enjoy and even provoke sexual activity in themselves—then they were cursed and cast out of Eden. When the analyst discovers the incest motive in the unconscious, surely he is only discovering a term of humanity's repressed idea of sex . . . the incest motive is propagated in the pristine unconsciousness by the mind itself, and in its origin is not a pristine impulse but a logical extension of the existent idea of sex and love.[5]

When an individual denies expression to his impulses, these remain undeveloped in the personal unconscious. The two chief barriers, which prevent the cure, are ignorance and fear. Auden suggests the 'parabolic' method of teaching, freeing man from the complexes of fear and ignorance. But people are not cured by reading psychology textbooks: "You must never tell people what to do—only tell them particular stories of particular people with whom they may voluntarily identify themselves, and from which

they voluntarily draw conclusion."[6] Psychology, according to Auden, does not instruct a man to trust his instincts blindly. Psychology aims at releasing a patient through increased self-knowledge, so that "he may really exercise his reason and wake a genuine choice. The ideally cured patient would be one in whom the unconscious and the conscious were at one and who would obey his impulses."[7]

Auden takes frequent recourse to the psychological viewpoints of D.H. Lawrence and Sigmund Freud. From Lawrence, Auden learnt that man's greatest sin was disobedience to his inner law of nature. Auden considered Freud not merely a person but a whole "climate of opinion under whom we conduct our different lives."[8] Freud's diagnosis and treatment of the lost cases showed Auden how by making people aware of the self-knowledge of their own past actions, the patient could be released from all inhibitions that had hitherto bound him. Auden agreed with Freud that all illness is purposive and an attempt at cure. All change occurs as a result of frustration or tension. Unlike Lawrence, Freud believed that sexual satisfaction, however important, was not to become the end of human life:

> Lawrence's concentration on the fact that if you want to know what a man is, you must look at his sexual life, is apt to lead many to believe that pursuit of a sexual goal is the only necessary activity. . . . Had sexual satisfaction been completely adequate human development could never have occurred. Illness and intellectual activity are both reactions to the same thing but not of equal value. . . . Cure consists in taking away the guilt feeling, in the forgiveness of sins, by confession, the re-living of the experience, and by absolution, understanding its significance.[9]

Auden makes it clear that the task of psychology is not to give moral instructions but to draw the attention of the people to the realm of the 'impersonal unconscious,' thereby increasing their knowledge of good and evil. This awareness will give them a perspective from which they will be able to choose better and become increasingly morally responsible for their destiny.

In terms of Auden's view of the 'Good Place,' psychology appears to be a perfect complement to the ideas of Communism.

He finds the teachings of both Marx and Freud to be complementary in suggesting a way to the formation of a perfect society:

> Both Marx and Freud start from the failures of civilization, one from the poor, one from the ill. Both see human behaviour determined, not consciously, but by instinctive needs, hunger and love. Both desire a world where rational choice and self-determination are possible. The difference between them is the inevitable difference between the man who studies crowds in the streets, and the man who sees the patient, or at most the family, in the consulting room. Marx sees the direction of the relation between outer and inner world from without inwards, Freud vice versa.[10]

The Marx-Freud combine takes into account the social, political and psychological needs of a perfect society. Yet the ideal vision remains incomplete without something that could fulfil man's ethical, moral, and spiritual aspirations. The 'Good Place' must necessarily ensure the good life. Auden's idea of the 'Good Life' centres around the relationship between man and God who is the cause and sustainer of the universe.

The fact that Auden was never a church-going Christian did not restrain him from showing a deep reverence for the teachings of Jesus Christ which are concerned with "the relation of the individual to God and his neighbor, irrespective of the political system under which he may happen to live."[11] Auden considers the teaching of Jesus unique in that it is totally non-moralistic. The emphasis is on the 'change of heart' which will ultimately bring about the change in environment. But here a chance of heart implies something more than a change in psychological outlook of the individual and has a direct being on the individual's behaviour. It means that Auden has in mind the end and the means relationship. The 'Good Place' must also be an ethically just society.

Auden's views and his interpretations of Christianity are both descriptive and prescriptive. His prose pieces are as elaborately concerned with Christianity as his poetic outpouring. In numerous essays, Auden explores the theme of Christianity in its

essence and tries to relate its relevance to man's needs in contemporary society.

In his 'Introduction' to *The Protestant Mystics* (1964), Auden agrees with Von Hugel's definition of religion as a tension in unity between three elements—the Institutional, the Intellectual, and the Mystical and says that this is also applicable to every sphere of human activity. Comparing the human species with other living organisms, Auden points out that the human species is not born with any behavioral instincts and has to learn even the most elementary of behaviour. A human society can only survive by a conscious effort by the passing on of traditions from the older generation to the younger. This is because human society is governed by authority and not by instinct or force. As members of a society, the primary attitude should be that of faith in authority.

The function of the Church, according to Auden, is not to convert, because only the Holy Spirit can convert. The Church can only pave way for conversions: "by continuing to preach its good news in words and liturgical acts. She must go on repeating herself, no matter whether her repetitions be passionate or, when faith is low, lifeless and mechanical."[12] In our relation to one another as intelligent people, we shall be compelled to assent to seek the truth because our love for the truth is a common feature, as Auden says: "in relation to one another we are Protestants; in relation to the truth we are Catholics. I must be prepared to doubt every statement you make but I must have unquestioning faith in your intellectual integrity."[13]

Auden says that our dream picture of the Happy Place where suffering and evil are unknown are of two kinds, the Eden and the New Jerusalem: "Eden is a past world in which the contradictions of the present world have not yet arisen; New Jerusalem is a future world in which they have at last been resolved."[14] It is possible for the same individual to imagine both but his interest in both would not be equal, for there is a gulf between Arcadian day-dreaming as that of Eden and the Utopian fantasy of the New Jerusalem which is unbridgeable. He says that in neither place is moral law felt imperative for the idea of universal law is

unknown in Eden and in New Jerusalem, the law is like the laws of Nature, which do not insist or abstain anyone from doing, but describe how its inhabitants are to behave.

Auden analyzes the whole intellectual system of moral imperatives which had governed human life from the beginning of the world upto the present time to discover in Christian thought matters significant to his creation of the ideal 'Good Place.' In his essay, "The Good Life," Auden states:

> Christianity is a twice-born catastrophic religion. Jesus teaches that a real conversion is required, not a slow amelioration. Further, that the good life is possible here and now. The call to enter the kingdom is an immediate one, not a reference to something which may take place after death. As a theology which stresses an absolute gulf between God and man, and the inevitable corruption of the world, is not really consonant with his teaching.

Auden finds in the teachings of Jesus a strong reaction against the evil and absurdity of class and racial prejudice, a reaction that would augment his conception of the Marxist Utopia where all discrimination would be abolished.

It is evident from the above discussion that Auden's life-long quest takes him across the frontiers of both time and space so that he could imaginatively create an ideal place for habitation by the truly human. He moves from the immediate environment of political, social and economic crises to those visions of democratic Athens, the Edens, the New Jerusalems and the Ideal State in order to seek to resolve the contemporary crises. He continually experiments with all available theories and ideas by means of which he could take his society out of the throes of the crisis which threatened it. He brilliantly assimilates divergent theoretical views in evolving the idea of the 'Good Place' where the political, the psychological, and the spiritual could converge in perfect harmony.

NOTES

1. W.H. Auden in *The Criterion*, XII (Jan 1933), p. 289.

2. W. H. Auden, *The English Auden: Poems, Essays, and Dramatic Writings 1927-1939,* ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), p. 316.
3. Ibid., p. 317.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 341.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 346.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 347.
7. *Ibid.*
8. W.H. Auden, "In Memory of Sigmund Freud," *Collected Poems,* p. 270.
9. *The English Auden*, p. 340.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 340.
11. W.H. Auden, *Forewords and Afterwards* (1959) Selected by Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 8.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
14. W.H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 345.
15. *Ibid.*

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T.S. Eliot and Donald Davie: A Comparative Approach

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A critical evaluation of Donald Davie's poetic stature invariably invites his comparison with modern writers, particularly T.S. Eliot, the major voice of the 20th century poetic scene. Though Davie considered F.R. Leavis his teacher and prophet, he could not remain untouched by the influences of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. By about 1960 Davie had found ample reasons for appreciating the *cantos* which involved a distinct change in his own critical attitudes. Henceforth, Pound was to be no longer aligned with Eliot as an exponent of the symbolist aesthetic. He showed that imagism was not development of symbolism but something in opposition to it. In spite of all these differences, Davie firmly continued to admire T.S. Eliot as a great poet and innovator of new technique in modern verse. Davie has assimilated in his later poetry the myth, symbol and images which are the characteristics of Eliot's poetry too. His unique poem *Three for Water Music* included in *Collected Poems* 1971-80 is akin to Eliot's famous poem *Four Quartets* in the employment of rhythm, music, symbol, imagery and some other principles. In this way it is obvious that apart from other works of Eliot, *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* have influenced him deeply and these influences have been best exemplified in the marvellous collection *Three for Water Music*, which remains one of the best compositions, ever created by him after the Second World War.

Three for Water Music is a composite of three reflections on water with rich mythological allusions and its music reminds us of Eliot's *Four Quartets*. In western classical music, a quartet is a piece written to be played by four stringed instruments. It is

divided into five sections called movements, linked by recurring themes, which are developed in a complex way and then resolved. In *Three for Water Music*, one may find the musical analogy, quite well paralleled. There are merely three poems, but each is divided into five parts or movements of varying tempo, and there is the complex development of themes. As for instance, the note of sound and music of water can be seen in the first poem "The Fountain of Cyane":

> Late, late in that season...
> Easy, easy the lap
> And rustle of blue waters?

Here in the above lines, the consequent use of alliterations in first and second line highlights the musical pattern of Davie. In the memoirs, Davie comments on his aptitude to music:

> I loved these sessions, have loved them ever since, and love them still; but have had to learn that I cannot be indulged in them at all often, because it appears that though my voice is powerful, 'I have no ear.' In fact I could have learned this fact about myself quite early, when the music master at Bamsley Grammar School (whose surname escapes me, though his given names were John Thomas—an occasion for ribaldry) stopped a chorus to ask 'who is making that terrible noise?' to be answered resignedly by several classmates: 'It's Davie, Sir, he always sings like that.[2]

Three for Water Music is a sequence of meditations ("The Fountain of Cyane," "Wild Board Clough" and "The Fountain of Arethusa") stimulated by the memory of specific localities and moving, like Eliot's *Four Quartets*, between a studied and a more conversational idiom. The poet's central concern, however, is the poetic imagination and the relation between contrivance and inspiration. He sees his own 'precarious springs' of creativity conserved beyond the 'misted panes of mystifying memory' in the silence of a 'conservatory.'

In "The Fountain of Cyane," Davie writes about poetry with the fluency of Dryden. The occasion of the poem's creation is his visit to the pool of Cyane in Sicily where, on Ovid's account,

Persephone was carried off by the Lord of the underworld and her grief-stricken companion Cyane wept herself into a pool:

> Sky-blue, dark-blue, Seal-green, cerulean dyes
> Dye into fables that we hoped were lies
> And feared were truths. A happy turn, award,
> Says they are both, and nothing untoward. (87)

Considering the springs of inspiration and his way of drawing upon them, Davie argues that poetry requires formality, but not so that it suppresses the anarchic violence which is part of the truth of reality. Language should crack a little for grief into fault-traceries on the perfection of form. Epiphanies:

> like the closed off
> precincts all right, but never
> When those exult in their closures. (88-89)

Moreover, poetry requires a subject which, though it may not have the necessity of existence, should at least be a postulate useful for making sense of life.

The sexual perversion and loss of moral values alluded to in the opening lines is the central theme of the poem. Christianity does not permit physical contact "for delight" because the union between man and woman has a serious responsibility to discharge, i.e. the procreation of the species:

> Her father's brother rapes her.
> In the bright
> Ovidian colours all is for delight. (87)

In this respect he resembles Eliot whose obsession was moral turpitude until the publication of *The Waste Land*. The reference to Philomela myth in the section "The Fire Sermon" more succinct:

> Twit twit twit
> Jug jug jug jug jug jug
> So rudely forc'd
> Tereu.

Davie's concern with the debasement to which love has been subjected, is pronounced in some other poems of the volume

also. The machine and industry started a war against nature and even noble human sentiments got degenerated and love suffered the greatest casualty. Eliot has recorded his disgust in the famous 'typist' passage of the third movement in *The Waste Land.* Davie has underlined the selfishness and artificiality of love in 20th century in the poem "Morning." The following lines can pertinently be cited:

> Love gets up of rumpled sheets and does singing
> Under his breath to the supermarket, the classroom,
> The briskly unhooded
> Bureaucratic typewriter. See how
> Sal winks upon its clever keys, and Flora
> In a northern winter, far underground,
> Feels herself sore at nubs and nipples. (74)

Instead of idealizing and glorifying love as the great romantic poets of 19th century did, Davie confronts this theme in terms of contemporary reality. If one looks for the traces of romantic agony in his poetry, one might be disappointed because Davie is a realist and he lays his hand on the pulse of the modern man who lives a unique existence, fragmented and alienated both from nature and his creator.

The second poem "Wild Boar Clough" projects Davie's own religious zeal and his meditation on some serious theological issues. The way towards experiencing the heaven is painful. It also gives a grim picture of human life because who can save us from the pathos of history and our fears of natural disasters. But if under clear-glassed windows, the clear day looking in:

> We should be always at worship
> And trusting in His merits
> Who saves us from the pathos
> Of history and our fears
> Of natural disasters. (92)

The theme is presented, not straightforwardly, but through concepts and the crystallization of the experience comes through metaphors, paradoxes and negatives. Thought is expressed through images—place, day and boar. The poem ends with the

music and images of slaughtered saints cut down on a Sunday morning by dragons:

> Sound of singing drifts
> Tossed up like spume, persistently
> Pulsing through history and out of it. (94)

Three for Water Music closes with the poem "The Foundation of Arethusa" which mirrors the poet again with the past behind him. Furthermore, this section is marked for being personal rather then philosophical. In "Gratitude, Need and Gladness," he acknowledges his debt towards the inhabitants of everyday for the small glories he finds there. Thus "it is not Shelley's grandiosity he praises, but rather his own mother's way of reciting Shelley, which first turned him to poetry and to which he turns again now, in memoriam."[3]

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that *Three for Water Music* is a sublime composition of Davie and its artistic beauty has an aura of Eliot's *Four Quartets.* It derives its theme, apparently, symbolism, images and resolution from religion. There is a formal unity between the three sections. Recurring references to places associated with the poet's personal past, as well as to contemporary events, recurring allusions and images and ideas—such as crying, pool, water, time, and seal contribute to making the sections a coherent poetic statement. One can, however, not overlook the basic subtlety running through all the sections—that of the difficulty of giving artistic expression to profound religious apprehensions. Davie has developed a unique poetic mode and has explored the technical possibilities of grappling with various challenging themes. Anthony Twait's observation that "Davie [developed] from polished neo-Augustanisms to more oblique and glancing moments of perception"[4] is substantiated by the poetic virtues of *Three for Water Music.*

NOTES

1. Donald Davie, *Collected Poems* 1971-83 (Manchester: Carcanet, 1983), p. 88.

2. Donald Davie, *These the Companions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 7.
3. Emily Groshloz, "Master Workers and Others," *Hudson Review*, Vol. 36 (Autumn 1983), p. 584.
4. Anthony Thwait, *Poetry Today* (London: Longman, 1985), p. 46

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Indianness of Indian English Literature
Sri Aurobindo as English Poet

VIBHA MISHRA

In August 1959, Kathleen Raine, an English poet and critic of some distinction, wrote in his letter that Sri Aurobindo, being an Indian, had no competence to write poetry in English and that he was only a great thinker and philosopher but not a poet at all.

Not only this, it has been said that English poetry can be written only by those whose mother tongue is English, since English language was not Sri Aurobindo's mother tongue it was impossible for him to write English poetry of any worth. As a poet, he was a 'failure,' He was in fact only a great thinker and not a poet at all. Here in my paper I have tried to prove that Aurobindo was a successful Indian poet who wrote English poetry.

Aurobindo was born in Calcutta. His father, a man of great ability and strong personality, had been among the first to go to England for his education. He returned entirely anglicized in habits, ideas and ideals so strongly that Aurobindo as a child spoke English and Hindustani only. He was determined that his children should receive an entirely European Upbringing. Aurobindo was very much interested in English poetry, literature and fiction.

About the early English poems which he wrote between his eighteenth and twentieth years in England he says that he knew nothing about India or her culture. What these poems express is the education and imagination and ideas and feelings created by a purely European culture and surroundings, it could not be otherwise.[1]

In the formative period of his life, Sri Aurobindo not only lived amidst English surroundings and grew intimate with fami-

lies with English life, language and culture in a direct and natural manner, but also wrote English poetry out of this familiarity. In fact, it was the culture and language of his mother country, which at this time were alien to him. In fact, he was totally anglicized and his poetry was influenced by his upbringing.

After his return to India his mastery over the English language grew constantly with his handling of it as the medium of expression of his poetic vision and inspiration. It was his view that the English language had a greater potentiality of development for this purpose than any other; so in writing his poetry he constantly tried to realize that potentiality. In doing this he may seem to the conservative English literary mind to be breaking the conventional forms of the English language. But that was not because of his ignorance of or unfamiliarity with its nature associations or his lack of poetic faculty, but because, with all the skill and scruple of his creative genius, he was re-moulding it to the pressing need of the future age. He succeeded in this endeavour to the extent of making the English tongue subtle, supple and rich enough to be an apt medium for the utterance of the mantra, and in vast stretches of glowing outbursts of spiritual inspiration and vision.

It need hardly be added that his poetic development followed the same curve of evolution as that of his consciousness through Yoga, and therefore all his poetry did not reach the supreme height as his *Savitri*; but even at its lowest pitch it is always genuine poetry written with unmistakable inspiration.

The English language has by new become so international that outside England it is gradually outgrowing its insular peculiarities. In India the English language has been in dynamic use for over a century and it has taken such deep and firm roots that even after fifty years of national independence we are not unanimously agreed to discard it in favour of another language. The world is fast moving towards an international outlook and culture, and since for the development of that outlook and culture the English language can be extremely helpful, we see no reason why we should not retain it and put it to the best use for this great purpose. In doing so in the distinctive manner of the

Indian culture, the creative mind of India may shape the English language on lines which may be different from those of the English people.

Especially for the expression of the spiritual experience, the English language has great potentiality, and flow that the spiritual genius of India is swiftly awakening after centuries of slumber with a new power of incalculable possibilities—the supermind—it may, if it chooses to lay hands on the English tongue as its fit vehicle of expression, shape out of it unimaginable marvels which will enrich the world culture more that anything else.

As Sri Aurobindo said: "If our aim is not success of personal fame but to arrive at the expression of spiritual truth and experience of all kind in poetry, the English tongue is the most widespread and is capable of profound turns of mystic expression which make it admirably fitted for the purpose; if it could be used for the highest spiritual expression, that is worth trying."[2] It is therefore not unlikely that in the coming years the English language may find itself renewed and revitalized more in an alien country than in its native land.

When Sir Herbert Read went through Sri Aurobindo's long poem 'Illion" he expressed his opinion in his letter: "it is a remarkable achievement by any standard and I am full of amazement that some one not of English origin should have such a wonderful command not only of English language as such, but of its skilful elaboration into poetic diction of such high quality."

NOTES

1. *On Himself* (Centenary Edition), Vol. 26, pp. 1-2.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 455.

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Exile, Alienation and Cultural Tradition: V.S. Naipaul's *Half a Life*

PARMANAND JHA

V.S. Naipaul, the widely acclaimed finest living writer of English prose, is the seventh Indian or person with Indian roots to be awarded the Nobel Prize and the second, after Rabindranath Tagore, for literature. Born in Trinidad, of Indian parentage, educated in Port of Spain and Oxford University, Naipaul has to his credit more than fourteen works of fiction and ten works of non-fiction. He is one of the finest winners of the prestigious Booker Prize (in 1971, for *In a Free State*) and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1990. Living in England, he alternates between a country home in Wiltshire and a flat in the Knightsbridge locality of London. A relentless explorer of the traumas of post-colonial change with a moralist's outrage, Naipaul, in all of his writings "focuses on individuals attempting to escape Fate, for Fate belongs to a world of magic, myth and ritual where the past exists but not history, a world which provides a sense of wholeness and belonging but proscribes ambition and curbs freedom. His heroes strive for the latter, for self-awareness and for change. This could also be a metaphor for peoples and nations."[1] The Swedish Academy citation rightly remarks, "He is to a very high degree a cosmopolitan writer, a fact that he himself considers to stem from his lack of roots; he is unhappy about the cultural and spiritual poverty of Trinidad, he feels alienated from India, and in England he is incapable of relating to and identifying with the traditional values of what was once a colonial power."[2]

Half A Life, Naipaul's latest novel, published just before the Nobel Prize came his way, portrays and evaluates the lives of the people of mixed descent in three countries—India, England and

Portuguese Africa (modelled on Mozambique) and their struggle to discover their identities. Partly autobiographical, the novel delineates the traumas of a tainted and troubled past, of attempting to find some meaning and purpose of life. It beautifully analyses the pangs of the exiles, their living a half-life, their sense of alienation, and their cultural traditions. "*Half A Life*," writes Maggie Ball, "has been over eight years in the making and combines many of the traditional Naipaul themes such as cultural alienation, the concept of national literature, how we define ourselves, with an unusual narrative structure."[4]

The story of the novel, moving through three different settings and three different eras, is told by three narrators. The first part of the story is told to the hero, Willie Chandran, by his 'self-deluded' father. A Brahmin by birth, coming from a line of priests (5), Willie's father decides to join the Mahatma's campaign against casteism and marries a 'backward' girl, very low in caste, as a supreme gesture of sacrifice, 'not an empty sacrifice . . . but a more lasting kind of sacrifice, something the Mahatma would have approved of.' (10) Even as he takes the vow of sexual abstinence, a vow of 'brahmacharya' (33) he fathers a son and a daughter in quick succession. The son is Willie Somerset Chandran, the middle name taken from the visit by the famous English writer Somerset Maugham to his ashram; and the daughter is Sarojini, named after the 'woman poet of the independence movement.' The stigma of marrying below caste, the disappointment of the college Principal who wanted him to marry his daughter, the fear of the fire-brand uncle of his wife and his own shell-shocked parents forced him to leave his job in the Land Tax Department of the Maharaja and find shelter in the courtyard of the temple. Subsequently he set up his own ashram and began living the life of a 'holy man.' "This pantomime of high intention and pathos subsumes the story of Willie Chandran's father's life; his stints in the Maharaja's Land Tax Department, his refuge in melancholy and his eventual career as a bogus holy man. Curiously it stands Naipaul's own most poignant story on its head; the story of his first father's ambition and failure."[5] This was the story that Willie Chandran's father

told. It took about ten years. Different things had to be said at different times. Willie Chandran grew up during the telling at the story (35).

It is at this point that the omniscient author intervenes to narrate the second part of the story. Having inherited the shaded, undistinguished ancestry in 'an undefined place in pre-independent India,' Willie Chandran sets out on a journey of life. Disillusioned with his stay at the Mission School and his parents, and uncertain of his future, Willie obtains, with help from one of his father's contacts, a scholarship to a college of 'education for mature students' in London. He arrives in England to find himself on the fringes of the 'special passing bohemian-immigrant life of London of the late 1950s. 'The immigrant community of post-war London, its dingy west-end clubs, lonely pavements and sexual encounters and even the eccentric milieu of the English writers captivate as much as frighten Willie. He is portrayed here as a young man 'with nothing to his name but his promise as a writer, drifting aimlessly, groping for a voice.' Egged on by his creative triggers and armed with the advice of his publishing friend Roger, Willie begins to recreate himself with little lies in his stories, modelled on the borrowings from 'old Hollywood movies' and the 'Maxim Gorky trilogy from Russia.' Reviewers, however, dismiss his book of short stories as a 'nondescript savoury' and he quickly abandons his plan to be a writer. 'Let the book die, let it fade away . . . I will write no more." (123)

Willie's life in London is fraught with many a frightening experience. He suffers from alienation and emptiness in being in the metropolis, 'a sense of being without history or understanding, the difficulty a writer from the colonies faces in finding material and his shocking sexual encounters.' He sleeps with prostitutes and friends' girl friends only to discover his own sexual incompetence. "Willie realises that his own failures mirror those of his father's and that these personal failures mirror the failure of colonialism; Britain losing India and Portugal losing Mozambique."[6] Willie, however, finds love in a chance encounter with Ana, a mixed race girl from Africa and admirer of his abandoned book. They meet in his hostel-room. Willie has been

a little tense and nervous before her arrival. But 'as soon as he saw her, all his anxieties fell away, and he was conquered' (125). The most intoxicating thing was 'that for the first time in his life he felt himself in the presence of someone who accepted him completely.' At home his life had been ruled by his mixed inheritance. It spoilt everything. Even the love he felt for his mother, which should have been pure, was full of the pain he felt for their circumstances' (125). His experience of love with Ana, he hopes, might bring him the fulfillment he so desperately seeks. With her, he travels to her home in a province of Portuguese Africa 'a country populated by desperate businessmen and their frustrated wives, all uncertainly living out the last days of colonialism.'

The eighteen years of Willie's life with Ana in Africa recounted by him to his sister Sarojini forms the third and final part of the story running into 87 pages. At Ana's estate house in Africa, Willie feels like a stranger but draws sustenance from Ana: 'It may be because of something in our culture,' Willie reflects, 'that in spite of appearances, men are really looking for women to lean on' (141). And further, 'Ana was important for me because I depended on her for my idea of being a man' (142).

Willie gets along passionately with Ana, who helps him to live with 'a new idea of sex,' a new idea of his capacity. He experiences with her 'some genuine excitement, some moments of sexual discovery.' 'We each found comfort in the other; and we had become very close, not looking beyond the other for satisfaction, not knowing, in fact, that another kind of satisfaction was possible' (189). But he does look beyond Ana for satisfaction when in the company of Alvaro, the Correias' estate manager, he visits the 'converted warehouse on the edge of the town, the blue bulbs and the dance floor and little cubicles and sleeps with a small, young girl who 'with her extraordinary look of command and aggression, need filled eyes, body becoming all tension' revives him and thus helps him recover from all the shame and incompetence of his earlier sexual encounters in London. Returning home, he doesn't feel that he has betrayed Ana in any important or final way. He feels that split-second still locked

away in his mind. These furtive visits to the warehouses continue for some time until one day when he spots among the 'rouged and dressed up girls,' Julio's daughter. Ana's little maid who had evinced some interest in him on the very first morning of his arrival in Ana's estate house. Recalling the day, Willie feels that 'that was the day when I betrayed Ana, sullied her, as it were, in her own house.' Willie's visits to the 'places of pleasures' cease to give him any real pleasure now. This was partly due to the 'worry about seeing Julio's daughter again.' 'But the main reason was that the act of sex there, which used to excite me with its directness and brutality, had grown mechanical' (195). He tries to renew his lovemaking with Ana 'hoping to recover the closeness that had once seemed so natural' (195) but it doesn't work. Soon, at a weekend lunch party he meets Graca, Correias' new Manager's wife and Carla's Convent School friend who has 'disturbed eyes' and looks at him 'in a way that no woman had looked at me before' (198). He makes love to Graca in the deserted cobra-infested German castle. "It would have been terrible," Willie thinks afterwards, "if he had died without knowing this depth of satisfaction, this other person that I had just discovered within myself. It was worth any price, any consequences." (205) This stormy affair is, however, short-lived. Willie's sensual life receives a setback when he realises that he has not been living his own life all these years. Africa's brutalities intervene to dry up his sexual urge. He slips one day on the front steps of Ana's estate house and becomes unconscious. He wakes up later to find himself in the military hospital in the town 'among wounded black soldiers with shining faces and tired red eyes.' Post-Independent Civil War has broken out in Ana's land. When she comes to see him in the hospital, Willie tells her that he is going to leave her: 'I have given you eighteen years, I can't give you any more. I can't live your life any more, I want to live my own' (136). He leaves Ana, leaves Africa and thus arrives in Berlin, at his sister's house.

Willie discovers, as he narrates his life in Africa to his sister in Berlin, that 'there was something in the African heart that was shut away from the rest of us, and beyond politics.' A large part

of that something happens to be raw sexual abandon. "Willie's submission to sexual desire is wholly believable for the very reason that he has previously been stunted into half-life by the constrictions of caste in India and class in England. Africa releases him into sensuality."[7]

A major theme running through the novel and supported by its structure is that of 'exiles living a half-life.' The story of the first forty years of the life of Willie Chandran, living in exile, first in London, then in Portuguese Africa in the years leading up to independence and civil war seems to suggest that man's search for wholeness is only half-successful. 'The displacement of the novel's characters, from Willie through to the other exiles he comes into contact with, and how they manage this disappointment forms the tension in the story."[8] Willie's circle of acquaintances in London consists of many an exile that lives in a 'half-and-half world' and suffers the pangs of alienation. There is that smartly dressed Percy Cato, a Jamaican of mixed parentage, 'who appeared to have no proper place in the world' (62) and who becomes Willie's guide to the city; Marcus, the West Indian, West African with his plans for a white grand child; and, of all people, Ana who looks like an extension of Willie's own existence, mirroring his own sense of being on the outside of life, 'homeless without a direction back.' Her autobiographical tales of 'Luisa' also mirror Willie's half-lies about his own background. All these exiles are living a half life or are looking for a life and perhaps having to borrow a life, never living life to the full. Even Sarojini, whose life remains largely untold, is homeless, wandering from one city to another with her German filmmaker husband. Her life is no more her own than Willie's. Sarojini's drift is more poignant than Willie's, because she has hardly anything to fall back on. Willie has his stories and a hope of finding some purpose in life: 'All that he had flow was a belief in magic—that one day something would happen, an illumination would come to him, and he would be taken by a set of events to the place he should go' (122). Willie discovers some purpose in life, though temporarily, through his sensual associations and sexual encounters in Ana's Africa but he realises their

futility soon after as these happen to be experiences in external settings and cannot be permanent for him. Near the end of his African life when Ana proposes they should go to Portugal, Willie replies, 'Even if we go to Portugal, even if they let me in there, it would be still your life. I have been hiding for too long' (227). And Ana's assertion, 'Perhaps it wasn't really my life either' suggests that even those who seem to be living their own lives don't really have more of a personal life than an exile.

Allied with that of exile and alienation, is the theme of cultural tradition. In a recent interview with Farrukh Dhondy, Naipaul remarked, "My concern in the book [*Half a Life*] is also the historical side of things. Willie runs away from his background, and even when he gets to Africa, this Portuguese province, he is reminded of the background from which he came."[9] Our origins always remain with us. The bonds of tradition are too steely to break. Trying to explain his sexual incompetence, Willie speaks on phone to Perdita, Roger's girl friend: 'But I have a need of you. It was bad last time. But I'll tell you. It is a cultural matter. I want to make love to you, but then at the actual moment old ideas take over and I become ashamed and frightened, I don't know of what, and it all goes bad' (118). Later in Africa, Willie does not feel the excitement he has been seeking desperately with the small, young girl in the warehouses: 'I couldn't feel any longer for her. Even if I did, all the ghosts were already with me, the ghosts of home . . . all the shame and incompetence' (187). Further, in a post-coital exchange in a Land-Rover in the bush, Willie whispers to Graca, 'I am smelling you on my body as I drive' (205). At the same time, he remains aware that the life into which he has been initiated is not really his own. The 'sexual simplicities of his earlier days are replaced by the opening up of new senses by a life of sensation in the company of Graca and he feels helpless. At the same time now same half-feeling of the inanity of my life grew within me and with it there came the beginning of respect for the religious outlawing of sexual extremes' (211). Rooted, thus, in his own cultural tradition, Willie finally fails to establish any fulfilling relationship through his escape from caste and class.

Willie's real life, however, lies in waiting for something to happen, like the characters in *Waiting for Godot*. Whether something really happens or not is not the issue. "There is no full life except for the life we live. We make and remake ourselves to suit our circumstances. Naipaul's *Half a Life* raises interesting questions about what life really is all about."[10] In a prose style that has the controlled edginess of Joseph Conrad in its evocation of a decadent yet curiously alluring frontier experience, *Half a Life* brings its own unique illumination to a novel aspect of our shared humanity.

NOTES

1. *The Times of India*, New Delhi, October 13, 2001, p. 14.
2. *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, October 12, 2001.
3. V.S. Naipaul, Half a Life (London: Picador, 2001).
4. Maggie Ball, "Slippery Substances," A Review of V.S. Naipaul's *Half a Life* (books on line telegraph.co.uk).
5. Soma Choudhary, "Taking Leads from His Own Life," *The Hindustan Times*, September 23, 2001.
6. Maggie Ball, "Slipping Substances."
7. Jonathan Bate, *Escape from* caste *and* class (books on line felegraph.co.uk accessed on October 24, 2001).
8. Maggie Ball, "Slippery Substances."
9. V.S. Naipaul, "Indian writers don't know why their country is in such a mess," An interview with Farrukh Dhondy, Cupidonline. com. Accessed on October 24, 2001.
10. Maggie Ball, "Slippery Substances."

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Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross:* Narrator as Episign and Device

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A common strain of contemporary theory is the denial of originality in a work of literature. The text is simply a site for the play of signs over which the writer has no control or paternity; it is a tissue composed of intertextuality. In his celebrated essay, 'The Death of the Author' (where the sensational metaphor glosses aver the weakness of his argument), Roland Barthes observes: "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 multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."[1]

This position of utter helplessness in literary theory appears to have a psychological rather than factual basis as regards the relationship between author and work; it is also inadequate for application to such empirically oriented writers as Ngugi wa Thiong'o. It scores its point by denying the usage of the words originality and 'intentionality.'

There is no harm in conceding that like matter in the universe, entirely new signs cannot be produced. What an original author does is to break and recombine, weld and merge available signs in order to create new ones and it is here that his esemplastic imagination plays its part.

In a similar way, intentionality can be shown to be an essential in a work of literature; in fact it is prior to and controls the process of sign-fusion. It is intentionality that makes Ammu in *The God of Small Things* so different from Jacinta Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross.* Both of them are dynamic and self-

respecting, both are victimized by patriarchy but where Ammu, considering sexual pleasure to be the ultimate goal, breaks down and meets an ignominious death, Wariinga shoots the man who has misused her. As Stewart Geham has remarked "the text may not be the emanation of an Author-God, but neither is it an arbitrary happening; textuality implied intentionality."[2]

Intentionality and imagination, or pratibha, supply the necessary energy and instrument respectively for the signs to pattern in a certain texture and move in the desired direction with the author at the helm of the affairs. But he cannot wield total control of the process because substance on which he works is given by convention and culture. His enterprise is in the nature of a struggle with a fair chance of success. He is not a passive victim of the play of signs but a manipulator who imposes his design on them and produces new semiotic effects: in a sense every good work of art is a partial defeat of the convention that upholds the sign.

Before we analyze the narrator in *Devil on the Cross* as a sign, we must say a few words on the structure of the sign and its manipulation by a creative writer. A sign consists of two elements which are like two sides of a coin. The signifier is the spoken or written symbol and signified is the concept which is conventionally associated with the signifier. What is deliberately ignored by the modern theorist (of the deconstructive bias) is the fact that the signified is upheld and sustained by the empirical and psychic reality including cultural superstructure, which, at a particular time, is the guarantor of meaning. A sign, if it has to function effectively in social intercourse, must remain oriented to the external reality and must undergo a modification or replacement of its signified as the historical changes take place.

A creative writer exploits the rules of sign-management devised and approved by the community but more than that he also makes use of his imaginative resources to open innumerable possibilities of giving birth to new signs. And to analyze the sign 'narrator' in *Devil on the Cross* is to illustrate the horizontal and vertical operations of creative sign-building by Ngugi, since

Ngugi himself translated this novel into English, we can safely work out the symbolism involved in his use of English words.

The key-sign, no doubt, is prophet. The chief components of the signified are closeness to God, power of vision, perception of evil in the society, role of a teacher and voice of warning. The Biblical prophets also care for their people, admonish them and yet love them dearly. The symbol is, however, altered and completely enriched by adding the word 'Justice.' Like 'God' it begins with a capital letter and unseats the former as the origin of all values, because it invokes the Marxist ideals of equality and non-exploitation of the 'working' class. Without abandoning or changing the signifier, Ngugi has assigned new symbolism to the sign by subtraction, addition and reorientation. At the same time by retaining the signifier, he is able to keep the roles contained in the traditional concept.

The narrator in this way is made to symbolize the Marxist wisdom: throughout his narration the socialist value system is assumed to be the basis; he can perceive below the isolated events and actions of individuals and groups the reality of class structure, class antagonism and class struggle; he is aware of the process of exploitation—he discerns good and evil in the society and declares his verdict on individuals and groups. He is also the author (Ngugi) in a state of vision when he can see and narrate the story of a victim with deeper symbolic implications. But, as we shall explain later, the narrator is not to be equated with a realistic character and viewed as a real person—he is a sign and a device.

The narrator's own problem—the problem of revealing the sociological truth or keeping it hidden—is related in the beginning: it is in the nature of a metatext. The question was whether the story should be told or not; some people in Ilmorog advised the narrator to keep silent because the story was so shameful that it better remained in oblivion; others argued that their minds need not be afflicted again by re-presenting the tragic events. But the narrator is not convinced:

> The Devil, who would load us into the blindness of a heart and into the deafness of the mind, should be crucified, and care should be taken that his acolytes do not lift him down from the Cross to pursue the task of building Hell for the people on Earth.[3]

The Cross here, is made to symbolize only an instrument of punishment for wrong doing; as a sign it is divested of the ideas of sacrifice and martyrdom. Indeed, such revisions of Christian symbolism are effected throughout in the course of the story and the process is assignable to the narrator as an embodiment of superior wisdom.

At first he succumbs to the arguments of a few people. Then Wariinga's mother comes and appeals to his prophetic and poetic self:

> Gicaandi Player, tell the story of the child I loved so dearly. Cast light upon all that happened, so that each may pass judgement only when he knows the whole truth. Gicaandi Player, reveal all that is hidden. (7)

The narrator is still undecided and hesitant: he doubts his powers and right to take on the task as a public responsibility; he is also worried about his safety. At this critical moment, he hears the pleading cries of many voices: "Gicaandi Player, Prophet of Justice, reveal what now lies concealed by darkness." (8)

Secularization of the signs continues. Fasting by the narrator is to be interpreted in non-theological terms; it symbolizes the discipline and suffering that are necessitated by the inner demand of the masses. He has to convince himself that what he perceives as ground reality is not an illusion; it is not the product of a vacuous theory or philosophy He is also made conscious of the public nature of the ideology which informs the story and of his duty to share his insight with the people.

Then he accepts the challenge and invites the people to share the story as a concern of the community which is not merely a past-time but a matter for serious thought:

> Come and let us reason together.
> Come and let us reason together now.
> Come and let us reason together about

Jacinta Wariinga before you pass judgement on our children. (9)

We have called "Prophet" an episign, whose further implications for the content, form and language of the main text have to be explored. Incidentally it may be noted that the word is derived from Greek: pro+phanai, pro literally means 'before' (either of place or of time) and 'Phanai' means to speak.' Thus a prophet is one who speaks before. In the novel under discussion, the narrator's episode precedes the main story both in place (when we consider the text spatially) and in time, when we regard it as something told to others. Pro may also mean 'publicly' as in 'proclaim.' It is interesting to find that all the above associations are aroused by the narrator.

Like books of the Prophets, the story presents an impassioned account of the various kinds of evils prevalent in the Kenyan society, it speaks of the sufferings and oppression of the honest, simple people, it punctuates the text with warnings. The syntax it Biblical and the language is steeped in traditional idiom of Gikuyu:

> Tears flow down her cheeks, and she does not wipe them away. Bitterness rages in her heart. Kareendi asks herself many questions without answers. The grade cow has stopped yielding milk. So it is now fit only for slaughter? For Kareendi, the sword is burned at both ends. She is back where she started. (25)

> The affairs of the heart are difficult to fathom. The hearts of men do not open up to each other like mole holes. The affairs of the heart are a dense forest, which no one can penetrate. (49)

The writing also rises, from time to time, to visionary heights, through dream, reverie and symbolic encoding. The narrator had prepared the reader for this in his own episode in chapter one:

> And after seven days had passed, the Earth trembled, and lightning scored the sky with its brightness, and I was lifted up and I was borne up to the rooftop of the house, and I was shown many things. (8)

The most significant aspect of episign (narrator) is that it necessitates the use of Christian symbolism throughout the story; it

compels its abuse and misuse and, with the Marxist notion of justice superposed, reshapes the whole system of values. F. Odun Balogun in an essay titled, "Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*: The Novel as Hagiography of a Marxist," has observed that, whereas in *Petals of Blood* Ngugi took up the usual anti-Christianity position of a Marxist, in *Devil on the Cross* "he was not as interested in satire, as in depicting Christianity in the ironic situation of undermining capitalism and of actively promoting Marxism.[4] There is however, little evidence in the novel and in the African situation to support the view that Christianity is seen to be promoting Marxism. It is true that Wariinga is deeply religious and devoutly prays to Mary in an hour of distress, but in the intellectual context set by the narrator she ought to be regarded as naïve, in fact, as the symbols in her nightmare suggest, in her unconscious mind she associates Christian rituals with the machinery of oppression. In the course of her tribulations, she learns to depend on herself and not on God.

It could perhaps be more appropriate to say that the realm of the capitalist oppressor has the same structure as organized religion—it has its angels, it has its beast, and other paraphernalia. And this parallelism in itself is an unfavourable comment on Christianity.

But we must concede that Ngugi also realizes that Marxism itself is a religion. It has its prophet of Justice, it has its martyrs and promises redemption through suffering. When Wariinga tells the young men to whom she had told the parable of Kareendi that her heart felt lighter, "just as it used to feel after I had confessed to the Catholic priest," (27) the young man replies, "May be I'm priest who has not yet been ordained. . . . But I belong to an order that has been called to serve by the poverty of the people of Kenya." (27)

Finally, we turn to the narrator as a device. Broadly speaking, every sign is a device for cognition, but when it comes to considering a character in literature, we demand verisimilitude to life. It is often heard from Bradleyan critics that Shakespeare's characters are real as life: you are tempted to discuss them as persons you have met or seen. This critical attitude was ridiculed

by L.C. Knights in his well known essay, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" (An Essay in the Theory and Practice of Shakespeare Criticism, L.C. Knights, *Explorations*.)[5] Similarly, discussing the plays of Shakespeare, Wilson Knight declares that we shall not look for perfect verisimilitude to life, "but rather see each play as an expanded metaphor, by means of which the original vision has been projected into forms roughly corresponding with actuality."[4] He continues, 'The persons, ultimately are not human at all, but purely symbols of a poetic vision." (16)

In fiction, however, this argument cannot be advanced with equal force. Yet in fiction, too, there are certain types of characters who are important for their function and cannot be visualized as palpable human beings. They contain elements of idealization and personification.

Such is the case with omnipresent and omniscient narrators. The narrator in *Devil on the Cross* is more complex than these simple persona, although he is a device by means of which the story is presented in a specific sequence which is not always linear. This device is seen operating at the opening of chapter 2.

> The devil appeared to Jacinta Wariinga one Sunday on golf course in the town of Ilmorog in Iciciri District, and he told her—wait! I am leaping ahead of the story. Wariinga's troubles did not begin at Ilimorog. Let us refract our steps. (10)

The sad experiences of Wariinga during her school days and after are not related in detail until we have read nearly half the novel. Certain portions are given in dramatic or musical forms. The Prophet of Justice is able not only to narrate but also discriminate and judge. He is a repository of traditional wisdom as well as Marxist ideology. Above all, he is the instrument through which the complex system of symbolism is operated and our mind is enabled to range from phantasy to factuality.

NOTES

1. David Lodge, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory* (London: Longman, 1988), p. 170.

2. M. Parker and Reps Starkey, ed., *Postcolonial Literatures* (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. 102.
3. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Devil on the Cross* (London: Heinemann, 1982).
4. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Methuen, 1949), p. 16.

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The Politics of Race-Relations: A Critical Study of James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*

A. KARUNAKER

The decade of the nineteen sixties was significant in many ways from the point of view of the black upsurge in America. In this decade the protesting blacks were struggling to achieve long overdue rights, rights to vote and hold office, rights to equal justice in the courts, rights to live in any neighbourhood they wised, rights to attend the same schools as had been the prerogative of the whites. Besides staking their claim to these rights, the blacks wanted something more, something which was harder to explain. In fact the black man had begun to intensify his search for identity in order to be able to define himself as a human being. It was no longer tenable for him to accept blackness as an ancient curse or an inherited confliction.

Especially significant in this decade was the year 1963, a year marked by great Negro protests in dozens of cities and also a year full of acts of white violence. It was also the year which was an assassin's bullet killed President John F. Kennedy, the President who was committed firmly to the Black cause. The events of this year were responsible to a large extent in expediting the strong Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited racial discrimination in public accommodations, forbade discrimination by law employers and unions, and discouraged all discriminatory practices in government finance programmmes. In the sphere of Black literature, 1963 saw the publication of James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, his magnum opus in prose. In a review of the book William Barret wrote: "This year is a centennial of the Emancipation proclamation; to mark the occasion James Baldwin . . . has written a proclamation of his own, a manifesto

on the Negro question so eloquent in its passion and so scorching in its candor that it is bound to unsettle any readers who might be satisfied about the progress we have made in race relations."[1]

The Fire Next Time contains only two essays, one entitled 'My Dungeon Shook,' and the other 'Down at the Cross: Letter from a region in My Mind.' The first essay consisting of only seven pages is addressed to his fifteen-year-old nephew, James, whom he fondly warns against following the path adopted by his ancestors in living upto the image of him as created by the whites. James Baldwin sees the danger of living upto stereotypes and says: "you can only be destroyed by believing that you really are what the white world call a Nigger." (18) Baldwin's purpose in addressing his namesake is to expose the conditions of anonymity in which the white man has compelled the Negro to live, a condition which the Negro had come to accept passively. What Baldwin wants the Negro to do so is to come out of the shell of anonymity and discover his true place in the American nation's scheme of things. The time had arrived for the black man to make his presence felt by rejecting the stereotypes. But this, he knows, is not going to be easy.

Baldwin writes, "This innocent country set you down in ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish . . . you were born where you were born and faced the future that you faced because you were black and for no other reason. The limits of your ambition were, thus, expected to be set forever. You were born into a society which split out with brutal clarity . . . that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity." (21)

Baldwin's essay is an exhortation to the Negro for setting his own limits instead of confining himself to the one set by his adversaries. Baldwin's intention in referring to the situation that created the Negro is to form a sound perspective against which the Negro can visualize his own position and role in the contemporary stage. He shows remarkable insight into the Negro problem when he points out the politics, which urges the whites relegate the Negro to an inferior status. He sees inhumanity and fear

to be the root cause of the white man's attitude toward the Blacks. The two words acceptance and integration, which have often been misunderstood in the context of race relations in America, are taken up by Baldwin to clarify his own attitude. He tells his nephew:

> There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that they must accept you. The really terrible thing is that you must accept them. And I mean that very seriously. You must accept them and accept them with love. For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men. (22-23)

Baldwin's view is not that of a sentimental idealist for his own connotation of the term 'acceptance' is a realistic account of one who believes in correcting mistaken notions of historical perspectives. The black man's attempt to find his own identity appears frightening to the white world because it so profoundly attacks the latter's sense of his own reality. Hitherto the black man has functioned in the white man's world. Any attempt to deviate from the fixed role is bound to shake the foundation of the white man's beliefs. The black man can find himself only by going behind the white man's definitions by spelling his 'proper name.' But this has to be done not with an attitude of confrontation but with the sprit of 'integration.'

Baldwin suggests that Negroes must accept the white people in order to save them from self-destruction. Integration is necessary not merely for harmonious co-existence. Integration is needed as a historical imperative as is evident from Baldwin's closing remarks in the essay:

> You come from a long line of great poets, some of the greatest poets some of the greatest poets Homer. One of them said, the very time I thought I was lost. My Dungeon shook and my chains fell off. You know, and I know, that the country is celebrating one

> hundred years of freedom one hundred years too soon. We cannot be free until, they are free. (24)

In the second essay 'Letter from a Region in My Mind,' Baldwin offers a close analysis of his experiences, which shaped his attitude to race relations. The essay begins with a reference to the crisis he found himself in as an adolescent of fourteen. He confesses that at that age he had found God and safety to be synonymous. For the first time in his life, he was aware of the evil within him and also that which lay without, the evil that he witnessed in the pathetic state of Harlem. He remarks with despair how he had grown up, like many of his brethren with the feeling of how a Negro was pitted against the power and might of the white man. The incessant humiliation and danger that the Negro encountered daily drove him to despair. Unable to counter this power and might, many of his friends went on wine or the needle; some fled to other states and cities; and Baldwin, like many others "fled into the church."

However, the entry into the church did not make him lose touch with harsh reality of living in America as a Negro. He realised soon enough that "One would never defeat one's circumstances by working and saving one's pennies; one would never, by working, acquire that many pennies, and besides, the social treatment accorded even the most successful Negroes proved that one needed, in order to be free, something more than a bank account. One needed a handle, a lever, a means of inspiring fear." (35)

This statement of Baldwin places his idea of integration and acceptance in a clear light. It also counters the argument of a critic who feels that *The Fire Next Time* "offers no new solution to the problem of race relations in America. Its solution is as old as the Bible and as simple as the Ten Commandments: Love."[2] It is a mistaken notion that Baldwin's solution is in keeping with Biblical preaching of winning over your enemies with love. Baldwin's emphasis on the Negro ability to inspire fear makes it clear that only by inspiring fear can one compel the enemy to recognise one's existence.

It is true that Baldwin's idea of acceptance and integration seems very different from the rage and anger of Richard Wright's Native son. But to say that Baldwin wants the hatred of centuries to be overcome is far from the truth. *The Fire Next Time* abound in countless passages which show the bitterness and resentment that the Negroes have had for the whites.

It was natural, therefore, for Baldwin to deviate from the principles governing the rites and customs of the churches which were essentially 'white' in nature. Instead of Faith, Hope and Charity, the Christian churches preached the principles of Blindness, Loneliness and Terror. Nevertheless, Baldwin did not forsake his belief that "if love will not swing wide the gates, no other power will or can." (44) His firm faith in the power of love brought to light his emphasis on the behavioural aspects of religion. His father was a devout Christian but he did not refrain from harshly chiding his son for befriending a Jew simply because the Jew was white. Reacting against the duality he saw in his father Christian that you are." (51)

Ultimately, Baldwin is disillusioned with the church because he sees in it the self-same quality that he saw in his father's attitude. He states poignantly:

> When I watched all the children, their copper, brown, and beige faces staring up at me as I taught Sunday School, I felt that I was committing a crime in talking about the gentle Jesus, in telling them to reconcile themselves to their misery on earth in order to gain the crown of eternal life. Were only Negroes to gain this crown? Was Heaven, then, to be merely another ghetto? . . . I had been in the pulpit too long and I had seen too many monstrous things. I don't refer merely to the glaring fact that the minister eventually acquires houses and Cadillacs while the faithful continue to scrub floors and drop their dimes and quarters and dollars into the plate. I really mean that there was no love in the church. It was a mask for hatred and self-hatred and despair. (53)

What Baldwin seems to convey is that what needed to be done was the rectification of 'historical and public attitudes,' a task which would have to be done by people themselves, both black and white. Preaching harmony in the midst of hatred would not

help. What was needed to be done was the confrontation of reality rather than the evasion of it. Baldwin attacks the historical role of Christianity in the realm of power and politics, a role which he considers ambivalent. He says: "It is not much to say that whoever wishes to become a truly moral human being . . . must first divorce himself from all the prohibitions, crimes, and hypocrisies of the Christian church. If the concept of God has any validity or any use, it can only be to make us larger, freer, and more Loving. If God cannot do this, then it is time we got rid of Him." (61)

Baldwin's experiences with the role of Christian churches which became instruments for the perpetuation of white power and supremacy, and his subsequent disillusionment with Christian morals and principles naturally led him to explore the other alternative in the sphere of religion, that is, the domain of Allah being the Saviour of the Black. A major portion of the present essay deals with his first-hand encounter with Elijah Muhammad, the unquestioned leader of the Nation of Islam Movement.

Baldwin's encounter with Elijah Muhammad took place long after he had been acquainted with him through whatever he had surmised from the legend that had been created around him by his numerous disciples and admirers. Baldwin confesses that he had paid very little attention to what he had heard because Elijah's message did not strike him as being very original. He found the Nation of Islam's demand for a separate black economy in America to be mischievous nonsense. He did not agree with Elijah that the white man's rule was bound to end forever, within ten or fifteen years.

Baldwin attributes the success of Elijah to historical situation which has made it possible to conceive the idea of a 'Black God,' an idea which would have seemed ridiculous only a few centuries ago. With the Christian world revealing itself as morally bankrupt and politically unstable, it became possible for people to think of Allah as the god of the Blacks who would destroy the white race. For the Black Americans, the turning point of belief arose from the treatment accorded to them by their

white counterparts during the Second World War. When the black soldiers experienced discriminations in its worst forms, they found it impossible to show any respect for the white Americans. They were astounded to see German prisoners of war being treated by white Americans with more human dignity than what they displayed for their black brethren. And, on their return home they were further bewildered to see the signs saying, "White" and "Coloured" as unmixable categories, something which seemed quite out of place in the richest and freest country in the world, and in the middle of the twentieth century. Urged by despair and torment, the black man saw in the idea of Black God some hope for his redemption. Baldwin states, "God is black. All men belong to Islam; they have been chosen. And Islam shall rule the world. The dream, the sentiment is old, only the colour is new." (71) The belief that the Black god would save the oppressed where the white god had failed, had taken deep roots in the minds and hearts of the Blacks.

Baldwin's chance to meet Elijah Muhammad in person for the first time came when the latter invited him to have dinner with him at his home. Elijah Muhammad had seen Baldwin talk to Malcolm X on the television and had become curious to meet him, so he thought. Baldwin's meeting with Elijah is vividly described by him in the present essay. On the basis of the speeches of Elijah, which he had read or heard, Baldwin has associated him with ferocity. But he was surprised to see instead a small and slender man, with large warm eyes, and a most winning smile, a smile which immediately drew Baldwin to his peculiar authority. Despite Elijah's humorous vein, Baldwin could see that Elijah's power came from his single-mindedness with which he sought to convince Baldwin that Baldwin had failed to realize that the White man was a devil on account of his being exposed to white teaching a little too long. The conversion of the "so-called Negro" to Islam seemed to be Elijah's mission. Elijah emphasizes that "for the horrors of the American Negro's life there has been almost no language. And, in fact, the truth about the Black man, as a historical entity and as a human being, has been hidden from him, deliberately and cruelly; the power of the

white world is threatened whenever a Black man refuses to accept the White world's definitions." (83) Elijah tells Baldwin that only Islam could save the black man from the holocaust awaiting the white world.

Baldwin's own ideas of the Negro experience made it difficult for him to reject outright the truth contained in Elijah's indictment of the whites. In the contemporary context, everyone except the Negro constitutes a nation with a specific location and a flag: "it is only the so-called American Negro who remains trapped, disinherited, and despised in a nation that has kept him in bondage for nearly four hundred years and is still unable to recognize him as a human being." (87) Baldwin was reminded by Elijah that "black has become a beautiful colour not because it is loved but because it is feared." (91)

Baldwin does not fail to see beneath the warm smile of Elijah his intense hatred for the whites, a fact that makes him confront the inevitable dilemma that "I love a few people and they love me and some of them are white, and isn't love more important than color." (85) Baldwin does have a profound understanding for the Black Muslim Movement but he does not have any sympathy for it for the simple reason that hatred itself was bound to prove counter-productive. According to Baldwin, the Muslim movement had had a marginal role in making the Negroes aware of the need to change their own situation. Baldwin is right in stating that mere polemics cannot change social reality. Any effort at change demanded a through awareness of the situation. To talk of a separate nation for the Black Americans, be it Africa or the Nation of Islam, seems an unworkable proposition. The Negro is a by-product of this American continent and it is this awareness of his that ought to be of paramount importance. What Baldwin seems to suggest is that evasiveness is no solution. Unless the Negro began to visualize the problem by transcending the "realities of color, of nations," there was no hope anywhere. It is only when both the Blacks and the Whites realise that unless they learn to live in mutual harmony, the nation would be open to the problems of a divided house. The glorification of the race at the cost of the debasement of another

would only aggravate the situation for there can be no integration if distinctions are made on the basis of the color of the skin.

Baldwin makes an important point by stating that "whoever debases others is debasing himself." He rules out the spirit of retaliation not out of any mystical concern for harmony but because he can see the situation for what it is. The situation of the American Negro is at variance with that of a black man in Africa. Even the power equation is different. Since the Negro constitutes approximately a ninth of the American nation, it will be suicidal for him to claim autonomy in the form of an independent nation. The American Negro, says Baldwin, is a predecessor. Baldwin clarified what it means to be an American Negro in his bitter statement:

> "This is who he is—a kidnapped pagan, who was sold like an animal and treated like one, who was once defined by the American constitution as 'three-fifths' of a man, and who . . . had no rights that a white man was bound to respect. And today, a hundred years after his technical emancipation, he remains—with the possible exception of the American Indian—the most despised creature in his country. Now, there is simply no possibility of a real change in the Negro's situation without the most radical and far-reaching changes in American political and social structure." (98-99)

The above statement seems to echo, very strongly, a Marxist stance but Baldwin does not elaborate upon either the factors that will activate a radical change in outlook or the people who would be instrumental in bringing about such a radical change. He, instead, seems to ignore socio-economic and political factors and dwells on an abstract hypothesis of the role that love can play in bringing about attitudinal changes.

Perhaps Nick Aaron Ford is right in stating that *The Fire Next Time* "offers no new solutions to the problem of race relations in America."[3] But it will not be fair to expect 'new solutions' from James Baldwin. It is not a writer's task to be the instrument of social change. Baldwin's failure or success in this essay should be measured in terms of his ability to provide a deep insight into the problem of race relations in America, which he does with considerable felicity. He does a fine job of exam-

ining the symptoms of disorder for in those very symptoms lie the antidote to the racial nightmare.

The problem according to Baldwin lies in the attitude of the politicians and even in that of the government for their lack of will to see the problem as it is. What the blacks really want is not 'tokenism' given in a spirit of condescension—for such concessions eventually turn out to be dubious means of placating the minority—what the blacks really need is to be genuinely treated like human beings and to be embraced by the white community at no matter, what psychic or social risk. This isn't easy without the existence of love between equals, a love that is tough and daring and ever growing. It is time, feels Baldwin, that everyone realised that "the price of liberation of the white people is the liberation of the blacks—the total liberation, in the cities, in the towns, before the law, and in the mind." (111)

Baldwin is again emphasizing the need for integration but his idea of integration is also a political imperative. He says, "To create one nation has proved to be a hideously difficult task; there is certainly no need now to create two, one black and one white." (111) What is significant for the Negro is the systematic and deliberate denial of his political rights. What he needs is not concession but the right to have a voice in the political affairs of his own country. Baldwin emphatically reminds the whites that "I am not a ward of America; I am one of the first Americans to arrive on these shores." (112) It is through such statements that Baldwin counters the limited and Muslim Movement has failed to see that "color is not a human or a personal reality; it is a political reality." (118) And in order to understand this political reality, neither historical vengeance nor a cosmic one will be of any use. It was naïve to defer the remedy until the arrival of either God or Allah. Baldwin warns at the end:

> "Everything now . . . is in our hands . . . if we—and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like loves, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others—do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything

> the fulfillment of that prophecy, recreated from the Bible in song by a slave is upon us: God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time!" (119-20)

Thus, Baldwin in this essay makes it evident that unless the two races learn to exist like lovers by creating the consciousness of 'the others' the racial nightmare would be disastrous for America. By exposing the racial problem in its entirety, Baldwin has displayed his remarkable grasp of both personalities and events. Combining observation with analysis, he feelingly conveys the thrust of the Biblical warning. What is explicit from the reading of this lucid and eloquent essay is Baldwin's role as a historian and prophet of the Black Movement.

NOTES

1. James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: The Dial Press, 1963).
2. "Readers Choice," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 20, March 1963, p.156.
3. Nick Aaron Ford, "*The Fire Next Time*? A Critical Survey of Belles Letters by and about Negroes" (1963).
4. *Ibid.*, p.101.

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Cross-Cultural Transactions and Evolution of Family in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

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Cross-cultural transaction is "an interactive, dialogic, two-way process rather than a simple active-passive one." It is "a process involving complex negotiation and exchange." In the postmodern climate, the notion of America as a melting pot for different cultures and the need for assimilation into what was thought to be the American culture is passe. Today the American attitude towards ethnicity and foreignness has changed. Ethnic difference is no more a matter of embarrassment. It is a matter of pride, instead. The metaphor of the melting pot has been replaced with that of a mosaic—an image used by Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zabusky in their book *American Mosaic* (1980). Another image—that of a quilt—has been used by Wesley Brown and Amy Ling in their collection of short stories *Imagining America* (1991). Yet another image of a salad bowl has been used in this context. The emphasis in the last three metaphors marks a shift from the paradigm of assimilation to the acceptance of what used to be perceived as alien, and ethnic as part of the larger whole.

In any case, Bharati Mukherjee has the maximalist agenda as proclaimed by her in the *New York Times Book Review* (August 28, 1988) as against what she calls the "blind spot in American writing," that is, the minimalism which "disguises a dangerous social agenda. Minimalism is nativist, it speaks in whispers to the initiated. . . . I can feel its chill as though it were designed to keep out anyone with too much story to tell." Mukherjee recalls V.S. Naipaul's complaint that two of America's most celebrated authors, the two Johns, Cheever and Updike did not speak to him. Despite Naipaul's penchant for provocation, she finds that he was right. Writing in the late eighties, she felt that while

"American fiction was sunk in a decade of minimalism, an epic was washing up on its shores." She goes on to imagine a poster over the United States Court House: "WELCOME MAXIMALISTS HELLO EXPANSIONISTS." Her Movement from Canada to the United States, she says, in the "Introduction" to the collection of her short stories called *Darkness* (1985) "is a movement away from aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration" (3).

Having argued for a new model of American literary scene, which is inclusive of the immigrant writings, Mukherjee, in her aforesaid article in *New York Times Book Review,* talks about what she calls "some forgivable fraud involved in the maintenance of expatriation." She feels that in "literary terms, being an immigrant is very declasse. There is a low-grade ashcan realism implied in the very material. . . . The exiles . . . come wrapped in a cloak of mystery and world-weariness. By refusing to play the game of immigration, they certify to the world, and especially to their hosts, the purity of their pain and moral superiority to the world around them. In some obscure way, they earn the right to be permanent scolds, soaking up comfort and privilege and nursing real grievances until privilege and grievance become habits of mind."

In *Jasmine* (1990), Mukherjee celebrates the freedom of anonymous in the U.S. and the American reverence for the autonomy of the individual. The energetic protagonist of the novel, who was born as Jyoti, metamorphoses herself into personae like Jasmine, Jase, or Jane, according to the requirement of the situation. By the time she starts her first person narrative, she has become a confident accomplished woman who is not only an adept "caregiver" to American households, "wife" to so many men, but also speaks with authority about diverse subjects such as farming, films, politics, science, medicine, accents of various Englishes spoken around her, Indian philosophy, Indian literature and social issues such as poverty. Her confidence level is very high throughout the novel, despite some real dark patches in her life. She finds herself being praised for her "great face" by an American woman professor. She is a source of love and inspira-

tion for her "husband"-lovers—Prakash, Taylor and Bud. "You were glamour, something unattainable," says Bud (199). Her rival Karin needs her help: "Help me not to hate you Jasmine," says Karin (203). She perceives herself as the woman with "stark-white bobbed hair and a sad, heavy, wrinkled face. It's the face of poet or a philosopher, the face of a woman who has come to terms with all the Sukkhis and Half-Faces out there and is no longer afraid" (208). And finally unlike her adopted son Du, who chooses to remain hyphenated, she says, "My transformation has been genetic" (222). It is important to note that unlike an expatriate, Jasmine claims to have changed her very chemistry.

Jasmine's journey of self-actualization leads her not just to a comfortable life and fluid identities but to forging new alliances to form what she, as an Indian, is obsessed with—that is, family. One recalls Clark Blaise's documentation of his year-long stay in Calcutta in 1973-74 with his wife Bharati Mukherjee. His observations about Calcutta and Indian mores are typical of a westerner's viewpoint. He writes, "Family, family, family. In India all is finally family. If we in the West suffer the nausea of disconnectedness, alienation, anomy, the Indian suffers the oppression of kinship" (1977). One may not completely agree with Blaise's point of oppression of kinship; he, however, aptly marks the centrality of family in the Indian context. This is more than true in Jasmine's case. Despite her adaptations and accomplishments, she is out to forge familial alliances at various levels with different people. And one notices that these familial concerns and efforts almost subvert the very institution of family she is out to create. In other words, she creates new and rather unusual familial ties.

Before coming to America, Jyoti falls in love with the voice of Prakash who spoke of love and brotherhood in vicious atmosphere of Sikh separatism in Punjab. "I fell in love with that voice. It was low, grave, unfooled. I was prepared to marry the man who belonged to that voice" (66), she says. "Only a very tall and a very strong man could have a voice like that" (67), she adds. It is interesting that she is prepared to marry Prakash without any knowledge of what he looks like. She writes, "Love

rushes through thick mud walls. Love before first sight: that's our Hasnapuri way" (67). Her only concern is whether Prakash spoke English or not. "I couldn't marry a man who didn't speak English. To want English is to want more than you had been given at birth, it was to want the world" (68). Assured by her brothers of Prakash's what they call "first class English" (68), she learns that he has plans to move to America. Jyoti has already set her heart on marrying Prakash without even knowing his last name. "An impression was all I had: dignity, kindness, intelligence. Maybe even humor" (73), she says. It is important that these are some of the qualities she appreciates in all her later "husbands" also. She chooses to marry unconventionally: "Ours was a no-dowry, no-guests Registry Office wedding" (75). Her village-friend Vimla observes rather pontifically "that once you let one tradition go, all the other traditions crumble" (75). And this proves right too in Jyoti's case. She prides in the fact that her husband Prakash Vijh was "a modern man, a city man. He did trash some traditions right from the beginning" (76). His friends were like him: disrupters and rebuilders, idealists" (77). She likens him with Professor Higgins as he "wanted to break down the Jyoti I'd been in Hasnapur and make me new kind of city woman. To break off the past he gave me a new name: Jasmine" because she was, as he called her, "small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine" (77).

Another important need Jasmine feels throughout her life is to get pregnant and mother a child. But then, "Prakash yelled every time I told him I wanted to get pregnant," she says, because he felt that they should wait for more prosperous times, which were never to be. Prakash falls prey to the bullets of a terrorist and thus Jasmine fulfils one of the two prophecies of the village astrologer—that of widowhood. The other one, that of exile, is what the rest of her story is.

But Jasmine is a fighter, survivor and achiever. She recalls that if "we could just get away from India, then all fates would be concealed. We'd start with new fates, new stars. We could say or be anything we wanted. We'd be on the other side of the earth, out of God's sight" (85). Jasmine sets out for America to

fulfil her husband's mission in a rather strange and unique way—to commit *sati* in the university where Prakash was to become a student! Sounds rather regressive, especially from a person like Jasmine. Braving illegal migration, hunger, cold and even rape at the hands of an ugly monster appropriately called Half-Face (whom she murders eventually in the role of goddess Kali), Jasmine sounds philosophical, typically in the Hindu way when she realizes: "My body was merely the shell, soon to be discarded. Then I could be reborn, debt and sins all paid for" (121).

Her next incarnation takes place in Wylie and Taylor Hayes's household in New York where she works as a "caregiver," a position of respect, where her job is to look after their young daughter, Duff. Significantly Jasmine feels comfortable there because, she says, "Wylie made me feel her younger sister. I was family, and I was professional." (175). By family, she means here a sense of belonging to the household. She has now acquired a new name. Jasmine has been shortened to Jase by Taylor in a typically American fashion and she becomes Duff's "day mummy." Gradually the scene changes. Wylie goes to Europe with her lover-friend Stuart to Europe while back at home Taylor falls for Jase. She admits, "On those nights, we—Duff, Taylor and I—became a small, sufficient family and I told myself guilty, that everything might really work out all right. I prayed that Wylie and Stuart would take all the time they needed in Europe, because I, the caregiver, was eager to lavish care in my new, perfect family" (183). One cannot help noticing the use of the term "family" here twice, this time in a more specific way than merely in the sense of belonging. Jase has replaced Wylie in the "family."

Taylor accepts her as she was. "Taylor didn't want to change me. He didn't want to scour and sanitize the foreignness," she says (185). But unlike the expatriates, Jase chooses to change—by choice, to be able to be one of them. She says, "I changed because I wanted to. To bunker oneself inside nostalgia, to sheath the heart in a bulletproof vest, was to be a coward. On Claremont Avenue in the Hayses' big, clean, brightly lit apartment, I

bloomed from a diffident alien with forged documents into adventurous Jase" (185-86). Jase feels that she could have founded a family even with the vain and solicitous Stuart, Wylie's lover, but she was in her own words, "heads over heels" in love with Taylor (186), "who had been unfailingly kind, never condescending, always proud of my achievements" (187). Besides, she finds Taylor inspiring too. He tells her: "Weak gravity is what keeps your dreams inside your head so that they don't go flying out" (178). But in Jase's head "bat-winged nightmares flapped frantically; I didn't want them flying out of my skull," she says (182). Her realization that "America may be fluid and built on flimsy lines of weak gravity, but I was dense object, I had landed and was getting rooted" (179) proves wrong when she finds her husband Prakash's murderer recognizing her. Jase decides to leave New York for Iowa where she will be Jane to her new "husband" Bud Ripplemeyer.

"Iowa was a state where miracles still happened," (197) says Jane. Bud, a big, hearty, divorcee of fifty-three was older to Jane by thirty years, a fact she couldn't consider at all between them. She sums up her Iowa experience as follows: "Bud wants me to marry him 'officially,' he says before the baby comes. People assume we're married. He's a small-town banker, he's not allowed to do impulsive things. I am less than half his age and very foreign. We're the kind who marry. Going for me is this: he wasn't in a wheelchair when we met. I didn't leave him after it happened" (7). And, "Bud was wounded in the war between my fate and my will. I think sometimes I saved his life by not marrying him. I feel so potent, a goddess" (12).

Bud and his Asian wife have an adopted son Du—Du Ripplemeyer who was born Du Thien, a hard-to-place Vietnamese orphan. "He barely spoke English when he arrived; now he is fluent, but with a permanent accent. 'Like Kissinger,' he says." Du is a precocious child. Like Prakash, he has a surgeon's touch. Jase feels that he "is the son Prakash and I might have had" (155). But Du does not feel belonged to this family; he remains what Jase calls "hyphenated." He is indebted to Jase for giving him a new life, but leaves Iowa for LA to his community people.

Jase observes, "Blood is thick, I think. Du, my adopted son is a mystery, but the prospect of losing him is like a miscarriage" (221).

Jase's Ripplemeyer attempt at family-formation is laudable but abortive. How can she fight the forecast of an old fakir sitting under a banyan tree in her village? And then now the divorced Taylor Hayes and his daughter Duff are on their way to reclaim Jase to form what he calls an "unorthodox family." Karin is back to Bud, thanks to Jane; and now, she says, "I cry into Taylor's shoulders, cry through all the lives I've given birth to, cry for all my dead" (241). Jasmine has lived many lives; in each incarnation she is a new woman. "I have had a husband for each of the women I've been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane. Half-Face for Kali" (197). One is naturally surprised if a rapist is called a "husband," especially the one who is murdered by her in anger soon after the rape. What is the meaning of the term "husband" for Jasmine? One assumes that marriage is central to family both in the Christian and the non-Christian societies. In the case of Jasmine, who has been a rebel of a sort from her childhood, social ceremony may have little relevance for her. In any case, the social or legal processes of getting married have no meaning for Jasmine, as she never married anyone of her so-called "husbands" except Prakash. But here she equates even rape with marriage! In her feminist zeal, she seems to subvert even the very fundamental feminist position for sexual freedom.

What concept of a "family" is Jasmine advocating? The unorthodox one obviously, even by the very strict feminist standards. On the one hand, Jasmine is a practitioner of feminist credo according to which the social and legal aspects of ritual of marriage are not central to one's existence; on the other, she seems to seek personal and social acceptance of such relationships as familial. As an Indian, she finds family to be an indispensable social institution. She creates unorthodox varieties of family that are possible only in the liberal climate of America.

On the basis of the above reading of *Jasmine*, I would like to suggest that South Asian American literature like the literature of

the other marginal, ethnic, racial or cultural groups in America, contributes to as well as complicates the traditions and mythologies of American literature. These literatures re-form the contemporary literary scenario and reflect the changing patterns of life and society in America. To read these works as "merely ethnic" and as "ethnic documentaries" would keep them somehow apart from our serious readings and discussions of twentieth century American literature. Besides, while there remain a number of problems in cross-cultural transactions, creative writers and community workers cannot continue to sit on the margins, content to serve their little "ethnic" communities. They feel the need to understand the history of America, its founding ideals, and the "common vision" and contribute to them positively. May I conclude my paper with Jasmine's optimistic remarks about her future, at the end of the novel: "Time will tell if I am a tornado, rubble-maker, arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud. I am out the door and in the potholed and rutted driveway, scrambling ahead of Taylor, greedy with wants and reckless from hope (241).

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All for Gold and Sex: A Thematic Analysis of Basavaraj Naikar's Short Stories

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There has been a trend in the Indian English writing for the last few decades among a few senior academics that after years of slogging through classics in the classroom, they assume a different role by turning themselves into creative writers. Although scholarship and creativity do not always go hand in hand, there are a few successful scholar writers in India. Basavaraj Naikar has made a humble entry to this exclusive club of academics transformed into creative writers by way of publishing his first collection *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories*. That Basavaraj Naikar has chosen to write in largely ignored genre of short stories, while most of his predecessors, be it Srinivasa Iyengar or Shiv K. Kumar, ventured their hands first at poetry, is a laudable one. And that, instead of going for highbrow themes like 'alienation,' 'expatriate sensibility,' 'exile,' 'east-west encounter,' 'dislocation of identity,' 'search for the authentic voice,' etc., the author is unpretentious about the reiteration of simple themes as man's primordial obsession for the possession of opulent wealth and succulent woman, and his subsequent fall from grace, is equally a meritorious one. These are precisely the themes around which our mythical pots were boiling and so many of our master craftsmen were weaving their plots. Naikar's *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories* contains ten short stories. Of these, eight stories deal with the ingenuity, manipulation, and coercion that go before the craving for money and sex, and the disappointment, repentance and retribution that follow the accomplishment and satiation.

Hunt for gold is the main occupation, in the title piece, for the central character, Malla, the notorious thief of Nagarahalli. And hoarding the booty is the favourite pastime of his patron and landlord, Marigouda. Malla's artifice has been depicted to such an extent that one is enrapt and gets carried away by his dexterously played games. One wishes Malla to succeed always in the way one wishes Milton's Satan, evil though he may be, to triumph over the rival angels. Because Malla, we find like Milton's Satan, has not chosen evil for the sake of evil but that he finds the path of good to be less challenging and very uninspiring. Thus in the words of the author:

> He had tried his hand at ploughing, carpentry and masonry and had felt *utterly disappointed*. That was because those jobs did not *thrill* him. Far from thrilling him, they *deadened his sensibility*. Once he even tried to become a Swami at Ranebennur, but found that it did not suit his bent of mind. At last he was tempted to take to thieving and found it after his heart. He practised that art for a couple of years and made a name for himself. He was so clever in his art that no policeman could lay hands on him even once in his entire thieving career. . . . The diverse myths built around him speak of his extreme popularity, indeed his notoriety in all the surrounding villages.[1] (emphases added).

While we find a character like Raju in R.K. Narayan's *The Guide*, on account of his act of forgery and the laboured repentance, moving from the mundane to the sacred, we see Naikar's Malla shirking off from the sacred for the mundane: 'Once he even tried to become a Swami at Ranebennur, but found that it did not suit his bent of mind!'

There are two engaging and awe-inspiring episodes of Malla's misdeeds described by the author. In the first one, provoked by his patron, the thief ventures to steal the golden ornaments from a dead lady. The job is terribly challenging since the corpse is always surrounded by the mourning relatives. Undeterred, Malla deftly makes a hole in the wall just behind the dead body. He chooses the right moment to insert his hands inside and collects the dead hands together and makes them clap. The naïve mind of the villagers which conceives that to be the work of the

ghost, and the hue and cry that follows provide ample time for Malla to rob off all the ornaments from the dead body. While we laugh at the villagers' folly along with Malla, we also relish the author's dig at the feeble Indian superstitious mind that finds a devil in every dark tree.

The second exploit is equally macabre; this time he has to steal a copper pitcher full of golden ornaments placed before the family god of Desai of the village Annagiri. Malla manages to hide himself skilfully among the oxen brought into the house and finds an easy entry. Then he paralyses the old lady, who keeps an eye over the gold, with fear by showing her his knife. As usual, Malla executes his operation without any hindrance from the owner. Yet, not just satisfied with his loot, and his self-confidence overflowing, while slipping away from the house with the pitcher, he taunts the house-owner by proclaiming his daring act. He shouts, "Dear Desai, I am Malla of Nagarahalli. I have come to tell you that I am taking your pitcher full of gold. You can take it from me if you have the guts." (20) Malla escapes the big chase that follows and before Desai's men reach Nagarahalli, he is fast asleep in his bed. Thus Malla has transformed the mean act of stealing into something sophisticated and superb, thereby winning the admiration of many:

> He haunted the imagination of the rich Desais, Patils, Deshpandes and Jahagirdars who spent sleepless nights in contemplation on him. He inspired a heroic spirit in the hearts of young men. He kindled amorous sentiments in the minds of young girls. Thus "Success" had become another name for Malla. He had taken an oath that he would stop his thieving profession the day he met with failure in his ventures. (22)

But he meets his nemesis soon when he gets outsmarted by Monappa. When Malla steals the golden bowl from the landlord of Imrapur and hides it in some ditch to save himself from the police, Monappa steals it away from him. Now there is an open challenge between the two—try how much he can, Malla fails to take back that golden bowl from Monappa. Accepting his defeat, one fine day he disappears from Nagarahalli. Thus ends the glo-

rious career of Malla, the legendary thief. In this manner, as Subhash Chandra comments, "There is a folklorish air about the story."[2]

Most of the other stories in this collection too have the greed for gold as a recurring motif. The next story is captioned, "All for Gold." In fact, lust for gold and lust *per se* are blended in equal proportions in this story. Virabhadra is hankering after gold and leaves his young wife, Ganga, behind and goes to Bellary on business where he has to delay his stay for many weeks. In the same village, lives Sangappa who has a roving eye for beautiful women. Ganga's 'pretty figure' ensnares and maddens him. He sends his message of love to her through Balappa, who is taken to task by her for this uncalled-for errand. Sangappa then bribes an old lady, Paramma, with the 'gift of golden necklace weighing five *tolas*.' Paramma, being an experienced lady in the ways of the world, places the turban of Sangappa in Ganga's house and later manipulates, blackmails and cajoles her into this lustful game. Although Ganga initially thinks, "Sinning once in secrecy would not be a great problem" (46), after yielding to her temptation with the tempter, realises that it could not end as a one-night affair. Naikar here implies that once somebody, even as pure as the mythical Ganga river itself (the choice of the name Ganga is not a mere coincidence) yields to the ways of gold and lust, there is seldom a comeback. Thus he explains the attitudinal change of Ganga:

> Within a month's time they grew up to be expert paramours enjoying their fill of sex without any inhibition. During daytime Ganga would remember her husband who had gone to Bellary on business and feel uneasy for a moment for betraying him, but would soon manage to forget it by recalling Paramma's secret advice about making the best of the golden opportunities of life. (50)

Needless to say that "the golden opportunities" in practice meant yielding to the prurient urges of her clandestine admirer, Sangappa!

However in the end, it is again the gold of Virabhadra that ensnares Balappa to betray his loyal friend Sangappa. Balappa

lures Sangappa to an isolated place where Virabhadra and his men hack him to death. Gold plays a lot of other roles in the total scheme of Sangappa but finally all his wealth fails to protect him. Though Sangappa commits the deadly sin of coveting his neighbour's wife and deserves to be punished the brutal way in which he gets killed, one cannot but feel sympathy for him since he has a premonition of his own death and a philosophical outlook towards the ephemeral life. Once in a fair when he sees a boy blowing a balloon to its full capacity only to get it burst the next second, he exclaims to his friend Balappa, "See, dear Balya, our life is also like that balloon. We do not know when it bursts." (31)

Rajasekhar, in "Her Husband Went to America," like Sangappa, gives credence to the 'seize the day' motif. In this story, the lust for gold is mixed up with a more dominant passion of achieving a Ph.D. from abroad and thereby enhancing one's worldly prestige and material prospects. Rajasekar's obsession for a Ph.D. from U.S.A., as it would offer him freedom from his drab job of a lecturer in some local college, makes him even abandon his young, innocent wife and old parents. Despite the fact that it is his wife Girija's strong support, patience, forbearance and prayers that fetch him a foreign fellowship and get him a degree from the Princeton University, Rajasekar gulls 'the semi-educated woman' to sign her own divorce papers. Since he has also married an American woman and has two children by her, without any qualms, he goes to America for good. When Girija's mother suggests her to go for re-marriage, the poor girl refuses to leave her in-laws. Misfortune has taught her courage and contentment. In this way, she represents a typical Indian woman, ready to face her fate with fortitude even if she loses the much-needed support from the spouse. However, her ideal character is rather unusual in this collection which is otherwise full of morally degraded and weak-willed people. But the story, on the whole, is not unusual because most of the Indian young men going abroad remarry there, enchanted by the sophisticated white ladies. Circumstances, Naikar seems to reiterate, do not make a man but reveal his true colours!

The moral lapse of degradation is at the lowest ebb in "Mother's Husband" where the author has tried to bring in the Oedipus myth with a strange twist and with little success. Instead of the son killing his father and remarrying his mother, here the mother abandons her husband and has sex with her son. The story begins keeping in mind the mythological tempo. Setavi, a flippant version of the Greek fore-teller Tiresias, is 'the celestial scribe' who writes the fate of the mortals to be reborn, literally, on their foreheads. But she is shocked out of her wits to know the future of her yet to be born daughter, Kamalata, "who is going to have sexual intercourse with her own son according to the strange course of her life." (79) As it happens in reality, Kamalata, in a fit of physical passion, marries a cobbler and years later, when she knows of his inferior profession, deserts him and their son.

As she is still very engaging, she slides into harlotry and changes her name to Chandrasani. Like mother, the son too is disgusted with the father's profession and becomes a young merchant dealing in precious stones and pearls. Pure chance and sheer coincidence bring the son, Adivesha, to the same town where his mother earns a living and makes him desire her celebrated beauty. As a result of their passionate love-making, Chandrasani gives birth to a male child. Subsequently, in dream, a woman of her mother's age shows up and admonishes her of this incestuous relationship. Unable to bear the guilt and shame, Chandrasani jumps into a well and commits suicide along with her "son-and-grandson." Deplorably, the story, despite the author's best attempt, lacks in organic growth. There has been very little said why and how Kamalata, who was so devoted to her husband and son, having had her fill of matrimonial pleasure for full five years, could leave them without a backward glance and suddenly become so degraded simply because her husband turned out to be one of the low caste men.

The obsession with wealth recurs in "The Invisible Face," where Bangarasetty, a renowned merchant of Dharwad turns out to be an accomplice in the crime of printing fake currency notes. Bangarasetty has risked his reputation for the sake of ill-gotten

wealth. But there is a double-irony at play; when there is a chance for exposure, all his partners in crime bribe the doctor in the hospital who poisons him to death. Thus, the person who should have saved the life of Bangarasetty is actually responsible for his death. So the greed for gold takes everything away from Bangarasetty. This story is a bitter expose of the widening gap between the public and the private face, between the man and the mask.

This life of intrigue takes another form in "She Wanted a Child." Here Manjula sacrifices her everything for a child of her own. This type of hankering after child is quite common in Indian society where life is supposed to be worthless without a male progeny. Manjula does not conceive during the first two years of her conjugal life and thus loses her familial and social status in the eyes of her mother-in-law and husband. Her husband, Sankara, even hints at his second marriage, compelling her to mislead him by telling a lie that she has lost her menstrual cycle and hence is expecting a child. A sudden but welcome offer of job in the Dharwad post-office as a clerk saves her from exposure for the time being. She has to leave her family and join the post where Sekhar, her young colleague, is attracted towards her. Manjula's wish for the child is now strangely mixed up with her desire for this smart young man. They secretly meet at different places and make love passionately, yet Manjula fails to conceive. The lady doctor finally tells her that she would need a minor operation. Scared of the operation Manjula prefers an easier way out by stealing a newly born baby from the Civil Hospital. But being a novice, she is caught by the police while she is returning to her husband to impinge on him that the child is their own. The police inspector, moved by her plight and candid confession, recommends for a less severe punishment of three months' imprisonment. The one improbable point of the story is the long absence of Manjula's husband who should have, in natural course, visited her very often to know about her well-being, more so, when she is expecting a baby.

The sexual depravity, which is the forte of many of the stories described above, surfaces again in "Coffin in the House." It

is about the rape and the resultant death of a nubile girl by an elderly man. That hapless girl is Prema and the perverted man is Mr. Patil, otherwise a very respectable man in society. He has broken his leg and is recuperating in a hospital when his neighbour in the apartment complex finds out some unnatural sound coming out of his room. It finally turns out to be the tinkering of a coffin by a thief. The episode is narrated to Patil in the hospital by Mallikarjuna. But gradually Patil is remorse-stricken by his past guilt and confesses his crime before a stupefied friend that how his carnal desires for that young girl led to that heinous act. It appears that he tempted her by chocolates, gagged her mouth, and raped her so violently that the helpless victim died during the assault. Gradually, the news spreads from one to another and Prema's father exclaims with disgust: "We thought Mr. Patil to be the best friend of our family and could never imagine that he would do such a terrible thing. We simply cannot guess which snake lives in which hole." (159) It should be noted here that the author has used snake symbolism in an appropriate way, for serpent is always associated with sinful lust both in the eastern and the western mythology. The police arrests Mr. Patil and he has to face the punishment meted out to him by law: he has to undergo ten years imprisonment as soon as he is discharged from the hospital. Thus he is punished for his brutal crime but at what cost to that innocent girl and her parents!

Being an academic with decades of teaching, Naikar comes to campus conspiracy in "The Anonymous Letter." The Professor and Chairman of the department of English of a University instigates the students against their own teachers by making them write repugnant letters to them collectively. Without signing any names at the bottom, these students become free in their anonymous garb to hurl abuses at them. For instance, they write:

> Professor Gangadhar dictates notes and does not explain anything. He speaks English like Kannada. We cannot understand Dr. Balachandra's pronunciation. He cracks jokes in the class and kills time. He makes students bring cigarettes from the shop. Professor Nagesh is a peculiar man. He never looks at the students but always stares at the ceiling. He does not tell us the meaning of Greek

> and Latin quotations. Professor Sekhar is a weirdo and helps only the girls by leaking out questions to them. He comments upon his own colleagues and fails the students who are not his *chelas*. (167)

This story is remarkable in this collection for its wide-ranging humour. It is also one of the two stories that is free from lust for gold or woman. Later on, the teachers find out the trick of the Chairman and make him apologise, of course, obliquely.

"When the News Came" is the other story that has a different theme. Here, the reported death of Chennappa, a truck-driver, by the police turns out to be painfully wrong. The one whose death is actually reported is alive and there is yet another by the same name who died accidentally. When the real Chennappa returns safely back to his village, after a week, he is surprised to see the fear on the faces of his people who mistake him to be his ghost. Chennappa also realises the forced widowhood of his wife and her eventual exile on account of his [ghost's] arrival in the village. In the end, the same police who contributed to the chaos make amends by reuniting Chennappa with his family. Naikar takes another opportunity to hint at the superstitious beliefs of the poor people. And the shifting tone of humour and pathos leaves no room for sex or chase for gold.

The last story, "Fulfilment," is a usual stuff of a rich girl falling for a poor boy of low caste and then eloping with him to fulfil her physical and emotional needs. Bharati is overwhelmed by the acting prowess, combined with the physical charm, of Chandrasekhar leading to their secret love affair and subsequent marriage. She is so devoted to her husband that she willingly lives a life of poverty with him in a remote village. They are blessed with a son named Viswanath. But their happiness rankles in the eyes of a few others and Chandrasekhar is implicated in a criminal case. He disguises himself as a beggar and goes to Bombay to escape the dragnet of law. Bharati's father is gradually reconciled to his fate and becomes philosophical. Finally, he donates all his property to a *Math*. After twelve years, Chandrasekhar returns with beard and moustache. And for a while, even Bharati fails to recognise him. But the recognition

dawns on her when she hears his voice and they live happily ever after.

In the "Preface," the author gives his preference for the Indian variety of English. He says: "Like many Commonwealth writers, I believe in the view that we Indians must write in our native brand of English and should not ape the British 'masters.' Our imagery and style should be redolent of our cultural ethos." (5) There are plenty of examples of typical English expression in the collection. For instance, when Malla hears of the countless golden ornaments, his mouth begins "to water at that news." (11) Similarly, when he succeeds in scaring everyone from the dead body of the old woman that would enable him to steal everything, he feels himself in "seventh heaven" (15). And when Balya approaches Ganga to concede Sangappa's secret wishes, she cries out in anger: "I shall have you shoe-beaten." (39) Again she retorts to Paramma in similar vein, "How can he think of having me as his keep?" (43). When her husband finally finds our her extra-marital affair, he shouts at her, "You whore, you have blackened my face permanently and I cannot show my face to the people in the village." (53) Virabhadra, when he gets hold of Sangappa, boils with anger (58). When, out of ignorance, Girija signs on the divorce paper, her father-in-law, tells her in anguish,"You have dug your own grave" (76). When Rudravva is wrongly reported by the police of the death of her husband, she suddenly feels, "as if the earth under her feet was sinking." (133) She wails pitifully before her son, "My dear Chandru, your father has left us in midwater." (133) When Prema's father finds out the misdoing of Mr. Patil, otherwise a highly respected gentleman, he cries out in abhorrence, "We simply cannot guess which snake lives in which hole" (159). These expressions give an earthly touch of reality to these stories. In addition, there are so many references to South Indian customs, rituals, dress codes and food habits, thereby providing an extra edge of naturalness to this collection. Thus we have innumerable references of women adjusting their sarees around their breasts indicating their inherent modesty.

But this naturalness is not maintained in the structure/plot of the stories. There are unnecessary details, self-evident facts and damaging repetitions pointing to the fact that the author needs a lot of practising and polishing of his craft. Every now and then a reader is not supposed to know how *holige* and *bhajis* are prepared, *dosas and idlies* are eaten and beetle leaves are chewed or cigarettes are smoked. These excessive details simply distract the mind of the reader from the main theme and hamper the tempo and smooth flow of the storyline. Moreover, if everything is told by the short story writer to the reader, then what remains for his 'discovery'?

Printing errors are plentiful and the author should have looked at the final draft, particularly when this is his maiden venture. There is the sexual "passion portrayed in its raw intensity."[3] One wonders whether it is this overdose of sex that makes fine female critics like Prema Nandakumar to choose only one story, "The Anonymous Letter," and discuss it at length and shy away from all the remaining stories?[4] Nonetheless, there has been a long and controversial debate in literature as to how much sex should be put into it. D.H. Lawrence has portrayed sexual passion with a particular philosophy of life in his mind. One fails to find any such philosophy in the present collection. Even Arundhati Roy has her own share of sexual interludes in her most famous novel. Yet everything is amalgamated in the fine alchemy of her art; one solely misses this artistry in Naikar. But then, when Henry Miller was accused of putting so much of physical passion in his novels, he simply replied, "Maybe you have to wade through rivers of shit to find a germ of reality."[5] It is equally true for this collection. One fervently hopes that Naikar would hone his craft further in subsequent collections after this apprentice work, which points to the dormant potential that needs further exploration.

NOTES

1. *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories* (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1999), pp. 9-10.

2. "Basavaraj Naikar, *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories*," review in *The Indian Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 37, p. 141.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
4. "*The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories* by Basavaraj Naikar," review, *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*, Vol. 38, July 2000, No. 2, pp. 78-79.
5. *Nexus* (1960; Frogmore: Panther, 1974), p. 100.

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Selfishness as a Virtue: Ayn Rand's Fiction and Philosophy of Individualism

V.T. GIRDHARI

Ayn Rand is a major cultural phenomenon of modern America. She propounds an unflinching individualism which the youth of all societies is today getting so enthusiastic about. One easily relates Margaret Thatcher addressing the university students, "Today there are no societies; there are only individuals." Ayn Rand's philosophy has been most effectively illustrated in her fiction particularly in her two novels; *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged.* The central characters in the novels, like her devoutest followers in the real life, are rigorously trained professionals involved in intellectual pursuits. All her novels follow a uniform pattern. We see an extremely able and individualistic central character fighting against the force of collectivism and mediocrity which are threatening or have destroyed a nation or the world.

Rand's main thrust has been on the primacy of the individual. The nobility and dignity of individual human life is the criterion by which good is judged. Whatever supports and sustains life is good; whatever negates the individual aim of happiness is evil. Rand repeatedly expressed her admiration and respect for the founding fathers of America and the foundation on which the country rested. The constitution of America symbolizes Rand's philosophy that each individual has some inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Gladstein in his book *The Ayn Rand Companion* observes the three areas of conflict, that Rand perceived, in which those rights were threatened. They are (i) Individualism versus Collectivism (ii) Egoism versus Altruism (iii) Reason versus Mysticism. All these areas are interconnected. Through reason the individual perceives that which is

life-sustaining and ego-nourishing. Collectivism, Altruism and mysticism attempt to collide against individual freedom, a healthy ego and rationality. The individual human is the most important being in the universe, the root and crown of the things. Neither God nor country, not the best cause can have a priority over the individual by Rand's standard of values.

The Fountainhead[1] is Rand's finest exposition of the primacy of the individual. Rand develops in it her idea of egoism which she also terms as selfishness and rational self-interest. Howard Roark, in his defence at the Cortland Trial, goes on to explain the virtue of selfishness. He elaborates how independent creators have contributed to mankind: "The creators were not selfless. It is the whole secret to their power—that it was self-sufficient, self-motivated, self-generated." He is of the view that only by living for oneself can one attain those heights that are the peaks of human success. The mind, in which the greatest creations are conceived, is an individual thing. "There is no such thing as a collective brain."

The well-known rule of living that Rand explicates in *Atlas Shrugged*[2] is another illustration of her faith in the primacy of the individual. The words that are carved in granite on the door to the structure of Mulligan's Valley are highly symbolic and specific, "I swear by my life and by my love of it that I'll never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine." Similar to the theme of individual versus collective, Gladstein[3] observes in Rand the situation of the productive versus the parasitical. For Rand, the elite are the able, the doers. The ability to create, to do, is a primary virtue. For Rand, 'You are what you do.'

The theme of the productive versus parasitical is developed further in *The Fountainhead*. Rand uses the term 'second-handers' for parasitical. Peter Keatine and Howard Roark have been introduced as the students of architecture. Keating does possess a little talent but instead of developing it, his pursuit in life is what other people think as important. He never really attains a level of his own and puts his name on other peoples'

work. He can never be satisfied because he has never really pursued what he wants.

Howard Roark on the other hand, knows exactly what he wants, and doesn't worry about what people think of it. In terms of architecture as an art Roark is an original artist. He never follows a set line of some school of thought or style. What he really respects is productivity. He terms it as competence. He tells Gail Wynand that there can be no substitute for competence. Ability is the measuring rod by which all of Roark's friends and Rand's characters are measured. It does not matter to what field or social class they belong. They are first-handers and do not need anyone's approval. They work with the full knowledge that what they have done is good. It is the likes of Peter Keating that need Ellsworth Toolhey to tell him that he is a great architect. Second-handers need committees and unions and groups to sustain themselves.

The second-handers of *The Fountainhead* are the 'moochers' and 'looters' of *Atlas Shrugged.* The second-handers are not productive and the world is full of their mediocre works; but in the world of Howard Roark there is still the place for true geniuses. In *Atlas Shrugged* the moochers and looters not only hinder the producers' attempt to function, but they frame laws that destroy both the means and the end of their effort.

It has to be understood that the keynote of Ayn Rand's philosophy is the personal value and nature of man; the two themes are interrelated in Rand's works. She defines happiness, in *Atlas Shrugged* as a state of non-contradictory toy. Pleasure for man is "not a luxury but a profound psychological need."[4] The sole moral purpose of life is the pursuit of happiness. Rand sees happiness as the proof of moral integrity. It is the proof and result of man's loyalty to the achievement of his values. "Learn to value yourself . . . and when you learn that pride is the sum of all virtues, you will learn to live like a man." (*Atlas Shrugged*, 179)

Nathaniel Branden reminds us that Rand's brand of individualism is not subjectivism. Happiness for Rand is a personal experience and therefore a commitment to living. There is only one choice given to man and that is the choice to live. Her con-

cept of morality is "existence exists," as Rand forcefully words it in *Atlas Shrugged*. The issue is happiness or suffering. "Happiness is the successful state of life, suffering is the warning signal of death."[5] In the final analysis it is man's life which is the standard of value and one's "own life as the ethical purpose of every individual man."[6] For an individual man the things which are sacred or precious are the things "we withdraw from promiscuous sharing." (*The Fountainhead*, 70)

The radio speech of John Gait in *Atlas Shrugged* is the ultimate statement of Rand's public philosophy. Gait's message to American people is a call for every man to earn his own living, bear the burden of responsibility for his own and for no one else's life and live as a rationalist, an individualist, a producer. Gait perceived the temptation to irrational thought, collectivist morality and altruistic ethics as man's most dangerous enemies. Rand specifies in *We the Living*, "man is the word that has no plural."[7] (99) She said that man exists for his own sake, "and that he should not sacrifice himself to others nor sacrifice others to himself"[8] Baker elaborates Rand's view that a rational being does not borrow the values of others nor does he impose his values on anyone else.

The rational individual, the man of ego, is by nature a selfish being, a man of supreme self-confidence and self-interest. Such is Rand's idea of a man as hero, a person with human spirit. Rand regrets that selfishness has unfortunately acquired a negative connotation; it is because of the exponents of destructive altruism. The individualist must beware of the curse of our century—the "cult" of altruism. Rand perceives altruism as self-sacrifice, self-immolation, self-abnegation, self-denial, and ultimately self-destruction. Her notion of man as a heroic being is the man of rational self-interest, the man who refused to live for the sake of another man. She once said, "a man who places others first, above his own creative work, is an emotional parasite."

Opposed to her heroes, Rand presents her unique breed of villains. They are evil because they are weak, because they are devoid of moral fortitude and therefore without hope. In *We the Living*. there is Kira's cousin, Victor, who joins the party be-

cause the party is his way up the social and economic status. He sells himself, like Doctor Faustus and loses his soul in the bargain. There is Peter Keating in *The Fountainhead, a* true second-hander, a man without a sense of rational direction who can neither trust his judgement nor his talent. There is James Taggart in *Atlas Shrugged*, heir to a rail empire, a man of weak personal identity, who makes bargains with other rail-owners to avoid competition. And there is the malicious Ellsworth Toohey, a looter and "a man [who] wants power not over himself, his work, his destiny, not even nature or wealth but over other man."[11]

The predominant psychological complex of these villains is that they are "second-handers"—a term first used by Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead.* "Second-handers" have no personal identity—they try to live other people's lives and let other people live theirs. This second-hander is a passive man, observes Rand, a parasite who lives off the work of Active Man as does a thief or a looter. Roark looks upon the second-hander in this manner The basic need of the second-hander is to secure ties with other man in order to be fed. He places relations first. He declares that man exists in order to save others. (*Atlas Shrugged*, 738)

Rand was convinced that America's philosophic poverty was the own block in its path of material progress and prosperity. She blamed the state of American Politics and economy, the loss of individualism and capitalism for this state of philosophic poverty of the nation.

NOTES

1. Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead,* (U.S.A.: Signet Penguin, 1993).
2. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged,* (U.S.A.: Signet Penguin, 1992).
3. Gladstein, *The Ayn Rand Companion* (U.S.A.: Penguin 1990), p. 220.
4. Nathaniel Branden, *Virtue of Selfishness* (U.S.A.: Signet Penguin, 1964), p. 61.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
7. Ayn Rand, *We the Living,* (U.S.A.: Signet Penguin, 1946), p. 229.

8. Toffler, "A Candid Interview," Qtd. James Baker, *Ayn Rand* (Boston: Twayne and G.K. Hall, 1987), p. 95.
9. Baker, p. 98
10. Toffler, p. 7.
11. Baker, p. 102.

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Ruskin on Art and Morality

KRISHNA SINGH

Ruskin is basically no preacher of 'art for art's sake,' it is rather, 'art for the use of man and the glory of God.' This is indeed, in Ruskin's conception, the true aim of all human actions and not of art only. First and second volumes of *Modern Painters* abound with this notion. His praise of art is not measured by its technical perfection, but by power of conveying ideas, and ideas in their turn are valuable in proportion as they tend to develop the noblest faculties: "The art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas."[1] Ruskin carried the idea further, making the arts an exponent of the social and political virtues of a nation, and of the writers themselves. In his advocacy of moral and edifying virtues, he aligns with Plato, Hume, Burke, Reynolds, Kant, Ballanche, Madame de Staet, Chateaubriand and Carlyle. But "Ruskin made the idea so peculiarly his own that in England at least it is always associated with him. 'Whether the theory is entirely sound or not, it is difficult to tell . . . but, the case Ruskin makes out for himself in the *Stones of Venice,* in *Lectures on Art,* and in his social teaching, is at least plausible, and substantially convincing."[2]

Ruskin works out the relationship between the artist and the ethical state of the age. The finest artists, he argues, live entirely within their own age. In it they find their characters and their themes. Thus all the qualities of the artist will be rendered useless if the condition of persons and things around him is degraded. "No great art was ever created by bad persons." Literature in general corresponds to moral elevation. "Poetry," says Ruskin, "is the suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions."[3]

In the beginning, Ruskin contemplated a systematic treatment of the question of aesthetics, later he moved to the principles of literary criticism of morals and of religion. He was "unconscious of the parallelism, but he was never tired of moralizing, or of making religions out and that nature on which healthy art is based. It is true, he declared that the love of nature is a separate thing from moral principle, but he maintains that it is inconsistent with evil passions . . . he especially associates nature with humanity."[4]

He states that the results of arts are "desirable or admirable in themselves and for their own sake" and that they have no "taint in them of subserviency of life."[5] "Subserviency to life" he meant to that part of life which is served by such things as "houses and lands, and food and raiment." It is only in this meaner sense of utility that art is useless. In the higher sense it is supremely useful, in that it enables man to fulfil his real function, which is to be "the witness to the glory of God, and to advance that glory of his reasonable obedience and resultant happiness."[6] Pre-eminently useful to us, in the pure sense of the word, is "whatever sets the glory of God more brightly before us."[7]

The sense of the Beautiful, according to Ruskin, doesn't depend on the sense, nor on the intellect, but on the heart, and is due to the sense of reverence, gratitude and joyfulness that arises from recognition of the handiwork of God and the objects of Nature. The same divine power operating in the artist inspires him to blend or fuse his mental impressions into beautiful pictures or poems. His account of the sources of art, and in particular of the artistic Imagination, is a somewhat crude adaptation of the theory of Coleridge. The latter, we recall, said of the "secondary imagination," that it "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create, or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead. To some of us, the God in Ruskin's doctrine will seem too much a 'god of the Machine,' miraculously at hand to solve all difficulties which arise."[8]

Ruskin says that he is speaking of the broad human virtues which all men recognize and of the evident vices which all condemn. He emphasizes that a work of art should be pronounced excellent precisely insofar as it glorifies the most commonplace of the virtues. Moral considerations can't fail to enter into the subject matter of every artist who is handling life and character. A moral issue may characterize the theme, which has been chosen—as it does in *Oedipus*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and most of the great tragedies of the world (instances are Ruskin's). Character will often be lovable or the reverse according to the manner in which their moral attributes have been sympathetically treated. Morality being one of the principal issues in life belongs to the very fibre and texture of all art. In can't be otherwise, for life is its subject matter. This life, of course, is life as the artist sees it. His power of seeing determines the quality of the work. All that belongs to his personality, not excluding his moral character must determine the work which he produces, so that when we pass judgement on it we are passing judgement on everything in his mental and moral make-up which he drew upon from science and rhetoric.

The function of the moralist is to exhort, that of the artist is to exhibit. The aim of the one is to influence action. The aim of the other is to awaken perception. The satisfaction of the moralist is an action which always has reference to an end beyond that action. The satisfaction of the artist in the work of art is complete in itself, and knows no perfection beyond its own perfection. Art cannot be determined by the needs of action, but only by the imperative demands of vision. We can see an image as it is, and if we attempt to falsify our vision in order to present an object "Didactic to the people" we have been treacherous to our art. Moral attributes can't be irrelevant: "The greater part of all art criticism that has ever been moralistic in tone or content, often vehemently moralistic, dealing quite freely in adjectives like 'noble' and 'exalted' or 'base,' 'vile,' 'corrupt,' 'sordid' and 'vicious'."[9]

Ruskin was one of the first to see industrialization in terms not only of human suffering but also of the blight it inflicts on art and free creativity. Ruskin's criticism of the "economic man" is

valid even today, and his horror at the spread of ugliness and the sensitive barbarity with which the evidence of the past; its buildings and sculptures and paintings are being destroyed or restored to non-recognition are many times as urgent today as in his life time. Ruskin's immediate English followers, G.B. Shaw and William Morris, who restore beauty to English book production and inspired the garden suburb movement, "owe much to him in fundamental ideas. Frank Lloyd Wright's conception of organic architecture is unthinkable without his inspiration. Rather surprisingly Ruskin found a fervent admirer and fine translator in Proust, who learned from him that "universe is something of infinite value."[10]

NOTES

1. *Modern Painters,* Vol. I (Boston, n.d.), p. 84.
2. *Ruskin as Literary Critic*, ed. A.H.R. Ball (Cambridge, 1928).
3. *Modern Painters,* Vol. II (Boston, n.d.), pp. 277-78.
4. Hugh Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era* (Delhi, 1955), p. 760.
5. *The Complete Works of Ruskin*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903-1912), vol. 20, p. 113.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
8. R.A. Scott-James, *The Marketing of Literature* (London, 1956), p. 286.
9. Arnold Isenberg, *Aesthetics and the theory of Criticism* (Chicago, 1973), p. 266.
10. *A History of Modern Criticism* (Cambridge, 1983), vol. III, p. 148.

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The Western Discovery of Sanskrit and the Growth of Linguistic Studies

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There has been a hoary tradition of language studies in India dating back to the Vedic times. The *Astadhyayi* of Panini is the culmination of all the previous studies, most of which are now lost. S.K. Belvekar speaks of nearly a dozen different schools of Sanskrit grammar, at least 300 known from quotations and "more than a thousand separate treatises, original as well as explanatory." (1976:1) "Beside such a concourse, the thousand manuscripts of Priscian's Latin grammar, the pride of our Western tradition," says W.S. Allen, "are but a drop in the grammatical ocean." (2)

The Indian grammatical systems influenced many nations of the world. The Tamil grammar *Tolkappiyam* (circa 2nd century B.C.) had been influenced by the Sanskrit system. Buddhist monks carried the Indian linguistic scholarship to China. Even the eighth-century Arabic grammar by Sibawaih called simply *Al Kitab* is said to be influenced by the Paninian system of classifying the speech sounds from the velum forward. (Robins, 98)

The linguistic studies in the west was stimulated by the dissemination of Sanskrit learning during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Christian missionaries who brought the European languages to India took back with them the Indian linguistic tradition.

Heinrich Roth was a German missionary, who was the first European to compose a Sanskrit grammar. But owing to his untimely death in 1668 at Agra, his work could not be published. The first European grammar of Sanskrit by Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo was written in Latin and published at Rome in 1790. In the field of Sanskrit learning, Germany remained a me-

diator between India and the rest of Europe and America. Like the fruits of Renaissance and Humanism, the Sanskrit learning spread out westward to stimulate interest in linguistic investigations.

A French missionary, Courdoux, made a comparative study of Sanskrit verbal forms with those in Greek, Latin and other related European languages. But his work could be published only after Sir William Jones'. The most important date serving as a landmark in the spread of Sanskrit learning in the West is that of the year 1786, when Sir William Jones, an English jurist at Calcutta Fort William, addressed Royal Asiatic Society. The following extract from the speech is perhaps the most quoted of the lines regarding the Indo-European family of languages:

> The Sanskrit language, whatever may be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could have been produced by accident; so strong that no philologer could examine the Sanskrit, Greek and Latin, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which perhaps, no longer exists. There is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic had the same origin with the Sanskrit. (Qtd. Robins, 134)

This observation paved the way for the genealogical classification of languages of which the Indo-European is the leading family. The above pronouncement by Sir William Jones set the Sanskrit ball rolling in the European court. J.R. Firth acknowledges the impact of Sir William Jones' contribution: "Without the Indian grammarians and phoneticians whom he introduced and recommended to us, it is difficult to imagine our nineteenth century school of phonetics." (qtd. Allen, 2)

Sir William Jones, however, considered Panini's sutras "dark as the darkest oracle." (qtd. Ballantyne, ii). In his "Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatic Words in Roman Letters," the whole order of treatment and descriptive technique is clearly based on Indian models. (Allen, 3) He also introduced to the

west the Sanskrit classics such as *Shakuntalam, Geetagovindam, Manusmriti* and *Hitopadesha.*

Following Sir William Jones' observation regarding the relationship of Sanskrit with Latin, Greek and Celtic languages, a lot of interest was devoted to the study of philology. The nineteenth-century Germany in particular, and Europe in general, witnessed a galaxy of Indologists, interested in every aspect of ancient Indian language, literature and philosophy.

During the nineteenth century a number of textbooks on Sanskrit Grammar were written in all the major European languages. Some of them are by Colebrooke, Carey, Wilkins, Forster, Bopp, Monier-Williams, Max Muller, H.H. Wilson, Weber, Regnier, Benfey. The books on Sanskrit Grammar issued in the latter half of the nineteenth century were more popular than the earlier ones. The first book on Sanskrit Grammar to come out in 1879 in the U.S.A was by W.D. Whitney, who also wrote *Essentials of English Grammar* (1877). MacDowell's Sanskrit Grammar was published in 1911. J.R. Ballantyne's translation of *Laghusiddhanta Kaumudi* came out in 1849. Otto Boehtlingk is the first modern European translator of Panini. He collaborated with Rudolf Roth in the gigantic *St Petersburg Dictionary of Sanskrit*. E.B. Cowell (1826-1903) was the first Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge. Many of the European universities began courses in Sanskrit. The western interest in Sanskrit learning facilitated the growth of philology. R.H. Robins makes it clear:

> The linguistic study of Sanskrit by Europeans had a twofold effect; the comparison of Sanskrit with the languages of Europe formed the first stage in the systematic growth of comparative and historical linguistics, and, additionally, in Sanskrit writing Europeans now came into contact with the independently developed tradition of linguistic scholarship in India, whose merits were acknowledged at once and whose influence on several branches of European linguistics was deep and lasting. (135-36)

Inspired by the Sanskrit learning, a few of the western scholars, who had studied Sanskrit, wrote books on the various aspects of language. The works of Grimm, Verner, Grassmann etc. could not have been so conclusive, had there been no linguistic en-

lightenment in the wake of Sanskrit studies in the west. Many of the nineteenth-century philologists were learned in Sanskrit. Max Muller has very correctly stated that "a comparative philologist without a knowledge of Sanskrit is like an astronomer without a knowledge of mathematics." (qtd Crystal, 153) Max Muller himself wrote *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1873), besides his other specialist works on Indological studies. W.D. Whitney, Professor of Sanskrit at Yale during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, wrote several books on language studies, such as *Language and the Study of Language* (1867), *Oriental and Linguistic Studies* (1874), *The Life and Growth of Language: An Outline of Linguistics Science* (1875).

The historically oriented comparison in the nineteenth century led to the classification of languages—both genealogical and typological. The Schlegel brothers popularized Sanskrit studies in Germany. A.W. von Schlegel became the first professor of Sanskrit in the University of Bonn. Adolf von Schlegel initiated the typological classification in 1818. Inflexional languages were supposed to be superior to the analytical languages. The interest in genealogical classification, however, also grew side by side. These studies, as Robins says, were "partly as a result of the stimulus derived from the study of Sanskrit . . . by Western scholars, and the demonstration at the end of the eighteenth century of the indispensable connection of this language with Latin, Greek and German." (295)

There had been linguistic studies in the west before the migration of Sanskrit. Greek language studies dating since the time of Panini passed on through the Romans, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Greek Grammar by Dionasius Thrax was imitated by the prominent Latin grammarians, Donatus and Priscian. Traditional English Grammars have been mostly Latinate for their model. Latinate grammars written by J.C. Nesfield in the first decade of the twentieth century "attained almost Biblical authority." (Scott et al, 216)

Language studies continued in Europe upto the eighteenth century before there was any definite impact of Sanskrit studies

on them. W.S. Allen is aware of the limitations of the British tradition in the following:

> In phonetics, we all too rarely look back beyond the great name of the nineteenth century—Henry Sweet, A.J. Ellis, Alexander Melville Bell—except occasionally to honour a few lonely and half-forgotten figures of the immediately preceding centuries. (2)

So meagre had been the contributions of he ancient and medieval European phoneticians that W.S. Allen continues: "Generally speaking the expressions of ancient phonetic thought in the west have little to repay our attention or deserve our respect, whereas Indian sources as ancient or even more ancient are infinitely more rewarding." (2)

"The strong British interest in phonetics," says R.H. Robins, "can be traced back for some centuries and was reinforced by the Indian tradition." (378) Henry Sweet, the most prominent of the nineteenth-century linguists, as W.S Allen writes, "takes over where the Indian treatises leave off—though even in some matters even Sweet could have learnt from them." (7) In his *A New English Grammar: Logical and Historical* he applies "the latest result of linguistic investigation as far as they bear directly or indirectly on the English language." (I: v).

Among the twentieth-century linguists Ferdinand de Saussure, Leonard Bloomfield, J.R. Firth, Roman Jacobson, Rulon Wells refer to some of the ancient Indian linguistic concepts. The concept of 'nominal' as opposed to 'verbal' style derives from the Sanskrit *sutra* literature. Even Noam Chomsky is aware of the Paninian system of grammar, which he regards "as a fragment of such a 'generative grammar,' in essentially the contemporary sense of this term." (1965: v)

There is no gainsaying the fact that linguistics, which is now a very developed discipline of study, had been positively influenced in its early nineteenth-century phase by the advancement of linguistic studies in ancient India.

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The Betrayal Motif in Vijay Tendulkar's *Vultures*

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A journalist's fundamental desire is to present the true picture of the society in which he lives. Vijay Tendulkar is, in this sense, a realist every inch. His view about life in general, is uttered by Leela Benare when she says: "Life is betrayal. Life is a fraud."[1]

There is nothing but struggle between the two poles: birth and death. No one is consulted before he/she is thrown here on this earth. His very existence is a riddle for him. Moreover human being is forlorn and finds no help from outside. Therefore, he does whatever is possible for him to survive. He is an inborn selfish, social animal. He goes to any extent to satisfy his limitless greeds. He is always in search of the means to satisfy his different greeds viz. 1) greed for material gains, 2) greed for power, 3) greed for sexual pleasure.

He lost his faith in almighty god and why shouldn't he? He witnessed the horrible two World Wars and inhuman excesses of totalitarianism and the dominance of materialism. A modern man has full faith in the teaching, "God is dead."[2] He has realised the validity of the dictum "I am, therefore I think," instead of "I think therefore I am."[3]

Agerley and Schulze[4] focus on the idea of selfishness or egoism as a core motif of human nature. Self-interest is certainly dominant motivation. We always think: if he has that, why can't I have it? Selfishness is the source of all evil. It is the root of man's suffering and his fundamental defect. The material selfishness is rooted in the idea of "I-ness" and "my-ness." Under the spell of this ignoble and demon-mind quality develops pride. Every selfish person is potentially your enemy. The instinct of

selfishness is the fountain of lust, aggressiveness, violence, cruelty, wickedness, lie, deceitfulness, greed, treachery, hypocrisy, corruption, envy and so on.

Worldly love, affection or emotional attachment to mother, father, relatives are based on selfishness and conceit. P.B Shelley in his poem "Mutability" (1820) rightly describes the illusion of the relations:

> Virtue, how frail it is
> Friendship too rare!
> Love, how it sells poor bliss
> For proud despair!
> But we; though soon they fall,
> Survive their joy and fall
> Which ours we call.

We do not have true relations because all our relatives love us to fulfill their own needs. And all our virtues are recognised as the hiding places of vices. While engrossed in bondage, people generally affirm each other: "my every deed, word and thought only seek your happiness; because I love you." This is one of the greatest lies on the earth. Truly in this world within the spell of deceptive maya, nobody does anything for anybody else's happiness. Behind every act, word and thought there is his or her own selfishness disguised. Our ego sense may not admit this fact, but that does not change the eternal truth. The whole world is attached to its own happiness and when trouble comes no one is with you. Wives and friends, children and relatives—all are attached to wealth. Practising great hypocrisy, treachery and corruption, man acquires the wealth of others. Most of us carry a sign-board: "Beware of me" on our forehead. If one fails to read and comprehend the caption, one's fall, and damage are destined. We teach children not to accept rides from strangers. We warn the kids that others might touch them in the wrong places. Our elders warn us "Beware of the man" whenever they realise the danger by an untrustworthy man. If everyone of us delves deep into his mind and confesses candidly, he will not deny the fact that he has never betrayed any one so far in his life.

But why are we all self-centred? Why do we behave treacherously with others? There can be various reasons to the queries. But initially we want happiness in life. Happiness is our very nature and essence. Happiness is the birth-right of not only human beings but of all sentient living creatures. Man has a larger number of and more complex nature of wants, the satisfaction of which gives him pleasure and in the absence of which he feels unpleasantness, pain and unhappiness. Mere possession and accumulation of objects and things outside do not make one happy. It is a state of our mind which is the direct outcome of the responses of mind. In other words, running of the mind brings no happiness, but restlessness; whereas the state of repose and quiet of the mind bring happiness and peace. It is thus clear that happiness requires a correct understanding of values and a proper, uncorrupted approach to achieve end.

The theory of betrayal/deception states that the selfish interests of individual cause betrayal. Humans have genetic and cultural tendencies to maximize inclusive fitness. Everyone seeks his maximum benefit and betrayal/deception is frequently used whenever needed. It is found that 'the heart of man' of all mankind, of every man born into the world "is desperately wicked" and that it is "deceitful above all things." There springs every species of vice and wickdness against our neighbours and ourselves, just for the desire of the flesh, the eyes, the pride of life, the love of money, the love of power, the love of ease, and the love of honour.

Thus the heart of man is so deceitful that men are continually betraying both themselves and others. And if men thus betray themselves, is it any wonder that they betray/deceive others and that we so seldom find a man in whom there is no guile. It seems that deceit as an influence strategy is neither new nor a human invention. The ability to betray/deceive one's peer has evolved into one of the most advanced and powerful of our cerebral functions. It is also observed that it is a power that gives us success in love, war and commerce. Whether it is good or bad can be another issue to discuss.

Vijay Tendulkar's *Vultures* portrays the devilish selfishness and satanic cruelty amongst the family members. Tendulkar wrote the play during the late fifties. Sai Paranjape directed the first performance at Tejpal Theatre, Bombay on 29 May 1970. Tendulkar is the most prolific and leading dramatist in modern Marathi theatre. He has observed society minutely and portrays its different shades meticulously in his plays. He handles the day-to-day problems of the middle-class people, generally, from his own observations.

Vultures is one of his well-acclaimed plays where Tendulkar deals with the dark world of human mind . Every character tries to betray and crush others for his or her self-interest. In search of happiness, the characters deceive their family members. They descend the abyss of ignoble depth where only demons live. Their behaviour even blots the world of satan, ghost and demon. It seems only human beings can do and behave like vultures. Rajaninath has aptly described them:

> The story of men accursed
> Or else of vultures cursed
> To live their lives as men. (265)

Vultures presents betrayal at different levels that runs throughout the play and unites the characters and events that finally leads to heart-shattering consequences with every one of them. They face an awful tragedy as a result of their deceitful activities. (The words betrayal and deception are used here interchangeably). Betrayal can be analysed in the following relationships:

Brother betrays brother.
Brothers betray sister and vice versa.
Father betrays his children and vice versa.
Betrayal for sensual hunger.
Self-Betrayal.

The play begins (after Rajaninath's verse) with the words "ungrateful bastard!" (206) It presents a story of a middle-class family, the Pitales. Hari Pitale and his brother Sakharam started "Pitale Plumbers," a business. Both of them worked hard, sin-

cerely and the business flourished. When everything was going on smoothly, an ego predominated Hari's mind. Accordingly, to satisfy his insatiable greed for money, he betrayed his brother Sakharam and expelled him from the business fifteen years ago. Umakant rightly points out: "Why did Pappa . . . cheat Uncle?" (218) Hari settled all the matter so carefully that Sakharam failed even in the court of law. Hari Pitale stabbed him in the back and forced him to lead a destitute and wretched life thereafter.

Hari is an untrustworthy brother who misled Sakharam and forced him to collect the broken pieces of his heart. Sakharam was thrown into a ditch from where he could not stand again. He suffered a great blow by Hari. He was betrayed at the hands of his own brother. He realised his error in placing trust in Hari, a machiavellian brother. But it was too late for Sakharam to retrieve. As a brother he never expected such a faithless blow by his own eldest brother. His feelings and respect towards Hari were not valued at all. On the contrary Sakharam was brought to the road to lead a helpless and hopeless life.

Hari misused his position as an elder brother. He is so shameless that he accumulated every paisa in his own account. He wanted to enjoy the whole property.

The play deals with the consequences of Hari Pitale's treacherous ways. His means are not pious and straightforword but corrupt and deceitful. It is rightly said: "Ill gotten gains seldom prosper." He accumulates material property by foul means but cannot enjoy it in the real sense of the term. His house is constructed on faithless, deceitful foundation. Therefore, it collapses finally more terribly . He wanted happiness at the cost of his brother's loss. His action of treachery reminds us of Macbeth who killed King Duncan deceitfully and suffered mental agony and loss. In the machination to betray his brother, truly speaking, Hari becomes a case of self-betrayal. Actually parents earn money for the sake of their children. Hari-pappa's case is different. He does not place trust in his children because he considers them as untrustworthy as he is. His limitless greed for money creates havoc in his family. The family suffers from the lack of social mores, altruistic-attitude, respect for human values and

humane approach. Everything is valued from monetary point of view. The Pitales are full of distrust and dishonesty. The captain, father pappa is a crafty schemer and it is not surprising that his children follow his ways. Ramakant rightly sums up: "Pappa, Pappa! As the seed, so the tree! Did we ever ask to be produced?" (211) Initially all the characters lack motherly love, affection and care. They do not know that "charity begins at home."

Hari Pappa's two sons are brought up under the aura of machinations and dishonesty. Ramakant and Umakant are the reformed forms of their father's cunning behaviour. Both the brothers try to supersede each other at every step. They behave as if they are enemies. The words "bloody bastard, bugger " are used frequently for each other. They evaluate every thing from monetary angle. Like their father, each one of them seeks opportunities to betray the other. Each one of them gets ten thousand as a share from their father's estate and each of them has an eye over the share of other. Generally they are drunk. They want to be lavish, so they spend their property to the extent that the ancestral business comes to dust. Particularly Ramakant becomes bankrupt. He is tortured by the creditors. His furniture is forfeited. Umakant is shrewd enough to settle his position abstracting his every share from the estate. On the contrary Ramakant, at the end, becomes insane and cries as a beggar for money. Thus there is no natural affection and respect for each other. Every minute they look at each other with suspicion and doubt. Instead of protecting, and consoling, they insist on digging ditch for each other. They always quarrel with each other for money and estate. We can understand the relation between the two brothers from the conversation: Ramakant rebukes Umakant: "You bastard! Bloody gnat! Half-cocked bastard." (253) And Umakant abuses Ramakant: "Swindler! I'll see you in the gutter!" (255)

The play is full of such conversations. Umakant, to insult his brother, discloses Rama's impious relations with Rajaninath. Both are cunning, deceitful and wily brothers. They are perfect match to each other. Both of them always wish destruction of the other. Their selfish tendency brings them destruction at every

level. After all they are the children of a cheater. Rajaninath rightly points out: "The seed's diseased. All else is good. But the vital core that takes root, that's rotten." (243) Ramakant also rightly confesses: "Brother, you bloody thought you were the only bastard. But no! No, brother I'm a bastard, too. We're all bastards." (262) We can say that the machiavellian tendency is regenerated in the next generation. Therefore, the tendency is inherited in the children also. Ramakant plays the role of Sakharam and Umakant inherits the role of Hari-pappa.

Vultures presents a perverted and barbaric relationship between brother and sister. Manik leads a stressed life. She feels a constant danger to her life. She can't even drink water as it might contain poison. She cannot have sound sleep because there is a danger from her brothers. It seems 'Raksha Bandhan' is useless from their point of view. Ramakant and Umakant always humiliate her. They call her "a whore." Once they plot to poison her medicine. They have an eye on her share in the property.

They even plot to blackmail her lover Raja of Hondur for money. Manik is pregnant. They demand twenty five thousand from Manik's lover otherwise they would publicly slander Manik and Raja's illicit relationship. They don't respect the sanctity of the tender relationship between brother and sister.

That a man can go to any extent to satisfy his interest is shown through the relationship of the brothers and the sister. Unfortunately Raja dies of heart attack and this frustrates them. They decide to make a public show of her becoming sati and thereby earn money by selling out tickets. Now they turn to Manik to abort the brat. Both of them beat and kick her on the belly so that the brat is aborted. She screams, cries before the stony-hearted devil brothers . Her leg is broken. The inhuman beating of Manik is one more awful scene in the play after the beating of pappa treacherously.

Even though Manik is helpless, still she has her revenge on Ramakant. She uses the mixture of lemon and ash and rubs it on Rama's belley and aborts the child. She reacts in the same barbaric manner as her brothers treated her inhumanly earlier. She

laughs in a frenzied victorious manner and says: "I've done as I planned." (260)

Pappa Hari accumulated property by foul means. His deceptive ways are followed by his children. He had a secret sensual relations outside and Rajaninath is a product of his unfair affair. Ramakant and Umakant develop a natural hatred for the illegitimate son Rajaninath. Pappa cannot support him properly. He stays in a dilapidated garage. A sense of being an outsider grows in him. He is alienated from the family. He also has no respect for his father and step-brothers. He is betrayed by his father.

Once Ramakant raised a flower-vase to hit his father. Both brothers Ramakant and Umakant use the words like "crafty old swindler, scoundrel, rascal" for the father pappa. As children become spendthrift, they require more money to squander. All the three become heavy drunkards. Ramakant and Umakant, realise that their father still has seven thousand rupees. So the children decide to grab the amount. They arrange a drinking party which results in a deadly party for the father. Ramkant and Umakant, along with Manik, flatter their father. They treacherously find out that the amount is in Punjab Bank. They drink and beat pappa. It's a shocking scene in the play where the father becomes a prey. He prays helplessly:

> Please don't kill me! I'm your father.
> You pimps! Your father! (230)

A time comes on the creator to pray the creatures:

> you've plotted this. You are going:
> to kill me . . . murder me. (229)

Pappa is forced to sign the cheque. He runs away to save his life. The father curses his children that they will end in mess, and worms will rot in their mouths. Pappa's beating is a devilish betrayal by the children. He becomes vicious and decides to destroy them. Actually he has no affection for them from the very beginning.

Pappa decides to take revenge on his children. He stealthily contacts and cajoles his illegitimate son Rajaninath. He changes

his colour like a chameleon while talking to Rajaninath. He requests and instigates him against his own children. How diabolic a father can be! He wants his revenge but he is insulted and humilated by Rajaninath. The whole play revolves round such plots and counter plots between the father and his own children.

We cannot deny the mysterious predominance and all pervading powerful memories of the sexual organs which always linger in our mind from infancy to death. How can we all forget that we are the product of the union of the male and female sexual organs. Every one of us could easily call to mind the peculiar fascination of the sexual organs and the instances from his own life or from that of his friends and acquaintances. This fascination plays a very imposing role in all the relations, gestures, conversations and memories of lovers. There is a hidden attraction between the two sexes, which is the fundamental cause behind all marriages and concubinage. It is said that animal sex is controlled by seasons whereas human sex is controlled by reason. But it is proved that human beings usually behave irrationally so far as sexual hunger is concerned. It shows the imperious nature of the sexual urge that dominates human mind. It is so imperious that in case of repression, crimes are committed in order to satisfy it. Manik, Rama, Rajaninath and the Raja commit the crime of adultery in the play.

People break the social taboo to satisfy the sexual hunger on the sly and sometimes openly. Manik is as shameless as her brothers. She is possessed by physical and material hunger. She is a clitorid type of woman. She had love affairs earlier with a cycle-shop owner, a camera-man, a stall-keeper. When the play starts, she is quite a mature woman of thirty-five and has an affair with Raja of Hondur, a man who had two wives earlier and six children. Raja and Manik fornicate on the sly. Manik doesn't marry him, but still she carries a brat of Raja. She does not repent at all her unmarried pregnancy. On the contrary she rebukes her brothers whenever they point out her unbridled wandering with the Raja. As her life is licentious so she pays terribly for it. She is trapped and beaten badly which leads to abortion. She becomes destitute and wretched.

I am amused when critics show sympathy for Rajaninath and Rama. To me they are cold-blooded Machiavellian, cunning characters. N.S. Dharan[5] says "there is portrayal of tender love" between Rama and Rajaninath. It's nothing but physical passion between them. Rajaninath sometimes goes to brothel. He satisfies his carnal desire with his sister-in-law. An elder sister-in-law is considered as a mother or sister. But here in the folk of vultures they are just two opposite sexes attracted towards each other to satisfy their sexual hunger. Rajaninath, a commentator and character, adds one more instance of sensuality and treachery like his father. He does not show any heroic quality to bring Rama out of the situation but stealthily pollutes the pious tie between them and then meekly watches the disintegration of the family members to his satisfaction. Both commit an offence of adultery. They, for sometime, try their best to suppress their mutual attraction but cannot avoid the opportunity. An opportunity brings them together to develop incestuous relationship. Rama calls him "Bhaiya" and Rajaninath knows that she is his sister-in-law. Both of them are aware of their relationship. But when the boundaries of relation are crossed, the two sexes remain like stags and hinds of the forests. The social taboo is thrown into the air. Then Rama is a woman and Rajaninath becomes her copartner man. Rama prefers to be polluted by another man than to be called a barren woman. She tells Rajaninath: "This soil's rich, it's hungry. But the seed won't take root. . . . if it's weak, feeble, lifeless, devoid of virtue, then why blame the soil?" (241) They betray their family members. Both of them misuse the loneliness of each other. Rajaninath behaves like his father-pappa and fathers Rama's brat. An illegitimate son becomes an illegitimate father. Rama conceals the fact. She lies to Ramakant: "We'll live in poverty. If we have to really. You, me, our baby." (251) Ramakant becomes very happy to know about her pregnancy. A pitiable fellow! But his dreams are shattered by his brother Umakant who tells him. "It's that bastard Rajaninath's! . . . It's your half-brother's! . . . That son of a whore!" (255) It is a brutal shock to Ramakant. He cannot bear the stroke.

As per the principle of self-betrayal, particularly father pappa, Ramakant, Manik, Rama are the cases of such betrayal. The theory of self-betrayal states that "Humans not only betray/ deceive others but also betray/deceive themselves about the fact that they deceive into believing that they do not betray/deceive."[6]

Self-betrayal is the process or fact of misleading ourselves to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid. Self-betrayal/ deception in short is a way we justify false beliefs to ourselves. Psychologists consider it as being the result of self-esteem problems.

Pappa, in the flux of betraying Sakharam, is disillusioned by his four children. Material prosperity does not bring him happiness, respect and true love from his own children. He runs after illusion and betrays himself inadvertently. Thus father-pappa is himself responsible for this domestic tragedy.

Ramakant, Umakant and Manik are the children and followers of their cunning father. Ramakant ends as a pauper and insane. He is disillusiored by "one bloody torture after another." (261) He becomes destitute having "No wife. No kiddie." (263)

Rama attempts to become mother. She follows a faithless means to conceive to prove her fertility but faces an awful tragedy as Manik suffers. Both the women use illicit, impious, unsocial ways and show us the vitality of the saying: "Means justify the end." Thus these major characters are self-deceived.

Betrayal/Deception carries some cost, not only in terms of time, energy, and resources (money etc.) but also in terms of mental and psychological costs. Deception and lying require a large amount of both physical and mental energy. The psychological concept of "cognitive dissonance" states that we become psychologically uncomfortable when our actions tend to betray others. Betrayer inadvertently develops a guilty conscience about his deceitful act and this guilty conscience may extract mental/ psychological price. Betrayal/Deception can have unintended effects and unexpected results on both betrayer and his victim. The Pitales, therefore, cannot escape from the result of their machiavellian actions. Every one pays for his or her deceitful action terribly.

Due to their faithless behaviour, everyone is alienated from other family members. A sense of alienation is the bitterest experience in human life. The cases of betrayal take place everywhere and people are aware of the possibility of these incidents. But it is unbearable to be betrayed by one's own kith and kin. Domestic relationship is questioned in the play. All the family members are emotionally betrayed by one another. The series of betrayal/deception create an awful aura that suppress our emotional out let. C.Coelho[7], in this respect, has aptly observed: "In *Vultures*, perhaps Tendulkar presents a too terrifying, repulsive, almost barbaric representation of life for us to easily swallow." We witness the ferocity, ruthlessness, avarice and cunningness of vultures in the form of the Pitales.

Thus the play presents the latent propensity to betray/deceive. Ramakant is a betrayer every inch. He betrays in his financial transactions. He gives a cheque of four thousand to Jaygopal Seth, which bounces as the account is nil. He supplies worst goods to the Major. The goods have not been given warranty. Ramakant's blood is contaminated by machination. In his childhood he saw his nurse's illicit relations with a watchman. Ramakant was nursed on her milk. It is proved beyond doubt that immoral, illegal acts, even though committed stealthily, have their consequences. *Vultures* is an example of the fact. Manik suggests Ramakant to throw their uncle Sakharam out of the house to die in the cold. They find uncle useless as he is penniless. They conspire to kill their own father as he has still some money. All the family members are mean, ugly, cruel, indecent, greedy and selfish. Not a single person is virtuous and honest for whom we may feel sympathy. Actually there live six vultures "in a hole in a tree in the shapes of men." (204) They are all traitors. As they are running after one prey to another, they don't get mental satisfaction at all. They had property but property could not bring them happiness. On the contrary the material property goes back in the same faithless way as it came. Umakant rebukes Ramakant: "What've you got left to look after? Double mortgage on the house. The office has gone already. The bank'll attach the account. The creditors'll fall like jackals on the rest of the prop-

erty. Pappa's account's cleaned out. Manik's share's all gone." (253)

Not only the property is gone but everybody is eliminated in the worst treacherous way. Vrinda Nabar observes: "Vulture-like, they prey on one another: conventional sentimentalities have no place in their world where fathers deceive children, in a destructive vortex of greed and treachery."[8]

The play presents a sense of loss and violence. Tendulkar sincerely believes that violence exists in each of us. In an interview, in connection with *Sakharam Binder* and *Vultures*, he states: "violence comes as a way of life—a natural way of life if you consider the backround of the characters. It is there as part of the function of a character."[9]

Violence, thus becomes a natural consequence of the action of betrayal. Boelkins and Heiser state a biological reason behind it: "No person living today can question the statement that man, Homo sapiens, self-proclaimed to represent the pinnacle of evolution, is the most dangerous living species."[10]

Since violence among humans is so commonplace, some social scientists have argued that human aggressive tendencies are inherent or instinctual. Some theorists have argued that violence results from frustration. An unfulfilled need produces the frustration and the frustration is given vent in aggression. Pappa, Ramakant, Umakant and Manik suffer from frustration. Therefore, they resort to betrayal, violence, barbarity and inhuman treatment to one another. Once Rama advises Ramakant to "stop this murderous deceit." (251)

Vultures is packed with deception, inhuman treatment, and violence. It is a dramatic necessity also as it sustains suspense, surprise and interest through out the play. Veena Noble Das quotes Artaud's statement: "the audience want to come face to face with his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism."[11]

Tendulkar has presented the basic instincts of human beings without reservation. There is no comic relief in the play. That leads Girish Karnad to say that "the staging of *Gidhade* [*Vul-*

tures] could be compared to the blasting of a bomb in an otherwise complacent marketplace."[12]

To conclude, one may quote Arundhati Banerjee: "The play is a ruthless dissection of human nature revealing its inherent tendencies to violence, avarice, selfishness, sensuality and sheer wickedness."[13]

The play was much debated during the seventies and today also because of its contemporaneity. Modern man is running after material objects like the Pitales and especially like Ramakant who desires a car, a posh bungalow, a chauffer, a chef, a watchman at the gate, eight or ten servants. The play presents complex needs, demands of a modern man and his restless 'hide and seek' race for self-gratification. Ramakant says: "Men aren't what they bloody used to be, are they? The whole race of 'em's crooked, dammit! Bloody frauds, the lot!" (236) And Rajaninath's last lines are word by word applicable to most of us: "There is no escape, for them . . . or for anyone" (265) today and tomorrow.

NOTES

1. Vijay Tendulkar, *Silence: the Court is in Session*, trans. Priya Adarkar, *Vijay Tendulkar: Five Plays* (Delhi, O.U.P. 1998), p. 116.
2. Paul Roubiczek, *Existentialism for and against* (Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 28.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
4. Agerley and Schulze, Selfishness: depalmini @ Fsmail. Uws. Edu, Fri. April 26, 1996, 9.
5. N.S. Dharan, *The Vultures (Gidhade): A Drama of Domestic Violence* (New Delhi: Creative, 1999), p. 73.
6. Mario F. Hellmann, "Social Evolution and Social Influence: Selfishness and Deception, Self-Deception, Social Power and Self-Deception," www.a3.com.myself /raven pap htm-65 k.
7. C. Coelho, "The Cult of Violence and Cruelty in Modern Theatre with special reference to Athol Fugard and Vijay Tendulkar," *Indian Literature Today*, ed. R.K.Dhawan, (New Delhi: Prestige), p. 35.
8. Vrinda Nabar, "*The Vultures*, A Book Review," *Indian P.E.N.*, Vol. 40, No. 11, Nov. 1974, p. 19.

9. Vijay Tendulkar, Interview, *The Indian Express*, 27 March, 1989. Magazine Section, p. 5.
10. Boelkins and Heiser, "Violence, Social Problems," William Kornblum, Joseph Julian (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992), p. 192.
11. Veena Noble Das, "Theatre as Plague: A Study of Webster's *The White Devil* and Tendulkar's *Vultures*," *Osmania Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 26, 1990, p. 86.
12. Girish Karnad, Introduction, *V. Tendulkar Five Plays*, p. XII.
13. Arundhati Banerjee, Introduction, *Five Plays*, p. XII

In Search of Perfection: Mohan Rakesh's *Halfway House*

SAVITRI TRIPATHI

Mohan Rakesh's play *Aadhe-Adhure* has been translated into many major languages. It is a social and realistic play. The play is about a family, its particular members and the values which govern this family and the class to which the family belongs. The play gives a complete picture of a modern middle-class family. Mohan Rakesh has portrayed very beautifully the worthlessness of modern man, disintegration of human relationship, the loneliness of man, boredom, disgust and search for quick and easy escape route from the problems of life. The story moves around a small family; rather a drawing room and the playwright has been able to make it a play of enduring importance. It is a social document of the relation, attachment and tension between husband and wife. Mahendranath loves Savitri very much. Savitri must be loving him earlier but when she comes in close contact with Mahendranath, she feels utter disgust for him. She says to Juneja:

> That he's never had any confidence in himself! The test for everything in life has been you. Whatever you think, want, do, he too must think, want and do, why? Because you are a man And he? He's not even half a man![1]

Savitri's long speech with Juneja reveals the secret of their relationship. Mahendranath is mere puppet in the hands of his friends. Savitri is a responsible and ambitious lady. She expects a lot from Mahendranath as every wife expects from her husband, but she realises that her husband is irresponsible towards her, toward children and even towards himself. She does a lot to make him a complete man but he does nothing to share the responsibilities of the family. In the play, everyone feels sympathy

for her. We realise and understand that her impatience and irritations and the natural consequences of the stress and strain of the years. Savitri realises that her life is a curse and her husband is a curse of her life. Unsatisfied with the behaviour of her husband (who is an incomplete man) and children, Savitri wants to live her remaining life with a complete man. But this desire is unfulfilled because perhaps it is wrong to search for perfection, for completeness, for wholeness.

Mahendranath also deserves our sympathy. He is treated like a servant of the family. He is like a rubber stamp for his wife. He knows very well the male-friends of Savitri and now and then discusses them. Every Friday and Saturday, he leaves the house not to return but returns back after few hours, feeling mentally tired, defeated and disappointed; perhaps it is his destiny.

This play is about the struggle of middle-class for status. Savitri struggles for perfection or completeness. She wants to maintain balance between home and the world. But the whole family—husband, wife and children—are disintegrating. Family's financial condition is worse, and the play is full of suffocation, pain and bitterness. Everyone tries to escape it but none can.

When the play opens, it reveals that Mahendranath, the head of the family is unemployed. His wife Savitri is in job to run the house. They have three children: a son, Ashok and two daughters—Binny and Kinny. Ashok is looking for job; older daughter Binny has run away with a man Manoj. The younger daughter Kinny lacks love and care and has started taking interest in sex.

Aadhe-Adhure is a realistic play. It uncovers the veneer of civilization of the society we live in. Mohan Rakesh has portrayed very skilfully the lack of human relationships, loss of faith and moral values, mental tension of a modern working woman. In older times, people believed in intimate human relationship. There was joint family system under which resources were pooled up and the needs of all were supplied. But today, there is a trend of small family and modern man has become self-centred and egoistic. There is no sympathy and compassion for the members of the family. All these things have been portrayed in

the play. It throws light on the problems of a family in which only the lady feels responsibility for the family.

In the opening scene, Savitri returns from her office and is greatly irritated to see the house in disorder. When her husband returns home, she says: "Whenever I come back, the house is in a mess." (7) She feels that if he cannot go out and work, at least he can keep the house in order. In drawing room there are chairs, tables, books and files. There is a layer of dust on these things. Due to poor financial condition there are cracks in the crockery. Like cracks in tea pots, there in disintegration in their relations. The unsystematic things in drawing room indicate unsystematic way of life of the members of this family. When older daughter Binny, who had run away with Manoj (her mother's friend), arrives, their conversation reveals that she is also not happy with her husband. When Savitri asks the reason she says:

> A cup of tea spilt from his hand or a short delay when he returns from work. These little things are not really reasons; they become reasons. A strange sort of feeling mounts up within me and spreads like poison through my whole being. Everything I touch or see or hear becomes distorted and I stand helpless and fearful under the spell of a destructive fate. But Mama, I don't know why. . . . I just can't see why! It happens unasked, unforeseen. It . . . It . . . tortures me till I think I'm going mad. (17-18)

Whenever Binny returns to her mother, she asks a question:

> From this house I have taken something with me which prevents me from being natural. . . . Can you tell me, Mama, what it is and where it is? Is it in the doors and windows of this house? In the walls, the ceiling, the floors? Why can't I see it? Can you see it, Mama? Can Daddy? Can Kinni? Can Ashok? (18-19)

During the conversation, the son Ashok enters and the argument goes on. We come to know that he has no respect for her mother. Mother is very much worried regarding his career and job but son wastes his time only in cutting the pictures of the actresses of English films. During discussion, Mahendranath loses his temper and leaves the house in anger. Then her Boss Singhania arrives and Savitri tells her son to behave properly with

Singhania as only he can provide him a job but Ashok is very rude and does not talk with Singhania properly. He does not like Singhania or any other male friend of his mother. He sketches his picture on a paper and thinks him to be a monster. He does not want to get a job through Singhania because for Ashok Singhania is a mannerless fellow. He does not know how to sit or talk properly. He doesn't have the sense to button up his trousers. When Savitri asks Ashok about the reason of all these activities he replies like a frustrated youth: "Why do you have to invite people who make . . . us feel even smaller than we actually are. (40-41) Ashok does not like his mother and tries to insult her. Saroj Mishra says: "He has utter disgust for his mother's ambition and flirtness."[2]

Savitri wants to maintain the relation to such type of persons not for her own sake but for all the members of the family, because she wants that Ashok should get a job to share the responsibilities and burden of the family and thinks that at least Ashok should not be idle like his father. Disappointed by the rudeness of her son, she decides not to bother about anyone in the house in future:

> The burden of this house is so great that I need someone to share it with me. I can't manage it alone! Your father lost all our money and has been idle ever since. You, far from doing something on your own, even consider my efforts to help you an insult! If no one else in bothered, why should I alone go on? Why shouldn't I enjoy life? If I did that, you wouldn't feel small. (41)

When Act Two opens, Binny and Ashok are talking and Savitri leaves for work informing about her plan to have tea with Jagmohan. She tells Binny, her elder daughter: "When you come next time I may not be here." (52)

Jagmohan is an old admirer of Savitri. Savitri calls him and goes with him as soon as he arrives, but Jagmohan listens to her sympathetically, treats her tenderly but refuses to give her any false assurance. When Juneja, Mahendranath's close friend arrives, there is long conversation between Binny and Juneja which makes clear the bitterness and coolness of relation be-

tween Savitri and Mahendranath. Savitri returns home because she did not get proper response from Jagmohan because Jagmohan is a man who does not want to do anything which makes him regret later.

Juneja is a man who is different from others. The family has no secret from this man. Savitri has been very close to him. Having received no response from Jagmohan, Savitri scolds Kinny and locks her in a room. Then she turns to Juneja and says: "Haven't I said that's enough! All of you. . . . Every one of you. . . . All alike! Exactly the same. Different masks, but the face? . . . The same wretched face. . . . every single one of you!" (76) When the situation reaches a climax, we are informed that Mahendranath has returned back. Mohan Rakesh writes: "The first man enters on the boy's arm." (79)

The play presents the problems and psyche of the individual and highlights the feelings and frustrations of city-bred middle-class family. Mohan Rakesh faithfully portrays the society around us. The play has also raised the problems of married life. Marriage is an external bond to keep together souls that can't be alike. It is a personal drama of husband and wife.

Singhania is Savitri's boss. By introducing his character, Mohan Rakesh wants to give a picture of those employers who only believe in pomp and show, talk nonsense, take undue advantage of their post and position and exploit the women who work under them.

Halfway House is a woman-centred play. Savitri searches for wholeness in her life and home. She tries to solve the problems of everyone in the family, whether it is the problem of Binny or Kinny or search of a job for Ashok or running the house with an unemployed husband. The husband is unconcerned with all these problems. Only Savitri can solve the financial problems of the family. She is an ambitious lady. She does a lot to make Mahendranath a complete man but he is only puppet in the hands of his friends. He does what his friends want. He comes home and sometimes behaves very badly. The speech of Binny reveals the domestic cruelty when she tells Juneja:

> Daddy rages. Then he tore Mama's clothes to shreds. When he gagged her and beat her up behind closed doors. Dragging her by the hair to the WC. . . . (Shudders) I can't ever recount the fearful scenes I've witnessed in this house! (64)

Perhaps due to all these reasons, Savitri is in search of completeness, wholeness or perfection in her life. Mohan Rakesh, by introducing the devices of one man in five roles, wanted to make us aware that all men share a number of basic characteristics. Circumstances may differ but the behaviour of all remains the same. The search for perfection is like catching the stars in the sky. All men seem fragmented and incomplete and ultimately her search for perfection remains unfulfilled.

The name of the heroine in the play is very significant. It shows how tradition and values have changed. In *Mahabharata*, Savitri is symbolic of the true wife's devotion and power. She fights Lord Yama, the lord of death, to get her husband's (Satyavan's) life restored, but here in the play, Savitri wants the removal of her husband from her life. In *Mahabharata*, Savitri finds her life meaningless without her husband, but here Savitri finds her life meaningless with her husband. Perhaps Mohan Rakesh wants to show how in modern age values have changed.

In the play, we find glimpses of contemporary life. The play begins with tension and ends with tension. Within a span of about thirty hours, the play ends and leaves a deep impression on reader's mind. The language is very simple and colloquial. To conclude in words of Rajendra Nath: "Here all human bonds of love and concern for one another have been replaced by very mundane and materialistic compulsions. Wherever bonds of love and concern are replaced by materialistic compulsion, the 'hell' is inevitable. And that is what *Aadhe-Adhure* is about." (11)

NOTES

1. Mohan Rakesh, *Halfway House*, trans. Bindu Batra from Hindi *Aadhe-Adhure* (Delhi: Worldview), p. 69.
2. Saroj Kumar Mishra, *Badalte Samajik Mulya aur Hindi Natak* (New Delhi: Om Sons), p. 112.

Deus Ex Machina: The Role of Coincidence and External Forces in Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*

A.A. MUTALIK-DESAI

Following Emile Zola's *L'Assommoir*, naturalistic technique in literature had, in the late nineteenth century, amounted to an exact, accurate and graphic portrayal of life according to the tenets of the philosophy of determinism. While realism contends, in practice, that the success or failure by men and women is the result of their own actions together with the play of circumstances and the effects of environment, naturalism denies the very possibility of human beings steering their destiny on their own strength or their own free will. According to the doctrine of determinism, humans have no choice. They are just the helpless victims of heredity (physical or biological) and environment (social and economic). They are caught in a hostile and malevolent world. They are thus enslaved and controlled by external forces. As Theodore Dreiser has himself commented: "His feet are in the trap of circumstances, his eyes are on illusion." These words are well illustrated by his epic novel, *An American Tragedy* (1925). In this vast canvass is unfolded the story of a young man's rise and fall. It narrates the life of one Clyde Griffith, his elevation to a relatively comfortable and secure position in life, his near admission into the upper echelons of society of wealth, power, prestige and glitter, and his gradual corruption and destruction. The main events of this saga may be introduced at this stage.

As a boy of twelve years dreaming the dreams of money, pleasure and comfort, Clyde had reasons to be dissatisfied with his parents and their poverty, backwardness and the general stagnant atmosphere at home in middle-western Kansas City.

They, in their monotonous and doleful existence, conducted a "Door of Hope Mission." His father: a most unimportant looking man; his mother: plain in face and dress but not homely. Life beyond all this drabness had much to attract him. He was easily fascinated by good clothes, luxury, girls and gaiety. A job, which his parents most reluctantly allowed him to accept, brought him the first taste of money and freedom from restrictions of living at home. Soon enough, he is sexually awakened. He becomes envious of older boys (though of questionable character and improper upbringing) who seem to be adept where he is still gawky and uninitiated. His first adventure into flirtation and passion comes to an abrupt end with an automobile accident and the death of a small girl. He escapes to Chicago. Much shaken, sober and even reformed, he is discovered, by coincidence of course, by his uncle who is a wealthy manufacturer in a nearby town, Lycargus. In his factory, Clyde is given a job. So, the short interlude in Chicago is over. Now, he has more money, leisure and an improved social status as a rich man's nephew. However, this very good fortune makes him isolated, secluded and solitary. He cannot freely associate himself with anybody he chooses either in town or in the factory. His socially important uncle's approval is so vital.

With an increase in his salary, he becomes more eligible socially and he is invited to join a golf club where the Lycargus' high society is known to hobnob; and, as a climax, Sondra Finchley, the daughter of another wealthy man from the same town, a pretty and vivacious society girl, a brittle and gay butterfly, evinces interest in him. All these factors trip the scales and Clyde (who is no paragon of virtue, but an egocentric with his own immediate gratification his only objective) becomes infatuated with her. To him Sondra is the apotheosis of that remote and inaccessible world of money, power and wish-fulfilment. She is therefore the essence of all his desires. Thus caught between the tender, unselfish love of Roberta on the one hand, and the bewitching, ensnaring love of Sondra on the other, Clyde is on uncertain, perilous grounds and he slowly drifts towards a situation that consumes him. With Roberta's pregnancy, matters come to a

crisis. If he cannot own up the truth, for that would mean the end of his days in his uncle's factory and his uncle's largesse, he does not wish to be tied down to Roberta either. The newly discovered passion for Sondra has strongly gravitated him away. Sondra can bring into his life all that he had clamoured for. She can, in fact, show him that he is in no way inferior to Gilbert Griffiths, his wealthy cousin. Throwing his lot with Roberta would forever close all such avenues. Thus, while hopelessly caught in a dilemma, his time runs out and circumstances close upon him. However, yet another circumstance or external factor again changes the course of his life irrevocably. As he is desperately looking for a way out, he finds a newspaper report of a death whose causes seem suspicious: was it death by drowning? Clyde drifts, unable to control the tide of events engulfing him. Whatever now follows ends his procrastination: the accident-cum-murder, the trial, his conviction follow, ending his tale.

This resumé shows Clyde in three phases: first, the state of innocence as well as one of dire poverty in Kansas City; then a significant improvement in his status, socially and financially, during his stay in Lycargus; and, finally, his moral depravity, emotional instability and emptiness, and destruction. But the story, as presented by Dreiser in his naturalistic manner, may better be assessed as forming two distinct strands: at first a tentative and short-lived triumph gained by Clyde by dint of his own effort as he seems to work for a better state in life leaving from his parental home which brings him the desired results (at least some freedom from decrepitude, life away from home, with worldly gains like money and comfort becoming realities, which is an advancement in the desired direction); for, this initial process represents a triumph of the free, human will over physical and biological inheritance and social and economic environment, i.e., a triumph over the forces that amount to physical determinism. During this stage, his chance encounter with his uncle and the equally unexpected helping hand he so promptly extends signify the ever-present reality external to the individual. Clyde, like a free individual, seizes upon any chance or opportunity that comes his way and works hard. In other words, unfettered by

nothing, he exhibits and employs his own positive and pragmatic self, resourcefulness, patience, tact and caution. But, as it turns out, this march is ultimately limited: it has to be. It has a negative aspect too, for it only makes Clyde keenly aware of the yet dividing social and financial chasm between himself and the world of the Griffiths and the Finchleys he so desperately wishes to reach and be part of. It is the snares and temptations of the latter that prove to be too strong. He is weakened all too soon and his downfall is swift. It is here that one finds the full implication of naturalism and of the impact of external forces. Consider some events in detail. After the "street accident" in Kansas City and his flight to Chicago, the prompt appearance of Clyde's rich uncle is another "coincidence" which becomes a turning point in his life which in its wake leads to the brief dreamy sunshine in Lycargus. However, far from assuring him a decent and secure future, it only whets his appetite and the happy interlude ends all too soon. Another "chance" in his life throws him in the company of Rita Dickerson. Yet another "chance" brings him to Roberta Alden (their first intimate meeting takes place at Crum Lake with its undertone of retrospective tragic irony). It is a "chance" or an "accident" again that Sondra got to know him: for, seeing him on the street once, she "mistakes" him for Gilbert Griffiths, the similarity in their appearances is itself another instance of "coincidence. " And, finally, what a monstrous "coincidence" it is when the idea of murdering Roberta enters his mind through a newspaper report which he just happens to read. That, indeed, is as good an example as any of something altogether extraneous entering one's life and radically altering it, as it happens to Clyde. *An American Tragedy* is truly replete with numerous such chance-elements, accidents, coincidences or instances of external forces invading the narrative and giving it an unexpected twist or turn. Though it would be unrealistic to deny that life does involve such happenings, a reader of *An American Tragedy* must conclude that *deus ex machina* has been scarcely used more freely than it is here by Dreiser in these pages.

But, among all these occasions when something external to human character becomes the decisive element, Sondra's coming

into Clyde's life and the suggestion through a newspaper of the idea of doing way with Roberta are the most crucial and significant. Sondra might like the way he is. But to her he is more: while he *is* a Griffiths, she likes him for his modesty and his good looks in *contrast* with Gilbert Griffiths and she has an old score to settle with the latter. If she seemed to prefer Clyde, it unsettled Gilbert: the prince of the high society did not, of course, like it when a poor and obscure cousin seemed to upstage him with her help. That is her plan, a prank, and Clyde, a mere tool, walked into the trap, and fell into her clever manipulations. That for him was the thin end of the wedge. In the same way, the newspaper report leads to his eventual tragedy, death in the electric chair: though casual in appearance, that chance happening ultimately draws him into the vortex of his tragic fall. Hamlet obeys the injunctions of a ghost; but at first he has had enough traumatic shock which has rendered him incapable of thinking straight, as it were. Macbeth, as it has been so frequently remarked, saw a dagger in the air when he was already contemplating the murder of his king. But it would not be wrong to say that Clyde began to think of murder (whatever the weak promptings of his conscience) only *after* reading about the unexplained death. In Shakespeare, hallucinations are the result of a tortured and guilty conscience. Here in Dreiser, an external factor casually introduced becomes the genesis of the crime. What a decision for a young man like Clyde to take the life of someone like Roberta! "He must," as Irving Howe once wrote, "abandon the pieties of his fundamentalist upbringing and sacrifice the tender young woman who has in fact given him a taste of pure love." Clearly, nothing short of a cataclysmic transformation in Clyde was needed. But in a naturalistic novel this is achieved by a mere extraneous agent!

Even during his trial, many external factors are manifest. To the local politicians it is just another occasion for self-aggrandizement from a grandstand and for strengthening their own prospects. A quadrennial election for county offices is in the offing. Democrats and Republicans are vying for every inch and every scrap of advantage. So Clyde's trial becomes a political

ring and he nothing more than a scapegoat. Evidence is sifted and manipulated. Social and political pressures are so strong that the prosecution and the defence both agree to keep Sondra Finchley's family out of the trial. Belknap, Clyde' s lawyer, too had a special interest in the case: for, was he not as a youth, the reader is told, guilty of sowing wild oats? Did not his father extricate him from his youthful indiscretions? So, now, he must help a similar unfortunate youth!

But while looking at this catalogue of extraneous elements, it must be admitted that Dreiser is not the only novelist or author to introduce and exploit an element of chance in a work of literature. Not can it be claimed that only practitioners of naturalistic technique stress the significance of external forces at work in life. Shakespeare himself has introduced a number of coincidences: handkerchiefs are lost in the nick of time, brothers and sisters conveniently lost at a shipwreck and restored with the same ease at the right moment. But the axiom "Character is Destiny" remains largely true in Shakespeare. The element of chance casts only an ominous shadow, and the characters outshine it and the alchemy of his art is so wholesome and so exquisite that all other considerations remain incidental and they pale into insignificance. Thomas Hardy is perhaps closer to Dreiser in spirit (a form of determinism) and in naturalistic adherence to narrative technique and strategy. His characters like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Swith in *St. Cleve*, the Mayor of Casterbridge and others are as much the slaves of the Immanent Will as are Hurstwood and Clyde Griffiths maligned by the forces of determinism. In Hardy's world, modern industrial civilization itself plays the villain. Thus Dreiser and Hardy present human beings as insignificant creatures, mere pawns, in the world around them. Dreiser learnt his naturalism as much from Thomas Henry Huxley and Herbert Spencer as from the French novelist Emile Zola (1840-1902). After the first phase of romanticism and Emersonian idealism in the United States, the intellectual climate fully aware of the new social and economic realities favoured a more balanced and rational approach which was an antidote to the earlier milieu in American life. So, as the nineteenth century ran its

course, Stephen Crane and Frank Norris showed the first signs of realism and naturalism. With Dreiser, American literature found its first full-fledged naturalistic novelist.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to observe here that Dreiser is not naturalistic in the classic or complete sense of the term. A naturalist is not supposed to satirize or preach. He must abstain from any pronouncement which amounts to a moral or judicial appraisal. Such an author's personality must never intrude into his literary creation. He must be totally objective, detached, as cold as a vivisectionist. But, even like Zola, Dreiser was too human and too deeply involved to be so coldly objective. Whatever the exterior may have indicated, his innate faith and his American middle-western traditional roots were too strong and deep to let him refrain from assuming the mantle of a moralist and a social critic. It is his concern for humanity that whips and goads him and makes his art transcendental. Besides, one might raise the question to what extent and with what consequences does Dreiser employ *deus ex machina* in *An American Tragedy*. Is the plot twisted beyond all limits of reason and verisimiltude? Does he succeed in giving flesh and blood to his characters? Over and above these considerations, in Dreiser, again as Irving Howe has noted: "The drama of determinism, which in Dreiser's handling, is not at all the sort of listless fatality that hostile critics would make it seem, but it is rather a fierce struggle by human beings to discover the harsh limits of what is possible to them and thereby perhaps to enlarge those limits by an inch or two. That mostly they fail is Dreiser's tribute to reality."

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The Politics of the American Dream: A Study of Some Afro-American Writings

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I would like to begin with the words of two well-known Black writers—one female and the other male—as they are compressedly evocative of the collective black angst in the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture, obtaining in America, ever since its inception. Recounting her childhood, Angela Davis says:

> My childhood friends and I were bound to develop ambivalent attitudes towards the white world. On the one hand there was our instinctive aversion toward those who prevented us from realising our grandest as well as our most trivial wishes. On the other, there was the equally instinctive jealousy which came from knowing that they had access to all the pleasurable things we wanted.

Langston Hughes sums up his experience in America thus:

> Well, son, I'll tell you,
> Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
> It's bad tacks in it.
> And splinters . . .

The founding fathers of America carried with them a vision of the new habitat they were going to settle in and this vision postulated Adamic innocence in a new Garden of Eden. People in this new land would be unsullied by the taints which had come to warp human nature in the country they left behind. Man would stand in his resplendent glory, as a noble, dignified, humane and sensitive human being, for ever engaged in the process of bettering himself both materially and spiritually, contributing his share in the general well being of the society. In the words of R.W.B. Lewis, this new Adam was to be a person who was "exempted from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; and an

individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his unique and inherent resources."[1] These idealistic thoughts found expression in the Declaration of Independence in the words that "all man are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." One is fully aware of the slave narratives, which recorded the horrendous tortures and soul-searing cruelties perpetrated by the white masters on their unfortunate, helpless black slaves who were treated as worse than chattel. The abolitionist writings, too, testified to the unhappy state of the blacks in America. 1870 saw the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of America, ensuring for all citizens the right to vote, stating that this right could not be denied on account of "race, colour, or previous condition of servitude." Undoubtedly, it constituted a landmark in the struggle for civil liberties for the oppressed blacks. With the end of the Civil War in 1865, came the end of slavery, but the condition of the negro, his political freedom notwithstanding, continued to be depressing. Thanks to the recalcitrance of the conservative whites who were determined to "keep the Negro in his place," disgraceful acts of lynching and the ever-spreading segregation made blacks progressively bitter, frustrated and disillusioned. These intense repressed feelings found a violent expression in the form of racial riots of the 1960s, which had their genesis in the urban ghettos.

Thus, while the American Dream, as a conceptual, social framework enfolded all the citizenry, without any discrimination, its dynamics resulted in fulfilling of hope largely for the whites, inasmuch as they got their release from religious and political tyranny being experienced by them in England. It meant blatant denial of the basic human pre-requisites and the Constitutional promises to the blacks.

At a certain point of time, the myth of success became an integral part of the American Dream—laying stress on the materiality of the human aspiration and hankerings. The rags to riches or from the 'Log Cabin to the White House,' aspects acquired ascendant importance among the constituents of the Dream, and

hence what one witnessed in America was an upsurge of economic prosperity both at the individual and the national level. But in the process, the day-to-day life got marked by extreme competitiveness—an essential ingredient of success—which in turn caused dehumanization and blunting of the finer human values. The American Dream, turned into what Jonathan Bumbach called the 'Landscape of Nightmare,' the Americans psyche came to be riven by existential problems. The whites confronted problems of plenty. But this is a subject for another papers another time. My focus on and concern with in the present paper are to trace the failure of the American Dream for the black segment of the American society which was denied its share of economic prosperity and human dignity. The blacks come to realize that the America Dream was for the whites and that they had to have a Black American Dream to cater to their potentialities.

It was this awareness of the politics at work in the American Dream which subtly but effectively excluded from its ambit the black segment of society that worked as the motivating force for several black American writers to provide paradigms of protest and self-actualization. The politics had begun quite early in the history of the American settlers. For example in 1706, Cotton Mather in *The Negro Christianized* exhorted the slave owners to raise the slaves from the state of wickedness to a state of knowledge and belief in God by quoting from Chrysostom: "But to convert one soul unto God is more than to put out Ten thousand Talents into the baskets of the poor." His contention was that education and the Christian spirit will 'render them exceeding dutiful—exceeding patient—exceeding faithful in their business and afraid of speaking or doing anything that may justly displease' the owner. The words of Thomas Jefferson in Notes on the State of Virginia are ostensibly sympathetic towards the under-doggish condition of the slaves, but one cannot miss the underlying reason for this sympathy: "And with what execration should the salesman be loaded who permitting one half the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots and these into the enemies, destroys the morals of

the one part and the *amor patriae* of the other. . . . With the morals of the people, their industry also is destroyed."[2]

The creative writings of the Afro-American fictionists are largely autobiographical and, therefore, it is instructive to know their personal experiences in the big, bad white world. The sordid experiences Richard Nathaniel Wright underwent constitute a pointer to the plight of the blacks in the American society. Kinnamon says: "That a novelist rather a criminal emerged from the racial prejudice, poverty, family disorganization and inadequate education that afflicted him every year is a phenomenon not easy to explain."[3] Wright's personal childhood experiences find creative expression in his semi-autobiographical work *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth*. The protagonist tells us that hurts which he suffered in his childhood, he carried with him into the adulthood: "I never left my house to walk two blocks without being made to feel a Negro."[4] As Wright said at the First Conference of Negro Artists and Writers in 1956: "I was born a black Protestant in the most racist of all American states. . . . I lived my childhood under a racial code, brutal and bloody, that white men declared was ordained by God."[5] The South suggested a prison to Wright and his last interview record these feelings of his: "Mississippi is only an immense black ghetto, a vast prison where the whites are the jailers and the Negroes are the prisoners."[6] James Baldwin's childhood was not much different from that of Wright, because he, too, suffered harassment from white policemen in the Harlem ghetto during the post-depression years and was enveloped by the atmosphere of poverty and desperation. Baldwin's artistictic sensibility was formed by the peculiar experiences he underwent.

The politics of the American Dream is inextricably intertwined with the politics of colour, making "black" an inferior racial category. Writing in "My Dungeon Shock," Baldwin tells his nephew James, "You were born where you were born and faced the future that you faced because you were black and for no other reason. The limits of your ambition were thus, expected to be set forever. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity and in as many ways as possible that you were

a worthless human being."[7] It was regrettable that a hundred years after his technical emancipation, the black man still was "the most despised creature in his country." Baldwin was, therefore, of the opinion that "there is simply possibility of a real change in the Negro' a situation without the most radical and far-reaching changes in the American political and social structure."[8]

A potent example of the black angst at the charade that the America Dream came to signify is Ralph Ellison's famous work *The Invisible Man*. This novel compresses within its pages the quintessence of disillusion of the blacks with the American Dream. The hero of the novel tells us:

> For, like everyone else in our country, I started out with my share of optimism. I believed in hard work and progress, and action but now, after first being for society and then against it, I assign myself no rank . . . and such an attitude is against the trend of times.

Thus, there is a pervasive consciousness among the blacks of the politics of the American Dream and they feel an acute need for a definitive action to rectify the situation. The polemics centres on the wall dividing the two cultures—black and white. The moot point is whether the wall must be broken altogether, enabling the two halves, nurturing their respective ethnic identities, to mingle together as one American mass, or whether the wall should be raised still higher, in view of the Black history. Baldwin and Gloria Naylor opt for the former alternative. In Baldwin's words: "We are part of each other. I am suggesting that these walls which have been so long . . . must come down."[9] Gloria Naylor seems to endorse this view in *The Women of Brewster Place* when she dramatizes "The Block Party," the demolition of the wall segregating Brewster Place from the mainstream of city life. Of course, it is to be achieved through collective, coordinated action. But the all important question that needs to be posed is: will this type of unilateral action on the part of the blacks automatically elicit a matching response from their white counterparts? Will it end the politics of the American Dream?

NOTES

1. R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 5.
2. Milton R. Stern and Seymour L. Gross, ed., *American Literature Survey: Colonial and Federal to 1800* (Light and Life Publishers, 1962), p. 472.
3. Kenneth Kinnamon, *The Emergence of Richard Wright: A Study in Literature and Society* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1972), p. 3.
4. Carl Veehten, Interview with Richard Wright, 2 April 1964.
5. Richard Wright, *White Man, Listen* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), p. 86.
6. Richard Wright, Interview in *L' Express* (Paris) 18 August 1960, pp. 22-23.
7. James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1967), p. 18.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 115 .
9. James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York: Dell, 1961), pp. 113-14.

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The Grammar of Narration in Shashi Tharoor's *Riot*

MANJU ROY

Shashi Tharoor once again shot into fame with the publication of his sixth book *Riot*. Two renowned and established publishers in two different corners of the world published this novel almost simultaneously. These two publishers—Viking Penguin (in India) and Arcade Publishing (in America)—published the book with different cover designs and subtitles to suit the audience of different sensibilities and, in turn, to reach a wider audience. The instant appeal of the novel to readers can be fathomed by the fact that all the leading English newspapers in India were found replete with different reviews of the novel immediately after it was launched with a great fanfare at the Taj Mahal Hotel, Delhi, in the presence of many celebrities like Sudhir Kakkar, Kushwant Singh, Mark Tully, artist Jatin Das, Namita Gokhle, Manju Kapur, Indian Express editor Sekhar Gupta and Sunny Singh. Additionally, this novel found some critics and reviewers abroad too. Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel hails Shashi Tharoor as "a major voice in contemporary literature."[1] This major voice has been trying to solve different kinds of global problems as a senior official of the United Nations for more than two decades. Nevertheless, India always matters immensely to him and, in all his works, he wants to matter to India[2] and *Riot* is a great testimony to this fact. Shobori Ganguli perceives rightly that you can take him out of India but you cannot take India out of him.[3] A reading of this novel, supposedly, makes it clear that Tharoor seems to be living his life on two levels. On one, he appears to be "the quintessential international civil servant keeping the peace and dousing the flames in the world's flashpoints"[4] and on the other, he seems to search the

way-out of pacifying communalism and violence plaguing Indian awareness to a great extent.

Tharoor has been generous, unlike most of his predecessors, in giving interviews about his writings and literary theories. This enables readers to appreciate his works better—sometimes, arguably, with mathematical precision. In an interview with Sunil Sethi, he claims that, unlike his earlier two satirical novels, this novel is to be taken seriously and that takes itself seriously.[5] He also adds that it focuses on collisions of various sorts—between individuals, between cultures, between ideologies and between religions. He goes on to say that the novel, by focusing "on one place, one time, a small group of people, helps illuminate the kind of issues I want to talk about—our identity and communalism and so on."[6] In the interview with *First City* he discloses that he wanted "to showcase the multiplicity of perspectives, since people are disputing the ownership of history and trying to uncover the truth behind a certain event."[7]

Several writers have acclaimed the novel as a great piece of literature. For instance, Elie Wiesel finds that the novel is not only "written with elegance and sensitivity" but it is also "a remarkable tale of violence and hope in a land that has known both."[8] For Uma Nair it is a novel that "flows and ebbs like the tide."[9] Radhika Khanna views it as an attempt to put Indian readers to "self-examination."[10] Deloris Tarzan Ament finds this book a beautiful amalgamation of all the nine elements—love, hate, joy, sorrow, pity, disgust, courage, pride and compassion—which make a book great.[11] On the other hand, we also get a critic like Sagarika Ghosh who is not ready to accept this book even as a novel:

> *Riot* disappoints because it remains restricted to the level of an essay. Emotion and character make brief, very rare intrusions. The gut is never wrenched. The hormones never stimulated. Tears don't spring to the eyes. Instead there are a series of extremely erudite explanatory notes on India ranging from district administration, pluralist shrines, the rise of Hindutva, economic reforms and the caste and class dichotomy. The prose has the brahminical accuracy of social science. Not the seductive intimacy of fiction.[12]

To me Ghosh's comments seem to be hurriedly concluded ones and partially true. She is justified in saying that *Riot* reads like a social and political treatise. Nonetheless, the reader, on occasions, gets the taste of a wonderful poetry of love. To illustrate, there are several graphic and touching scenes which trace the progress of intimacy between Priscilla Hart and Lakshman. The plot, at times, lapses into romance and there are plenty of instances of eroticism in the novel. In addition, to repeat Deloris T Ament's words, *Riot* is a wonderful fusion of nine elements like love, hate, sorrow, pity, and joy etc. which constitute a great novel. In my opinion, Ghosh seems to have under-estimated this work by classifying it as an essay.

Thus, it appears that the novel is great in more than one way. One of the strengths of the novel lies in the unconventional narrative structure the writer has come up with, perhaps, successfully. This fact has been highlighted and justified by the writer also who defines novel as a literary genre in which one can always bring some kind of novelty.[13] Tharoor himself is a great experimentalist and, therefore, it does not seem very surprising that he has tried his hand on a very unconventional structure. This paper is a modest attempt to highlight some features of the narrative structure of *Riot*. Further, it also aims to find out its suitability to the plot of the novel. Besides, it tries to discover how well time is interwoven in the narrative of the text.

The genesis of the novel lies in two historical facts. A friend of Tharoor sends him a very detailed report about a riot in Madhya Pradesh. Almost at the same time he reads a newspaper report that an American woman has been killed in a racial riot in South Africa. These two events have been intermingled together to produce *Riot*.

The first striking point about the narrative is that the whole novel is divided into seventy-eight sections of varying length. These sections help in unfolding the story of the novel in a two-tier system. The first strand runs through records, entries and letters whereas the second one unwinds through interviews, conversations and interrogations. The various sections give the novel a feel of an encyclopedia where each section brings a per-

spective about Priscilla Hart's multidimensional personality, her universe and also the tragic flaw of her character, if any, which might have contributed to her death. Further, many of these sections also try to explore the socio-political condition of the time in which she lived and worked in India and finally got trapped in its whirlpool leading to her death. In addition, as discussed earlier too, one of the great merits of this novel is that though each section is an independent whole in itself, we can find interrelatedness among them. Besides, like an encyclopedia, we can take the liberty of reading it in any order without missing the crux of the story. This novel contradicts Nicholas Marsh's view of a novel that every novel should start with exposition and then go on to resolution via complication.[14] Here, the novel begins with resolution, if gone by the spatial arrangement, and then keeps on alternating between exposition and complication. Tharoor's one of the two main characters, administrator-cum-author, Lakshaman, writes in his journals:

> I would like to write a novel that doesn't read like a novel. Novels are too easy—they tell a story, in a linear narrative, from start to finish. . . . I would do it differently. . . . in which you can turn to any page and read . . . They're all connected, but you see the interconnections differently depending on the order in which you read them. (135-36)

On close scrutiny, we discover that Tharoor, through Lakshaman, is expounding his own philosophy of novel. Tharoor appears to have echoed Andre Gide's idea of "a transposition of the theme of a work to the level of the character."[15] This technique has been discussed by many French literary critics. A famous example from Gide's own work is *The Counterfeiters*[16] where "a character is engaged in writing a novel similar to the novel in which he appears."[17] In *Riot*, Lakshaman dreams to write a novel which can be read in any order but, he is, perhaps, ignorant of the fact that he is already a part of the identical novel.

The whole novel is set in 1989. This year has been selected because of its history - a time which led to the major Ayodhya episode. Going by all the entries (seventy-eight) of the novel, we

discover that the events of this novel start on 2 February 1989 and end on 16 October 1989. So, it uses an actual time span of only eight and a half months. However, going by the references of various historical events of the book, readers get a bigger canvas of time encompassing the events of pre- and post- 1989, for instance, Hindu-Sikh riot in 1984, and the Ayodhya incident in 1992/93. If "afterword" of the novel is considered to be an extension of the novel, Tharoor also refers to the declaration made by the various affiliates of Sangh Pariwar regarding the commencement of the construction of a temple in Ayodhya in March 2002, much to the embarrassment of the Prime Minister. Really, facts of history have been exploited by the novelist to bring life and dynamism to the novel and, in turn, to make the novel highly interesting. Tharoor advocates the importance of historicity of time in *Riot:*

> I think the best crystal ball is the rear-view mirror. . . . It is part of the writer's job to recapture moments of history. My novel stands as portrait of time, of tendencies that were brought to the fore, the genie that was let out of the bottle and could not be put back. I felt we should take that genie by looking it squarely in the eye.[22]

The large number of narrators who either communicate face to face to other characters or through the written mode like letters, notebooks, diaries, cables, greetings and scrapbooks. These different types of narrators justify their existence in more than one way.

Firstly, when taken the subject matter of the novel seriously, one realizes that they help in weaving the plot of the book. A young American lady researcher doing her doctoral degree at New York University spends 10 months in a small town of UP working for female population control awareness programme. Just before she is set to leave for New York, she is murdered. All the narrators try to piece together events which could have possibly led to her murder. Tharoor shares the view with Shobri Ganguli that the novel is about the knowability of truth.[23] So, naturally the more perspectives we get about the murder of Priscilla Hart, the greater is the chance of getting the root of the

heinous event. Though the irony of the situation is that no one - from the local politicians to civic and police authorities including foreign correspondent—has been able to come to the truth. These narrators instead of resolving the mystery ask unresolved questions like: who are we? By what do we define ourselves? What do we hate? Why do we hate? These existential questions concern all the readers and, arguably, are left to them to find the answer.

Secondly, coming back to the issue of several unresolved questions, this novel suggests the difficulty of telling the untold. Even the told sounds like a provisional category. "Our knowledge of this fact will ultimately effect our ability to pass judgement on the characters of the novel."[24] The helplessness on the part of narrators as regards the untold is, perhaps, inevitable. Elizabeth K Wallace boldly asserts that generally a story leaves out as much as it includes.[25] Further, Wallace's conviction[26] that "the told always consists of multiple possibilities or interpretations" also holds good for this novel. Besides, sometimes narration itself complicates the category of told and untold. We also admit Wallace that what gets told depends very much not only on who asks for the story, but also on what motivates the telling.[27] Catharine Hart's interview with Lakshaman bears testimony to this fact:

Katherine Hart: I'm not trying to embarrass you, Mr. Lakshaman. I just want to understand everything I can about my daughter's death.

Lakshaman: I wish I could help you, Mrs. Hart. But there was nothing between us. If you will permit me to say this, sometimes it is best not to assume we can know everything. Your daughter led a good and admirable life. She worked for others; she was popular and well-respected. She died a tragic, senseless death. You know the old Greek adage, the good die young. That was all there was to it.

Katherine Hart: But there was more. There was something else, something that might explain, why she was there, in that out-of-the-way-place. Perhaps it had to do with some aspect of her life we don't know about.

Lakshaman: Perhaps. But does it matter what we do not know?
Katherine Hart: I suppose you're right. (253-54)

In this interview, in spite of a clever dig about the circumstances in which her daughter, Priscilla, lived and died, Katherine Hart does not get satisfied with the responses. In the same interview she also refers to the fact (gathered from her daughter's letter) that she was in love with someone in authority. Lakshaman very intelligently tries to brush her doubt aside: "But I'm overworked, overweight and married. It couldn't have been me." (53) However, she tries to reconstruct the untold on the basis of her intuition and conviction of the facts of correspondences she had with Priscilla and ignores Lakshaman's explanation. Looking at the whole scene from the viewpoint of Lakshaman, it seems that he is terribly helpless to suppress the untold because of its far-flung implications. Tharoor exploits the tension between the told and the untold to unfold the different facets of human drama.

Thirdly, a band of narrators have replaced the omniscient narrator in this novel. The whole novel travels through the eyes and voices of different narrators, fitting between all kinds of relevant documents like news clippings, personal letters, notebooks, journals, scrapbooks, private conversations, and transcripts of interviews.[28] We are never led through the dark and circuitous corridors of history by the omniscient narrator. That is why we witness a first-person narrative in which the identified speaker relates everything from his or her point of view. This type of narration lends the novel a realistic touch. In case of an omniscient narrator, the writer leaves behind a deep seal of his personality on his characters. But the technique employed in the novel gives the narrator freedom to shape his views and philosophy. Tharoor, while talking to Sandip Roy-Chowdhury, explains the value of this freedom: "In describing Zalilgarh from Mrs. Hart's perspective, I had not just to visualize the town . . . but to ask myself what a middle-aged, intelligent but fairly conservative American woman would notice about it."[29]

Riot also portrays different types of conflict—of people, attitudes, philosophies, religions, loves and hatreds. Therefore, it

was difficult to have just one point of view and naturally, a multitude of narrators was needed to have, presumably, different points of view. I agree with Tharoor,..who acknowledges the suitability of this particular narrative structure which brings "multiplicity of perspectives."[30] He, further, elaborates it that this special feature enables "each character to have his/her own voice, whatever their biases, prejudices and levels of incomprehension."[31] Wallace (2000:238) too admits that the movement among the various points of view facilitates the readers' sense of contrasting perspectives.[32] Some examples will make this point more clear. Ram Charan Gupta is an extremist firebrand Hindu who feels that even the Taj Mahal is actually a Hindu temple. Professor Sarwar believes in India's pluralism but, by no means, he is a representative of majority of Muslim opinion. He is basically a historian who has rediscovered faith in his own religion after remaining a die-hard communist for a long time. Fatima Bi loves the idea of birth control but their menfolk threaten Priscilla Hart with dire consequences if she continues to influence Fatima's thought.

Finally, the theme of juxtaposition, used by narrators, also lends greatness to the novel.[33] To put it differently, in the novel, a national narrative has been sharply contrasted with the narrative of individual love and loss. This brings it closer to the category of the great novels of the world. Actually, Tharoor tries to raise big issues like communal peace and harmony and population control using the life of ordinary people. Not only that the narration of romance conventions and historical realism creates a tension but it also gives a momentum to the novel.

To sum up, we can say that the multiplicity of stories in the novel defies linearity and therefore, the writer's experiment with the narration in which the reader can begin from any section suits the novel. Further, the presence of several narrators are aptly justified because the writer needed different perspectives, in an attempt, to know the unknowable truth. It appears that in a world where cause and effect relation is not always tenable, we need to understand history in a different way. Here, history does not seem to be a rational unfolding, but as a chaotic succession,

of events in which these narrators randomly clutch bits and pieces, in a futile attempt, to make sense of their world. In spite of all these, narration has to go on because it is, perhaps, the only force capable of healing painful rifts and weeping wounds. Additionally, the plot of the novel justifies the way time has been treated. Though the story actually spans over only eight and a half months (2 February 1989-16 October 1989), it takes us much deeper in our memory and imagination of various events. In other words, we not only get past information about the character, event and story-line mentioned at that point but also a glimpse of subsequent events. To recapitulate the whole discussion, Shashi Tharoor seems successful in his experiment with the narrative technique employed in the novel.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Shiv K Kumar, *Infatuation: The Crescent and the Vermilion*, UBSPD, New Delhi, 2000, 161 pp. Rs. 175.

Poised between two poetically evocative symbols—crescent and vermilion—which are religious, secular and aesthetic all at a time, Shiv K Kumar's liberal humanism has found a captivating expression in his latest novel *Infatuation*. The central flow of lyric emotions embroiled in the paradox between crescent and vermilion in this novel finally secures release and thus dramatizes a symbolic victory of the instinctual self of man qualified by the purity of his emotion over the conservative forces. The narrative blasts the aridity spread around mankind by reason and religion and recommends balance and moderation in life with a view to giving proper dignity to human feeling.

Developed in nineteen chapters the plot of the novel originates from the infatuation between Murtaza Ali, heir to Medina Dargah in Dilbargah, an imaginary town, and Prema Rangnathan, a Brahmin woman of dazzling beauty working as accountant in Hamidia College which is one of the several institutions run by the same religious trust of the Dargah. Murtaza's wife, Shakila, is just a deadwood and Prema's husband, Srinivas Rangnathan, is more interested in his real-estate business than his wife and son. Eventually the two unstated selves—Murtaza and Prema—fall in love with each other and their clandestine relationship soon deepens into commitment. No sense of guilt touches them for they become agents of redemption for each other. When Murtaza's father comes to know of this relationship, he dies of shock precipitated by his social position as the Chief Imam of the thirteenth century religious shrine and Murtaza's brother, Shabir who is a mental case vows to avenge the death of his father and the neglect of his sister-in-law, Shakila. He kills

Prema brutally on a hilltop. His frenzy is rooted in his feeling that he was giving a suitable punishment to Prema for her crime of usurping the holy rights of Shakila. As part of his conviction by the court he is put in the State Mental Asylum under observation for six months. But when he himself develops emotional intimacy with Prabha, a fellow inmate of the asylum and a destitute Hindu girl, he awakens to a new facet of life and finally decides to bring her home with approval of his brother and *bhabhi*.

Thus the pattern of spontaneity repeats itself in both the episodes of love and affirms the validity of the Bergsonian concept of supremacy of instinct over intellect. In other words, this novel vindicates Kumar's anti-intellectualism and his romanticism. In brief, the novel unfolds two love stories of amoral passions intersected by a drama of revenge. Beginning with the passions of Prema and Murtaza it ends with the passions of Shabir and Prabha. Passions therefore spin the plot of this novel,

Kumar's generous humanism is also evident in his treatment of his old theme of emotional discontent in married life. There is more of tolerance and understanding in the response to this turbulent issue in this novel than one finds in his novels and also in his poems and play, *The Last Wedding Anniversary*. There is no divorce here but a tendency to weigh and consider, understand and amend. The novel shows the ultimate failure and futility of the philosophy of violence and revenge. Compassion is the key to the solution.

The role of children in this novel is also remarkable particularly because in no other novel of Kumar such a role has been assigned to any child character. Both Ganesh and Jameel, sons of Prema and Murtaza respectively, have been portrayed as forces of reconciliation not only between their parents but also between communities. The novelist has also shown how frustrated childhood leads to disastrous results for it shakes the very foundation of the individual's faith in human relationships.

Using his favorite Joycean technique of dream symbolism the novelist has successfully unveiled the psyche of his characters. The shades of life painted in this novel are natural, unen-

cumbered with any sort of dogmatism. Of course at places where love-games have been detailed with pathological vividness the narrative gets overcharged with carnality, but still there is an inner discipline that lends a moral touch to the affair.

Infatuation is undoubtedly much better piece of fiction than Kumar s other novels.

Gaya College, Gaya **PRABHAT K. SINGH**

Saryug Yadav, *New Perspectives on Sri Aurobindo's Plays*. Creative Books, New Delhi, 2000, 190 pp. Rs. 400.

Sri Aurobindo is a major voice in Indian English literature. He is a multi-faceted personality. The great metaphysician and mystic has written epics, lyrics, metaphysical treatises, essays on various topics, literacy criticism and verse plays. His poetry and philosophy enjoy the lion's share of critical attention whereas his plays have suffered undeserved critical books on Sri Aurobindo's plays can be counted on fingers. Saryug Yadav's book *New Perspectives on Sri Aurobindo's Plays* is a very welcome addition to the critical study of Sri Aurobindo's verse plays. The most striking aspect of the book is its freshness of approach in the gamut of Indian English Drama.

The book under review contains six chapters besides preface, milestones and Bibliography. In the preface to the book a very brief account of some of the critics of repute, who have done admirable pioneering work on Sri Aurobindo's plays, has been undertaken by the author who Justifies the need of writing his book in these words: "Yet, there remains a sufficient scope for breaking fresh ground in assessing his plays and therein lies the *raison d etre* of the present study." The biographical perspective "milestone" deals with the important incidents and episodes which somehow or the other would and shape the creative mind of the playwright.

The first chapter "Sri Aurobindo's Life, Mind and Art" highlights each and every aspect of the versatile genius of Sri

Aurobindo lucidly and in an interesting manner. The author rightly mentions that "Sri Aurobindo is one of the most dominating, influential and energetic literary doyens of the first half of the twentieth century." The writer has captured the attention of the critics and academics by quoting K.D. Sethna's famous pronouncement: "How shall we crown Sri Aurobindo." To the author, it is difficult to decide. This is because "Everywhere Mount Everest seems to face Mount Everest." Yadav scrutinises the long creative career of Sri Aurobindo under the following heads: (i) London to Pondicherry (ii) A Symbol of National Character (iii) A Poet par Excellence (iv) A Critical Kaleidoscopic Dimension (v) Sri Aurobindo and the Modern world. Exploring the relevance of Sri Aurobindo in the modern context the author observes: "At this critical juncture, when we are groping in the dark and 'there is something rotten in the state of Denmark' and we are not in a position to decide 'whether to be or not to be,' the teachings of Sri Aurobindo can illumine our path and lead us to a world of peace and bliss if we go to him with an open heart."

The second chapter "British and Indian Traditions of Verse Drama" makes a successful attempt to analyse and examine both the traditions of poetic drama in order to make comparisons and contrasts and it has been pointed out that Sri Aurobindo as a playwright was influenced by both the traditions. In the beginning of this chapter the author candidly says: "Drama is never designed to be experienced by reading but is meant to be experienced as a visual and oral exercise, something to be seen and heard rather than read." The third chapter "The Passion and the Plot of Sri Aurobindo's Plays" undertakes the thematic and philosophical patterns of the verse plays. The writer in his critical framework broods over conflict and metamorphoses emanating from the plays which are both individual and cosmic. It has been found that "the forces of Nature have now to surrender to the greatness of men's spirit."

The fourth chapter "Characterization: A Study in Realism and Romance" offers a portrayal of the important characters of

the plays. The author in his critical evaluation points out that in almost all his plays Sri Aurobindo creates extremely interesting men and women by developing the psychological element which endows his plays with inexhaustible human interest and significance. This chapter unfolds a very thorough analysis of the plays in socio-cultural ambit. The next chapter "style, Metre and Imagery" scrutinises Sri Aurobindo's dramatic technique in the stylistic perspective. The author opens this chapter with a remarkable annotation: "style is the man, the manner speaks the matter." Strategically this chapter proves to be the nucleus of the book because it interprets Sri Aurobindo as a brilliant craftsman and architect. Sri Aurobindo's imagery and playful game with the words come into focus with the best effort of the writer. The last chapter "Conclusion" sums up the whole gamut of Sri Aurobindo's dramatic vision, vistas and virility in their totality. The greatness and grandeur of Sri Aurobindo's dramatic art is presented as an organic whole. It has been critically located that even the great metaphysician and mystic has explicated his verse plays as scintillating and superb work of art.

It is worthwhile to note that Saryug Yadav marshals all the facts meticulously which reflect his clarity of perception and maturity of critical acumen. Lucidity of writing backed up by clarity of thinking makes this book quite readable.

S.B.S. College, University of Delhi **SUMAN BALA**

Basavaraj Naikar, *Kanakadasa*, New Delhi: National Book Trust, India. 2001. 115 PP. Rs. 40.

"Footfalls of God echo in the memory. Through faith we understand that the words were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not in a strange country." (*New Testament*, Hebrews: 11: 3). Basavaraj Naikar has penned the biography of Sant Kanakadasa through the footfalls of the Golden Servant of Lord Hari Adikeshava of Kaginele. The writer has a rare touch of intuitive perception of the theme of saint, saint-

hood, Godhead and their commitment to the society in which he is born.

This biography reveals the full spirit of Hindustani Vaishnavite tradition in it. Naikar has aptly confessed that this "booklet" is a "monograph" which will serve as a "critical introduction" to the celestial life on this earth of Timmappa, son of Biregouda and his most elegant devotional and musical poetry. He is successful in "arousing" devotional curiosity in the hearts and souls of readers who are devout lovers of such classical literature.

The unique life of this Bard of Bada is divided into thirteen chapters. The narrative begins with a short but highly meaningful survey of "Bhakti Movement" in India by appropriate conclusion of Vyasa Kuta and Dasa Kuta in Karnataka. The central issue of this retrospection and introspection of Bhakti enables the readers to enter into the "Hall of Fame of Immortal Saints." Naikar is right in pointing out that the path of devotion helped the masses to experience intuitively and seek empirical perception and get dawned upon the omnipresence of God. This pan-Indian movement is the grand invisible and unbroken binding and linking and sustaining force of Hindustani cultural heritage in the light of grand collapses of all Egyptian, Greek, Chinese and other cultures in the bygone past. The all-pervasive survey of this Hindustani Bhakti cult is worth-noting and contemplating one and to be read again and again in order to get imprinted the importance of Bhakti cult. The unbroken chain of saints right through Nayanmars, Alwars, Andals, Shri Ramanuja, Shri Ramanand, Kabirji, Sant Basaveswara, Allamaprabhu, Siddharama, Ambigara Chaudayya, Madivala Machideva, Akkamahadevi, Lalleshwari of Kashmir, Mirabai, Narsi Mahta, Surdas, Jayasi, Nandadas, Jaidev, Chandidas, Guranga Mahaprabhu (Chaitanya Mahaprabhu), Nivruttinath (mentor of Dnyaneshwar), Sopankaka, Muktabai, Changdev, Namadev, Janabai, Gorakumbhar, Eknath the Great, Tukaram the Great, Guru Nanakdev and their ten gurus is quite absorbing.

"Background, Life and Time of Kanakdasa" provides the readers with the bare physical aspects of this divine soul. It reads like a miracle: Timmappa succeeded in persuading his father to establish a bell-metal-icon of Lord Hanumanta in the temple of Adikeshava. The story of his archenemy Mallanayaka and his daughter's spontaneous love for Timmappa is spell-binding. The anecdote of accidental finding of a treasure of gold-coins and its selfless distribution by Timmappa to the poor and for religious festivals is the most striking example of his behaviour. Hence the people considered Timmappa a great donor and began to address him as "Kanakappa'', or "Kanakaraj'', or "Kanakanayaka" (General Kanaka). The dream sequences and other mundane instances made Kanakaraj delve deep into his mind, heart and soul. This incident made him surmount his own adamantine "pride and ego." Kanakappa began to dance in divine frenzy by meditating upon God. He gave his promise to Lord upon his asking that he would become his "dasa" (servant). The course of nnected with Shri Vyasaraya Swami and Kanakadasa shed a floodlight on the then prevalent caste-system in Hindu people and its evil effect on the society. There are more than two dozen such anecdotes which are presented as eye openers to Brahmin disciples of Vyasaraya. But the adamantine and blind disciple was beyond mending. Shri Vyasaraya is the sole divine souled preacher to perceive the worth of gemlike Kanakadasa. The most poignant description of the great Guru-shishya is presented in an inimitable style and exquisite words. The final summary of his life, "Thus did Kanakadasa, the great saint of Karnataka led a life of intense devotion and spirituality. Having abandoned all the material wealth and glory, he dedicated himself to the service of God and Man and perceived God in all the animate and inanimate things of the cosmos. And as an eternal pilgrim, he visited many places of pilgrimage in and around Karnataka. An innate poet and musician, he composed a number of devotional poems to celebrate the glory of Lord Vishnu and awakened a deep devotional awareness in the masses to help them accomplish God realization through active participation in the worldly

life itself." This is the yeomen's service for which the lives of the saints stand out as colossal lighthouses to lead kindly light to the masses. From *Mohan Tarangini* to *Mundiges* (Chapters 4 to 9), Basavaraj Naikar has taken a fine and short resume of all literary treasures produced by Kanakadasa. In this role of literature Kanakadasa can be compared to saint Eknath Maharaj of Maharashtra or Tulsidasji of Uttar Pradesh. The great wealth of Kanakadasa's inimitable magnum opus consists of *Mohana Tarangini*, *Nala Charitra*, *Rama Dhanya*, *Hari Kathasara*, *Kirtanas* and *Mundiges*. It is an eternal riddle as to how Kanakadasa could handle all these literary works of art ably. *Mohana Tarangini* is an epic that has its unique grandeur in the Kannada of the Middle Ages. The poem celebrates the legend of Pradyumna who kills Tarakasura. The story is readable like any one of the epic stories from the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. This is the most popular epic poem in Kannada along with the master poets in Kannada language like Pampa, Ranna, Harihara, Raghavanka, Kumaravyasa, Chamarasa, Durgasimha, Nagavarma and Nagachandra. The intense intention behind the composition of *Mohana Tarangini* is to enhance the impulse of human devotion to Lord Hari (as Vitthal in Maharashtra, Giridhar in Rajasthan, Lord Rama in UP, MP and Bihar, Krishna in Bengal etc.) paving way for the general human welfare and spiritual upliftment. The poem does bear relevance to the Vijayanagara Empire and the great Emperor Krishnadevaraya. It is spread over more than twelve thousand lines and Kanakadasa employed a variety of figures of speech or tropes in *Mohana Tarangini*, the simile (as is the case with prince of poets, Kalidasa) happens to be the dominant trope in it. This is certainly going to "awaken and arouse" the sensitive reader to reach for the book in original to seek its appreciation.

Nala Charitra in "Bhamini Shatpadi" of nearly three thousand lines is another popular epic-in-fragment composition. To compose the Nala Damayanti suffering was a challenge worth taking because more than forty pundits in Sanskrit and thirteen poets in Kannada had already attempted this legendary story

with tremendous success and the King Harshavardhana was the leading literary figure amongst them. This story is told in the most enrapturing words and phrases in "limpid Kannada." "There Kanakadasa has employed occasional folk-element, comprehensible Bhamini shatpadi stanza form, euphony and befitting similes. The greatness of this narration and all the poetic devices are monitored to bring home the dominant sentiment of compassion in a very touching manner."

Ramadhanyacharitre is a real creative product of Kanakadasa's divine imagination. It is autobiographic in nature. Kanakadasa is at heart a 'rebel' who protested against the evil of casteism and communalism. He wanted to uplift the downtrodden people to an elevated level of dignity. In this sense Kanakadasa is a protestant saint poet after Basaveswara, Dynaneshvar, Namdev, Sena Nhavi and other saints. The allegory of rice and millet is not to be found in the *Ramayana* of Valmiki. It is a clever brainchild of Kanakadasa. It was grafted into the story of *Ramayana* purely for the purpose of social amelioration. The didactic message of this poem is that the character of a person should be perceived from his 'intrinsic worth' rather than from the accident of his birth. This has found an excellent literary feature of mock-epic poem and can be compared to Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* as far as technique is concerned. It does have parallels in *Battle of Books* and *Tale of Tub* by great satirist Jonathan Swift. This poem holds a mirror to his creative inventiveness, deep social concern and bold experimentation. It exhibits in an artistic manner Kanakadasa's righteous indignation at the social segregation of low-caste people and their exploitation by high-caste ones. It has been satirized through the allegory of rice and millet and the final victory of millet over rice. Symbolically Kanakadasa celebrates the victory of the downtrodden. Kanakadasa has enriched the Kannada literature by composing this poem. He has made use of the folk dialect of 16th century Karnataka.

Hari Katha Sara is a devotional narrative, which depicts the need for harmonious relationship between Man and God. Kana-

kadasa has compressed the vast knowledge of Hindu mythology, philosophy and yoga and has articulated it in a simple language understood easily by the layman. Kanakadasa is at his best in the *Kirtanas* and *Mundige*' of rare beauty and excellence in common language used by the masses. Kirtanas are the very soul of his character and persona. Through his whole life preaching and teachings, he teaches the simple philosophies. These are the best in specific "verbal beauty and superb imagery." These are classified into (i) Devotional, (ii) Philosophical and (iii) Spiritual. These are of great instructive value to the masses. They touch almost all faces of human life. These Kirtanas are infused with grand devotional sentiment. It is on account of their musical element that these Kirtanas succeed in capturing the heart and soul of the masses and the scholars alike. They are undoubtedly rich treasures of spiritual truths. Kanakadasa has composed many *Mundiges* or folk-riddles-puzzles. They resemble "Yaksha Prashna" of *Mahabharata*. The *Mundiges* offer challenge to scholars to interpret them correctly. They also remind us of such "Abhangas" of Muktabai of Maharashtra.

In the last four chapters, Naikar presents glimpses of Kanakadasa's grand contribution to music, folk element in his kirtanas, his language and it is concluded with specimens of ten of his different kinds of kirtanas. Basavaraj concludes the small but highly critical booklet on a high not of hope. He opines: "There is ample scope for researchers to study the themes, imagery and technique with those of the other poets like Vemana, Dnyanadev, Namadev, Guru Nanakadev, Tulsidasji, Surdasji, Mahatma Kabir, Metaphysical poets like John Donne, George Herbert, St. Teresa and St. Augustine from a comparative point of view fruitfully and arrive at some universal patterns of religious and mystic literature." The study will lead to the scholastic study of literatures across and beyond national linguistic boundaries. The national blueprint and practice of Comparative Literature have been cultivated especially in Europe (Germany and France etc,) and U.S.A. If it is cultivated in India, we are bound to produce

some fine work of scholarship and interpretation with the aid of its admixture of historical and synthetic methods.

The discipline of regional comparative religion will contribute greatly to our knowledge of Bhakti cult Movement in various provinces of India. It will encourage us to identify recurring patterns of various beliefs and practices amongst Hindu people widely separated by boundaries of languages and geography. But all these Movements of Bhakti cult in each and every province have a strong inner current and vitality of elevating effect of devotional poetry. It is a common link that should be the literary target of our study of these divine saints.

Let National Book Trust commission such a project and scholars and devotees like Basavaraj and company be the vanguard bearers of this project.

Abasaheb Garware College, Pune **N.S. KULLUR**

Bookshelf

Notes on New Books

David Davidar, *The House of Blue Mangoes*. Viking in association with Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 2002. Rs. 395.

The history of modern India ebbs and flows with the story of the Dorai family, their fortunes inevitably linked to it. The early struggles for independence, the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party, World War and finally the new India—the great events of the 20th century form the backdrop to the story of an extraordinary family.

R.S. Sharma, *Flowers of Feeling: Second Blossom*. Gyandeep Publications, Varanasi. 2001. Rs. 60.

In this collection of poems, as in his earlier 65 poems of *Flowers of Feeling* (1998), R.S. Sharma has forcefully and sensuously painted the landscape of modern consciousness—its alienation, unease, fear, rootlessness, sense of void and a host of other states. His poetry also presents a critique of the Western model of human progress.

O.P. Mathur, *New Critical Approaches to Indian English Fiction*. Sarup and Sons, New Delhi. Rs. 300.

It contains studies on certain aspects of two of the pioneers—Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan, later novelists like Arun Joshi and Salman Rushdie, followed by studies of more recent writers like Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rohinton Mistry and a few other novelists who have attempted

Mistry and a few other novelists who have attempted to give new and interesting content to this form. Most of the studies in the book are from entirely fresh and challenging perspectives and should be of interest and profit to scholars, students and general readers alike.

Anil Raina, Manju Jaidka, Somdatta Mandal, Vijay K. Sharma, ed. *Cross-Cultural Transactions in Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the U.S.* Prestige Books, New Delhi. 2002. Rs. 500.

The anthology puts together selected papers from the Melus-India International Conference held at Hyderabad in January 2000. The theme of the Conference was "Cross-Cultural Transactions: Representations of Race, Gender, and Culture in Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the U.S." The essays cover a wide range of topics on related themes, from broad-based critical approaches to specific scrutiny of individual texts. The authors discussed include Toni Morrison, Richard Wright, Bernard Malamud, Rudolfo Anaya, D'Arcy McNickle, Alexei Sherman, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Claude Mckay, etc. The anthology has essays on Afro-American, Native American, and Asian American literature. A couple of essays draw parallels between American texts and specific Indian texts from regional languages. Among the contributors are Sandra Gilbert, the renowned co-author of *The Mad Woman in the Attic*, Alice Mills from Université de Caen, and Rebecca Haque from Bangladesh.

Suman Bala and D.K. Pabby, *The Fiction of Anita Desai.* Khosla Publishing House, New Delhi. Rs. 1000 per set.

Anita Desai is the most popular of the contemporary Indian women novelists. She has won several literary awards, notably the prestigious Sahitya Akademi prize for literature. She has been twice shorlisted for the Booker prize. Anita Desai has added a dimension to the Indian fiction; her major concern is es-

sentially with the exploration of the human psyche. Her novels are important as social histories too; they depict the shifting sensibilities and changing attitudes as India moves from conservative and traditional social order to a liberal and open socio-cultural ethos. The anthology, in two volumes, covers a critical response to the entire corpus of Anita Desai's fiction—from *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) to the novel *Fasting, Feasting* and the recently-published collection of short stories *Diamond Dust.*

Creative Writing

A Kind of Economics

They had a donkey, stout and firm
Both for house and for washing ghat
Loaded him with traditional tiara and tasks
Left everything to him for their sweet will:

House-rent, taxes, bread and butter
Clothing, utensils, sofa, chair and table
Satchels, pencils, books and tuition fees,
Overtime T.V. with laughter, ads and horrors,

Great deeds of loving and murder
By painted beauties and handsomes—
All these and other responsibilities
Piled on his back in sackfuls of money.

Then goaded to lead the caravan
On the journey across inflation:
The sea whose level is always rising
To drown the islands, threaten the continents

Nobody noticed his backbone and legs:
Rendered speechless he trudged on
Until the bend of age and burden sore;

Essential Qualification

You must develop a heart of stone
Let your blood be petroleum;

Your mind must be an efficient
System and network to store
Knowledge as information,
When morning news gouge out your eyes.

Let these be unmoving movers
Of your body and your world,
So fool proof that no charge
Of emotion or of thought
Can like the virus
Creep in and disbalance

B.H.U., Varanasi **R.S. SHARMA**

Suffocation

The birth creates problems
and life knows no answers.
Death has no solutions.
One knows not what to do?
where to go?
The world as a hanging sword
is upon the neck.
where to go?
what to do?
The sorrow is like
the dead body of a beloved
person which one can never bury,
nor can one cremate.
It hunts one,
one carries it on one's back
wherever one goes.
It is rotten and smells badly.
One bears it in silence.

Nanded **AJAY PAWAR**

Khajuraho

In Khajuraho
Stones
Speaking
Smiling
Kissing each other
Embracing his beloved
Making love with her
Dancing in ecstasy
Climaxing together
Writing a new discipline
With words engraved on stones
Ask a visitor
Looking for catharsis
Who is stone
We or you?

Garden of Gods

Amidst cosmic cacophony of crown
Counter-charges of cavaliers
Boys wearing bangles
Banging bangles
Boasting bullets
Shouting slogans
I am searching for the song of silence
A solitary sight
To sow seeds of strength
Soulful self-esteem
I am seducing celestial stream
To run through my place
The shifting shades of sunlight
To help sprout the seeds
I'll graduate them in grammar of God
With love and care of gardener
Watch them grow into garden of gods

Before I am buried into its breast

S.S. College, Jehanabad **C.L. KHATRI**

Quake in Gujarat

The helpless dunes tuned
at the moon's break
spring-boards of grief
fast loping
spiking upward.

Lives stone-like huddled
swore defeat
at fate's bashfulness
uprooting, pulverizing
flickering with goofy grins .

Hollowness beats down pitilessly
in unloving streets
down our throats
like energies of bodies
pressed against the doors.

Cherapunjee

The fog rose and fell
in slow small boil
on the blue weave of the pasture
growing into a room washed with moonlight .

Rain in grey robes echoed
the patterings of hot childhood
those thumbprints in stilled pages
we open with a saga of love
snugly nestled in the breasts of expectant women.

The smiling falls finely fused

moments interpenetrating profoundly
with knuckles of delight
finally merging in one landscape.

F.M. College, Balasore **KRISHNA BOSE**

THE STRANGE DISEASE OF 'I'

I. The Changing Pronoun

He and she
became 'we'
at the peak of
passion and love.

But the passion
turned fleeting
and the love
buckled and bent
under the pressure
of this and that,
and 'we' became
'ME.'

II. Families

They are
always at war
among themselves
fighting with their
own flesh and blood;
the old with the middle,
the middle with the young,
and the young with every one.
They are infected
with a strange disease,
which the doctors
have recently diagnosed

as 'I.'

Down in the street,
a bitch has given birth
to a few beautiful pups.
she laps and licks them
all through the day,
while the dog
dutifully brings in
a few crumbs of bread
and pieces of bone
for them.

They also bark
but at the aliens,
when they smell
some danger from outside.

III. Big and Small

Rivulets
used to flow
into the rivers
and rivers into the seas
and seas into the oceans
and, thus, the process of
merging and expanding had
been going on smoothly
for several centuries.

But now
the rivulets have turned
rebellious, and so have
the rivers and the seas,
they refuse to listen
to the eternal essence
and merge into something
bigger, and so all
are left to languish
alone, isolated

and small.

I.I.T., Roorkee **PASHUPATI JHA**

Earthquake

What a panic, terrible moment occurs
When God's dark face manifested
Through Earthquake!
Buildings collapsing like a pack of cards,
Heart-rending cries,
Men, women, children, animals
All scurrying out of their homes in desperate haste
Screams, desolation, destruction and shattered dreams,
Making the air gloomy, arid and destitute,
Multi-storeyed mansions with clanging noises
Crushing down, down, down
The remaining ripped apart
Or on the verge of collapsing, damaging;
Great aspiration, dreams and ambitions
Are turned into the heap of bricks and stones.
O God! What a pathetic scene!
what a traumatic experience!

II

Earthquake!
Terrible, horrible, deplorable!
A thousand cries touched the crescendo,
Skulls broken,
Limbs and backs badly bruised, butchered,
Body drenched in blood
Body enveloped in mud
Screams, wails, sighs and sobs
Rent the air turning heaven into hell
An old woman wails outside her devastated dwelling
A child continuously crying,

On the verge of dying,
No shelter, no roof, no protection
A fiancé steadily stares at
The collapsed house of his dead fiancée.
The mutilated bodies drenched in blood
Stacked like sacks of rice,
Burnt collectively like the bale of wood,
No rituals, no ceremony, no worship!

III

Earthquake!
The synonym of Great fate, Time, Providence
The Great Leveller
The leveller who knows no distinction
The leveller whose havoc is beyond description
Reaping and cutting equally alike
Both the mighty and the marginalized
The divine and the destitute
The rough and the sublime
Yes! a social leveller
Making the poor and the rich
Sharing space with the pavement dwellers
Pouring out onto the streets
Without the feeling of caste, class and creed.
Developing friendship, fraternity, humanity
O God! Your ways are mystical
Beyond the knowledge of mind and machine.

IV

Man can fathom the depth of sea.
Climb the mountain big and tremendous,
Control both mind and machine
Unravel the various knots of Modern science,
But can he control the will of God?
No, never, not a bit.

May God bestow the departed soul
The ray of Divine Light!
A part of Your Great Might!
O God! Bless the destitute, the bereaved
A fraction of your Divine Power
Making the bold and brave
To face the fret and fever
The cares and anxieties
They are bound to bear the days to come.

V

O God! What is it? I know not
Bestow Your Divine Grace
Your perennial shower of love and affection
To know the secret of your bright and dark face.
Suddenly my soul spoke.
Darkness and light, life and death
Back and forth they come and go.
Remedies of all ills
Either man-made or natural calamities
Are hidden, covered and sublimated in Man
What is this? Where to go and get?
Yes, they are always present in every creature.
Hope, Patience, Faith, aye
They are panacea for all troubles.
They are substantial, not bubbles.

Jagdam College, Chapra **AMAR NATH PRASAD**

Indian Writing in the New Millennium

R.K. Dhawan, ed.

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