THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Vol. XLII

2004-2005

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ENGLISH STUDIES

Indian Journal of English Studies

Price: Rs. 200, $ 15, £ 10

Printed at Chaman Offset Press, Delhi 110 002

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Vol. XLII
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THE OFFICIAL ORGAN
OF
THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ENGLISH STUDIES

Indian Journal of English Studies

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R.K. DHAWAN

The year 2004 has registered a rich growth of literary works by Indian writers. The most significant contribution in this regard has been made by the writers of Indian Diaspora. Migration has played an important role in the cultural scenario of countries like America, Canada, England and Australia. Multiculturalism is an ideology that appreciates the value of diversity—of culture, languages and religions. The policy of multiculturalism has given rise to a considerable body of fiction written by immigrant writers. Foreign lands have given Indians fame and success; their bond with the country of their origin is strongly embedded in their writings. A few popular novels are being made into films. Noted immigrant director Mira Nair will be filming two new diasporic novels: Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist*. Writers like Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Sujata Bhat, Amitav Ghosh, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Anita Rau Badami and Rahul Varma have recently brought out new works. The diasporic fiction is a story of those who maintained the culture they left behind. And at the same time, they became an important part of their adopted countries. Many of these writers have received international acclaim. The year has witnessed Anita Desai's *A Zig-Zag Way*, Bharati Mukherjee's *The Desirable Daughters* and Rohinton Mistry's *Family Matters* making a mark on the global literary scene.

At home front, there is a phenomenal growth of Indian writing in English. Interestingly, India has emerged as a huge market for self-help books. There is now a great demand for inspirational books. The business of motivation is on a roll these days, with a plethora of inspirational books jostling for shelf space in

libraries and bookshops. The spiritual gurus are giving mantras, telling us how to manage our life. Books by authors like Deepak Chopra, Shiv Khera and Arindam Chaudhuri have taken the market by storm. This new-emerging area has given a great fillip to Indian writing in English.

It is Indian English fiction, however, which is growing from strength to strength. There is a new group of writers who are making waves in the literary circles, forcing readers to see beyond the traditional writers. Names like Anurag Mathur, Navtej Sarna, Namita Gokhale, Ruchir Joshi, Manju Kapur, Kalyan Roy, Pankaj Mishra and Kamal Jha have become so well known as they are bringing great laurels to the realm of Indian writing in English. *Q and A*, a debut novel by Vikas Swarup, has created ripples in the literary world. The author, a diplomat in External Affairs Ministry, has sold this novel in over fifteen countries and even won a film contract. It is a book for everyone. What's so wonderful about Swarup is that he has a sense of humour, a great imagination and subtle artistry. Kalyan Roy, a Calcutta scholar who teaches in the States, has just published his novel *Eastwards*. The novel is crowded with mythical and Shakespearean characters, replete with literary allusions in a comparative framework.

Going by the abundance of new books on Indian themes, one wonders why our authors feel compelled to present their country's exotica in order to ensure wide readership, especially in the West. Many writers from South Asia, like Chandani Lokuge from Sri Lanka, Adib Khan from Bangladesh and Amitav Ghosh from India have depicted their countries in 'romantic' fashion, the way Europeans imagine this part of the world. India, for example, has often been projected as a land of palaces, remote hills, peacocks and elephants. The latest in this genre is the highly-praised novel of Amitav Ghosh entitled *The Hungry Tide* which calls for a brief discussion here. The novel offers us the history of Sunderbans region, the precarious ecology of the river dolphins and the great Bengal tigers living there. Here, at the beginning of the last century, a visionary Scotsman founded a utopian settlement where peoples of all races, classes and religions

could live together. Ghosh interlaces a plethora of details—scientific, ecological, and cultural—into the story. He produces, in the process, a rich specimen of exotica. Unlike his other novels, *The Hungry Tide* has few characters and covers the events of just a month. An anthropologist by profession, Ghosh makes a serious investigation into the subject of the theme of the novel.

Ghosh sets *The Hungry Tide* in the Sunderbans islands lying below Calcutta on the gulf between India and Bangladesh. Sunderbans islands are located in the Bay of Bengal, sort of an extension of Bengal. We have here Bengali villagers who eke out their living in the mangroves and mud, and are in constant fear of being eaten up by crocodiles and tigers. It is a setting where everyone is on an equal footing. The settlers of the Sunderbans believe that anyone without a pure heart who ventures into the weary labyrinth will never return.

The story begins at a railway station at the entrance to the Sunderbans, with the incidental meeting between the two main characters, Kanai Dutt, a sophisticated businessman, and Piyali Roy, an American scientist who has come to study the rare dolphin which lives in the rivers of the tide country. Piya hires an illiterate boatman Fokir to guide her through the backwaters in her search for the dolphin. She unravels the mystery concerning the dolphins which are said to live in the local waters. Piya does not share common language, but she shares with Kanai and Fokir the quest for knowledge. The story is told from the perspective of Piya and Kanai, the two main characters.

Kanai Dutt, educated as translator and owner of a successful translation business, comes to the island of Lusibari to visit his aunt, Nilima. He has come to the islands on the request of his aunt, a local figure, for the first time since the death of his uncle, a political radical. He had been to Lusibari as a teenager, sent by his parents to be exiled for his pride and arrogance. He has been now summoned by Nilima because of a package left to Kanai by her husband, Nirmal, which has been found some twenty years after his death.

Piyali Roy is the daughter of Bangla parents who had immigrated to Seattle. She is a woman used to the solitude and rigours

of the life of a scientist working in the field. She often works in areas where she knows neither the customs nor the language: she can survive for days just on dry foodstuff. She has come to the Sunderbans to find these rare creatures and alien culture.

With the writing of this new novel, Ghosh has discovered another new territory, a fascinating place, another world, a kind of exotica emerging from history and myth of the place. Epical in scope, the novel has captured readers' imagination the world over.

While celebrating the publications of new works that have enriched the global literary corpus this year, there is a tinge of sadness, nevertheless. This is so as a number of noted literary figures passed away in the year 2004. We earnestly pay our tributes to them. These include Mulk Raj Anand, the father of Indian English novel; Kamala Markandaya, a pioneering woman novelist; Shama Futehally, a young novelist of *Tara Lane* fame; and eminent poets Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes and Arun Kolatkar. Also passed away Jacques Derrida, perhaps the best known literary critic in the world who contributed to the evolution of critical theory in the modern times, and Susan Sontag, an American writer and philosopher of culture, who wrote best-selling novels like *The Volcano Lover* and *In America*. The deaths of these writers have created a vacuum that will not be filled for many years to come.

S.B.S. College, University of Delhi

'A Beautiful Mind':
The Substratum of Values in English Studies

Presidential Address AIETC, C.C.S. University, Meerut

O.P. MATHUR

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Indian Association for English Studies for inviting me to preside over the forty-eighth session of the All-India English Teachers' Conference. It is, I believe, the oldest and the most prestigious body in our country in the area of English studies, the horizons of which have been extending in stages from British literature to world literatures in English. I sincerely hope that the academic goals of our studies will correspondingly expand from the literally geographical to the metaphorically geological, i.e. the exploration of the depths of thoughts and values, which irrigate the field of English studies in particular and that of education in general. Moreover, this fertile area of our country, in which Meerut is situated, will help us in discovering and enriching the enchantment of literary studies by our realization of the spiritual nourishment of 'doab,' a symbol of the essential dualities that our studies harmonise—literature and language, tradition and modernity, the East and the West, the British and the non-British, and, as regards content, the emotion and thought or the voice and the vision.

The N.A.V. (Net Asset Value) of our studies is to be calculated in terms of the three P's, the Payment, the Pleasure and the spiritual Profit. The last is the most important, for it is the universal currency of literature when things are falling apart when missiles are guided and men misguided, when in this wasteland of values sensex and senseless sex are rated much higher than true sense and sensibility, when wealth and technological gadgetry have made the lives of a few comfortable, even luxurious,

but not happy, while mankind in general wallows in misery and the world as a whole seems to be threatened by some sort of disaster or the other, Sri Aurobindo also gives a grim warning:

> A scientist played with atoms and blew out
> The universe before God had time to shout.

Scientific civilization is also posing a threat to traditional values, as pointed out by a number of Indian and African novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhatacharya , Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka. Gabriel Okara in his *Voice* has portrayed a world devoid of roots and waiting for some 'It.' This is a crucial question, for modernized men are eager participants in a rat-race for wealth and high living, a race in which, as a wit has said, even if you win, you remain a rat. Science may have made some men's lives better, but not of Man himself by transforming him into a true man.

Education is an important tool for the creation of what A.P.J. Abdul Kalam calls "ignited minds" and the spark of ignition can be provided by the inculcation of moral values. A visionary like Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of Banaras Hindu University, also declared, "Moral progress is even more important than material progress." True education should be holistic in its objectives, with a marked emphasis upon the development of the character and personality of the student and broadening his vision from being purely self-devoted or job-oriented to, in the words of A.N. Tripathi (a Professor of Engineering who is running the Malaviya Centre of Value Studies in BHU), "The realization of the whole value spectrum consisting of material, psychological, aesthetic, societal, ethical and spiritual values."

Educational institutions, like the family and the society, are an important cradle of human values. Schools no doubt also do have in their syllabus a component of 'moral education.' But human values cannot be 'taught' to children for their securing good marks: they should rather be 'taught' to their parents from whom values are largely 'caught' by their children. Moreover, the social environment too is not quite salubrious. If this were not the case, on the basis of 'moral education' taught in schools

we would have seen generations of saints amidst us. It is, therefore, the duty of the institutions of higher learning to share the burden of making their students inculcate, though in a different way and within their own limitations, those human values as far as is possible.

These values are so many and so deeply interlinked that it would be better to identify a few germinal ones like Inquisitiveness, Sensitivity, Receptivity, Empathy, Imagination, Universal Love, Reverence, Integrity, Creativeness—all culminating in wisdom which includes the animate and the inanimate, a global, dynamic and comprehensive vision arising out of Reflection, and a synthesis of the traditional values and their modern context. A synthetic resolution, as far as possible, of the apparent contradictions, and, what is of equal importance, a systematic, clear and effective expression which may be serious or ironically playful and of different autotelic and self-subsisting values. John Burroughs has eloquently expressed the importance of literature towards the development of personality:

> Can there be any doubt that contact with a great character, a great soul, through literature, immensely surpasses in educational value, in moral and spiritual stimulus, contact with any of the forms or laws of physical nature through science? Is there not something in the study of great literatures of the world that opens the mind, inspires it with noble sentiments, and ideals, cultivates and develops the institutions and reaches and stamps the character to an extent that is hopelessly beyond the reach of science?

When we examine how far these values are embodied in the process of the study of English at our universities, we find that the touchstone of values is missing at almost every point. Our syllabi and our question papers were and still are in many universities so framed that the end-products churned out are generally young men and women whose awareness, confined only to the defining features of certain spots of literary history or of a few selected authors, is enveloped in vast spaces of darkness. Our syllabi have been revised or are in the process of revision, but the revisions are only based either on certain unusual considerations or on the need to make the students study in some detail

the broadening areas of the course. But the inculcation of human values, which may occasionally be a casual and unintended by-product, is not even a peripheral-consideration. From the vast and multifarious areas of literature it should not be difficult to choose authors and works more clearly and effectively embodying the essential values of human life than the others do, of course without sacrificing the academic requirements. Moreover, within the autonomous nature of a literary work, teaching may be so oriented as to ensure that the essential human values, though not taught as such, are transmitted to the students by a sort of spiritual aromatherapy.

This naturally brings me to the teacher who, with Christa McAuliffe, should be able to say, "I touch the future. I teach," for, teaching is, as Rastogi Committee puts it, "the mother of all professions." According to Kothari Commission also a nation cannot rise above the level of its teachers. The teacher is invariably the pivot of the educational system. He should try to keep himself abreast of the latest developments in his branch of learning so as to keep both himself and his students on their toes and also to possess the ability of being an effective vehicle not only of knowledge but also of the values of life by serving as a model of the love of reading, of critical acumen, and more so, of personal qualities like simplicity, punctuality, nobility, integrity, sympathy, gratitude, large-heartedness and unswerving devotion to duty, to mention only a few. He becomes the moral force, orienting the lives of his students. The improved conditions of service only partly reflect this fact, for more is needed by way of the creation of the posts of Professors in colleges, grants for buying books and journals now so costly and reduction of teaching load for research work. The standard of students is also improving with the introduction of admission tests, and both teachers and students should show that they are not to be clubbed with inanimate "resources" as successive Governments have been labelling them, but seekers of truth who, as Ezra Pound has put it, "insist on knowing," always keeping in mind the ideal omniscient teacher, Lord Krishna, and the ideal devoted student, Arjun, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Like Lord Krishna, a

teacher must encourage doubt, questioning, even dissent, from his students and try his best as Lord Krishna did at length, even to the extent of showing Arjun, his cosmic form. He is the ideal teacher and should inspire the modern teachers to handle his students like Arjun.

Universal love and understanding, "a thawing out of ice-bound impulses" as Richard Wright puts it, which philosophy would sublimate into the spiritual or even into the essentially religious, can in literary terminology be called 'empathy,' the 'key,' with which T.S. Eliot would open each man's prison to break his egoistic Corialanus, his self-centredness. All living beings are but sparks of the conflagration divine. A kinship which one may call love should exist among men and all the lower creatures. As Auden says, "We must love one another or die." To understand all men and to sympathise with them, demolishing all our personal prejudices, may not always be so easy, but literature seeks to imbue us with it through its Shylocks and Malvolios, its blacks, browns, whites and yellows, the different religions and classes that we find in the various countries of the world, transforming the diversities of all kinds into mere 'shadow lines.' Thus a sense of unity and compromise, as demonstrated by Ngugi in *The River Between* directly and by numerous other writers, is one of the supreme values of literature, emphatically manifested, for instance, in Wilfred Owen's dead soldier revealing his identity to his killer as the "enemy you killed, my friend," and Thom Gunn's soldier-narrator fighting "in turns on both sides" in the battle of Troy. Not too distant from 'empathy' is Imagination, the sweep of which is all-embracing for the poet's eye in fine frenzy rolling.

Values are not absolute but relative and contextual. They are interpreted differently from age to age and from place to place. Let us take only the concept of love as an example. In his famous sonnet "Let me not to the marriage of true minds." Shakespeare considered love to be immortal and unalterable. Some later poets have reinterpreted this concept of love somewhat differently. Robert Bridges, for instance, shows that the form of love changes with the passage of time. Since he has done it in a com-

paratively lesser known poem ("So Sweet, Love Seemed"), a short quotation is called for:

> But I can tell—let truth be told—
> That love will change in growing old;
> Though day by day is nought to see,
> So delicate his notions be. . . .
>
> His little spring that sweet we found,
> So deep in summer floods is drowned,
> I wonder, bathed in joy complete,
> How love so young could be so sweet.

W.B. Yeats has expressed the same idea more forcefully, carrying it to the limit of the final flight of love, presumably of youthful love, in old age:

> How many loved your moments of glad grace,
> And loved your beauty with love false or true;
> But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
> And loved the sorrows of your changing face;
>
> And bending down beside the glowing bars
> Murmur, a little sadly, how love fled,
> And paced upon the mountains overhead,
> And hid his face amid a crown of stars.

Love has also become ambivalent in modern poetry. "Soul and body have no bounds," says Auden, and in his poem 'Lay Your Sleeping Head, My Love' the lover's heart seems to have been bifurcated between "the living creature." Mortal, guilty, but to me/ The entirely beautiful" and his wedded wife: "Lay your sleeping head my love,/ Human on my faithless arm."

In Shaw's *Arms and the Man* the traditional concept of courage is debunked, while in his *Candida*, the wife's traditional faithfulness to the husband is upheld; but for the more embarrassingly realistic reasons. Perhaps it is not necessary to multiply illustrations to show that the moving glass of time shakes in its own fashion, but not always out of recognition, the reflections of the established values of life.

Ladies and gentlemen, creative thinking not only reinterprets and modifies the traditionally accepted values but can

also create new ones. Values are highly relative and the tracks leading to them are difficult, complex and convoluted. Each sensitive, thoughtful and creative individual has to discover his own values like Yann Martel's Pi through the hills over hills arising in his own life or through the dense jungle of experiences of mankind as variously revealed in literature. The mystery that is life can be fathomed differently by different persons. For quite a few this state of doubt and confusion forcing them to think for themselves may be the ultimate value of literature. But perhaps such a view is incorporated in the all-inclusive value of freedom, which covers freedom of thought in its turn generating another equally, if not more important, value of creativity of literary studies.

An important value of literary education, often ignored, is that it widens the range of our experiences by proxy, thus leading to a comprehensive perspective which is 'Vidya' in Sanskrit and 'Vision' in English. A wide study as well as personal experiences of life for "an eye that has kept watch over man's mortality" requires time. Is it because of this that some of the wisdom of mankind has been distilled in literature through old, supernatural or legendary characters or even through inanimate objects that have 'watched' the world through a certain length of time--Wordsworth's leech gatherer, Browning's Rabbi Ben Ezra, T.S. Eliot's Tiresias and Prajapati, Shashi Tharoor's Ved Vyas, or even Keats's Grecian Urn? It is in old age, through "monuments of unaging intellect," that

> Soul claps its hands and sing, and louder sing
> For every tatter in its mortal dress. (W.B. Yeats)

George Bernard Shaw, realizing the spiritual value of life that can be cut short only by accidents or wild animals, wants mankind to go back to the Biblical Methuselah. "Ripeness is all" said Shakespeare, a sage in his own right, who makes even his clownish old Polonius utter the following gem of wisdom eternally and universally true:

> This above all: to thine own self be true
> And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

"Acceptance is all," says George Lamming in *The Castle of My Skin* and a perceptive and persistent study of literature can promote such a holistic vision of life ranging from a comfortably optimistic to the existentialistic or even nihilistic. Or it may embody black humour or even the most pessimistic stance like that of the present Nobel Laureate C.M. Coetzee who, according to the Nobel Citation, "erodes all basis of consolation and distances itself from the tawdry drama of remorse and confession," believing that, to quote his own words from his novel *Disgrace*, "One gets used to things getting harder; one ceases to be surprised that what used to be as hard as hard can be grows harder yet." Or one may perhaps go even beyond to Dadaism or Surrealism, the former affirming all "radical irrationality and futility as a protest against all bourgeois notions of meaning and order," symbolized by its lexical origin based on the stroke of a knife on a French-German Dictionary, finally resting on the word 'Dada'

Against the all-inclusive global vision provided by the totality of literature all discords, dissensions and disputes dwindle into just a fleeting shadow of an eclipse against the tranquillizing reflection of a 'Radiance,' as perceived by Thomas Hardy in his poem 'On a Lunar Eclipse.' Our sufferings today arise, in the words of Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, "not so much from the split atom as from the split mind." What is required is a harmonious orchestration of the inner and the outer which is only possible through literature, the house of many mansions, and the synchronous contextual acceptance of all the different angles of perception.

The quality of Love is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes . . .
It is an attribute of God himself.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would conclude my address with Tennyson's poignant call for a concordance between the mind and the soul, which we, as students of literature, must strive to attain,

if we want to acquire, what may be called 'a beautiful mind,' a glowing integration of the materialistic and the spiritual:

> Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell,
> That mind and soul, according well,
> May make one music as before,
> But vaster.

The unconsciously prophetic use of the word 'vaster' by Tennyson can include not only globalization of literature and the amazing increase in the amount of scientific gadgets through which men can communicate with men more quickly and effectively than through the written word, but also reflections on the mystery of Life, God, Time and Space—in a word, of the universe itself.

Varanasi

Eager to be Women of Their Own: Assertive Heroines of Bharati Mukherjee

SUMATI and PASHUPATI JHA

Both the first and second generation of women writers of Asian Diaspora, have taken up various themes like that of language, identity, nostalgia, loyalty, socio-cultural adaptability and have produced "a constantly evolving and often self questioning body of literature."[1] Among the first writers of Indian Diaspora, Bharati Mukherjee, an American writer of Indian origin, is known as the grand dame of Indian Diaspora, as capturing and depicting almost every kind of feeling experienced by Indian Immigrants in the U.S.A. in her novels has been her forte. Fakrul Alam has truly said that her novels focus mainly on the "phenomenon of migration, the status of new immigrants, and the feeling of alienation often experienced by expatriates." In addition, the sense of assimilation and belonging in the host land is fully dealt with, though mostly in her later novels.

Nevertheless, the one theme that underlies her novels is the question of finding, and then asserting, their identity; a constant search mainly by the protagonists, for the answer to the question "Who am I?"; "Do I have a personality of my own?" or "Do I have just to be what others want me to be or what I imagine myself to become? Moreover, we witness a conflict, internal and external, in this process of defining, discovering, and affirming their self-identity, once they have realized what actually they stand for. Although the degree may vary, the protagonists of each of Mukherjee's novels who are all women, exhibit eventually an assertion; a direct or indirect statement of their being self-styled, self-motivated and independent thinking individuals, geared up for facing all the consequences of that assertion, and never giving up. This quest for assertive identity has been a continuous process,

evolving with each novel Bharati Mukherjee has come up with. This paper takes into account the process involved in the quest of her female protagonists to locate their identity, which is acceptable to them, notwithstanding other's points of view.

Bharati Mukherjee has always adopted a unique perspective on the immigrant experiences where she focuses on the positive aspects of immigration. In *The Holder of the World* and *Desirable Daughters*, she seems to celebrate this kind of experience showing highly complex and flexible personalities through the heroines: Hannah Easton and Tara Chatterjee, both of whom advance Mukherjee's "assimilationist agenda." Both feel quite at home in their adopted land, but still occasionally experience the pull of traditions of their country of origin. And, in this process of balancing the two or more identities people associate them with, of their acceptance of part of the host land and their reminiscence about the land they have come from, emerges out their own unique self.

None of the female protagonists in Bharati Mukherjee's novels can be assigned the category of ordinary, commonplace women. From the very beginning, it is clear that they possess a unique mindset which does not match with that of others in their family or society. Krishnamoorthy Aithal, in his review of Mukherjee's novel *Leave It to Me*, points out: "Whereas most of the minority writers of the U.S have sought to define the separate cultural identities of their people, their origins, roots, ancestry, ways, outlooks, values, beliefs, etc. Bharati Mukherjee has made no such narrow selection of people for presentation."[2] Therefore, when we talk of her female protagonists defining and declaring their identities, it is not in the context of their need to assert their identity in terms of a national and cultural group, though it may still be a part of their identity. The identity imposed upon them by their respective families or communities or nationalities often help them in navigating their path to discover their true self. Their quest is more on an individual plane. So, it is analyzed here whether they are able to identify their own true being, express it, and then, maintain it too.

In India, almost in every religion, caste, class, or region, women have to comply with the demands made by traditions on the way they live their lives—from the dresses they can wear, the

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In India, almost in every religion, caste, class, or region, women have to comply with the demands made by traditions on the way they live their lives—from the dresses they can wear, the

places they can go, and from the kind of study or jobs they can take up. Dimple, the heroine of *Wife*, has her own notions about marriage, love, happiness etc. living in a utopia of her own. However, she is too timid and submissive as to assert her will and is made to accept what her patriarchal family chooses for her. Even if she is unhappy at her marriage and at her in-laws' place, she only grumbles within and says nothing. This goes on until she finds the opportunity to exercise her own will by way of aborting her child to live life as a "more exciting person"[3] abroad. Till then, she could be identified as a typical Indian daughter and wife, but this act of her is an authentication of the bold step towards asserting her own individual identity which would not be defined by anyone now onwards.

Jasmine, the protagonist of the novel by the same name, is a born rebel. Her refutation of the astrologer foretelling her "widowhood and exile"[4] seems to be the most powerful sentence reflecting her determination not to accept what others impose on her. She confronts him squarely, "I don't believe you." (4) Although she never willingly accepts what she is not convinced of, the rules laid by the males in her family try to dictate her all the time. Her spirit to defend her self-identity does not hold much ground because of that. Though luckily she gets married to the man of her choice, she has to identify herself with him and is made to think according to his plans, as is exemplified in his rejection of her wish to have a child.

However, after her husband's death, the basic instinct of rebellion and defiance in her nature comes to the fore to assist her and pave the way for her to declare her decision to go to the States despite bitter opposition from her family.

The protagonist of *The Holder of the World*, Hannah Easton, is adopted and brought up by Robert and Susannah Fitch because she had been left behind by her widowed mother to herself run away with her lover. Young Hannah has a wantonness of spirit and a certain wilderness, which she is not allowed to express even in such a small matter as her needlework. She lives in a society too puritan to all her young fancies. It is only when she goes for an unpremeditated marriage with Gabriel Legge, a mys-

terious person, and comes to India with him, that her true nature gets the chance to be displayed. In India, her real identity as an exotic, passionate, highly romantic, and idealist, is revealed to the full.

Tara Chatterjee, the youngest of the three daughters in a Kolkata based traditional Bengali Brahmin family, is the heroine of Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Desirable Daughters.* In the beginning, she is introduced to us as a rich divorced lady living in San Francisco, with her teenage son and a live-in lover, Andy. Her ex-husband, Bish (Bishwapriya Chatterjee) is a big name in the Silicon Valley. But when we go back to their past lives, we have that her eldest sister, Padma, lives in Newark, U.S.A, where she has married a Panjabi businessman, much older than herself. Parvati, the middle sister, has also had a love marriage and lives in Mumbai, India. Tara had married the groom of her father's choice at the age of nineteen and come to Atherton, U.S.A. In this respect, she seems to be the most tradition bound among the sisters. As long as she is at her father's home, she has no voice, no separate identity of her own. Although in States, she shows herself to be self-reliant by divorcing her billionaire husband and living as a single parent, she still falls back on her male counterparts on every occasion.

Until the moment of the arrival of that so-called nephew, she is confirmed of her identity as a well-secured Americanized woman. However, after the revelation of her sister's pre-marital affair with Ronald Dey, and her having a child by him, she realizes that she cannot escape her past. Moreover, when she thinks of herself in the light of that past, she wonders . . . does she know her family all these years . . . or does she even know herself. She wonders what she really is: a well-protected and safe Bhattacharjee/ Chatterjee or an ordinary person vulnerable to any threat. These are the questions that goad her on to probe into her past and act on her own to find out the answers.

So, though all these women have their own ways, they have not been able to assert themselves openly against the norms of their patriarchal heritage or have felt no need to do that until circumstances force them in that direction. The quest for self is

there, the capability and stamina to carry out this is there; only life has to provide them with those kinds of circumstances, which it does, sooner or later.

All of Bharati Mukherjee's heroines go through a transformation in their personality; they are not what we know them to be in the beginning of the novel. We are simply amazed at what they have turned themselves into when the novel ends. People can be internally transformed only when they are not quite satisfied with their already established identity; in some corner of their heart they yearn for change. This dissatisfaction leads to a quest for identity in ambitious and curiously adventurous people for their actual self and, eventually, to an affirmation of their newly found identity. It is through this process of their metamorphoses that their quest is finalized.

Assertive identity starts when there comes a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's sense of self becomes insecure, typically due to a change in his/her expected aims or a fear of his/her beliefs being shattered, unrealized. In the case of Dimple, once she gets to U.S.A., with her husband, she is quite shocked at the violence, frankness, and permissive environment there. Later, she tries to come to terms with it, struggles to fulfill the demands of tradition and her own heart. She is enmeshed within this conflict. When she does not get an outlet for her pent-up feelings, desires and whims, when she cannot come out of the web of her fears and inhibitions, she gets depressed, insomniac, almost on the verge of madness, and eventually turns into a murderer of her husband whom she feels responsible for her plight. And, it is through this act of hers that she has managed to assert herself, her individual identity, husband being the archetypal oppressor.

On the other hand, Jasmine appears to be a much more strong-willed person. She embarks on her journey to U.S.A as a typical Indian wife to be a 'Sati' for her husband's cause. But once she realizes her strength and power after murdering her rapist in the very beginning of her journey towards many transformations, she never looks back. Hers is a clear-cut journey towards her being a totally Americanized, self-assured, and self-

confident woman. Moreover, going through this process she adopts various identities in the form of being Jasmine, Jase, and Jane; proceeding westward both in location and in attitude. She recognizes herself fully, and as a result, decides to accompany her lover "greedy with wants and reckless from hope." (250)

The protagonist of the novel *The Holder of the World*, Hannah Easton, is a woman who is as "inquisitive, vital, awake to her own sense of self and purpose" as any other heroine of Bharati Mukherjee. Although she is born and brought up in a Puritan American society, her spirit yearns for freedom, to exercise her own free will; most probably this is the reason behind her marrying a mysteriously adventurous person like Gabriel Legge and accompanying him to India. Beigh Masters depicts her happiness: "She was alert to novel, but her voyage was mental, interior. Getting there was important but . . . watching her life being transformed, that was the pleasure."[5] Her love for living life to its full in all its varied colours, is slated to be realized when she is saved by Raja Jadav Singh from a bridge collapse and is taken to his palace; she has already left Gabriel for infidelity.

She embraces "the wilderness" of that palace and realizes that "Hannah Easton Fitch Legge was dying." (222) She takes upon new identities, improvising the rules of behaviour set for her in Salem or in London. As a 'bibi' of the Raja, she lives a life full of intense passion, to the extent of frenzy. She even Indianizes herself in every way. However, in her quest for her true identity, there comes a moment when she feels "the contradiction of a passionate nature" too. On the one hand, she craves for the gratification of her sensual desires; she wants on the other hand to nurse the "wounded and dying." (237)

Just when we are on the verge of accusing her of lechery, she amazes us by her act of saving the life of the Raja and further proving herself "a spiritual aristocrat"[6]; she takes the daring task of negotiating peace with the Emperor. She maintains her dignity by not accepting the Raja's offer of a place in the *Zenana*, and thus saving herself from being degraded and disgraced.

Having fully realized herself in this way, she feels confident and audacious enough as "a pregnant white woman" as to try to

end the war. She recognizes her inner strength. Even after being a hostage of him, "only a person who thought she was God Almighty" (259) could have spoken before the Great Mughal as a selfless "peacemaker" (267) trying to safeguard the innocents from further suffering.

Her quest for freedom in life inspires her to escape from there to Salem back, live life on "the fringes of society"[7] with her mother, her children, and her own daughter. They are discarded by society but still render social services uninhibitively, asserting themselves as "We are Americans to freedom born." (285)

In *Desirable Daughters*, Tara, a self-possessed and curious woman, exhibits a fervent quest for identity and space of her own. In fact, central to the theme of the novel is this quest of her, as her traditional Brahmin roots and present American life frequently struggle for supremacy. She has done what is quite unimaginable; she has divorced her brilliant, extremely rich and famous husband. Moreover, she frees her artistic son from prep. school and chooses to live with her lover, without marrying him, and thus proving herself to be her own guide. As an individual, she enforces her identity as a self-propelled woman by exerting her own will on decisions about her life. "I am free to make a mess of my life,"[8] she says to Bish. And so, she prefers to make her own traditions, to choose her own home and place rather than those given to her by her father or husband. She is one of those kinds of diasporic women who gladly renounce a security within the confines of the four walls to walk the path of freedom, to explore their own methods, and devise their own plans to go on in life. Bharati Mukherjee's statement fully illustrates her way when she says: "She leaves him [Bish], thinking that this is replication; gated community in Atherton, California turns out to be a replication of the patriarchal life in India and moves into the Upper Height area of San Francisco. She gets into adventures that a new American woman who uses sexuality as her way of experimenting and rebelling might."[9]

Till the appearance and revelation by that fake Chris Dey, she has never bothered to turn back and examine her life but has just been talking all goody things with her sisters and parents

over telephone. It is only after that incident that she reconsiders her assumptions about her family and begins her quest for reality. It is through this quest only that she finds her true identity.

When she realizes how things were covered up in her family, how her sister still denied the fact of her having a child outside wedlock, she feels "lost inside a Salman Rushdie novel, a once firm identity smashed by hammer blows, melted down and re-emerging as something wondrous, or grotesque." (195) She realizes the pernicious intentions of somebody behind Chris Dey's arrival at her new home, but finds nobody to support her in her search to know the truth. Her lover deserts her for her going to the police, her son gets irritated; but despite all this, she takes it upon herself to find out the reality.

Till now, there was a conflict going on in her mind between her need to adhere to her family's old traditions and her desires to be an active part of the contemporary American culture. However, she realizes at last that she does not have the traditions that she thought supported her, but she goes on in her efforts on her own experience.

When we see Tara put against her two sisters, Padma and Parvati, she is much more practical, down-to-earth, and inquiring than them. Padma, the eldest one, solely depends on appearances and maintenance of her secrets than facing reality. She cannot come out of the ghetto of Indian community even in the U.S.A., though in her actions throughout, she has been the most American. Parvati, the middle sister, though marries going out of the way, remains content finally with being a typical Indian wife, silently catering to the demands of her husband and his family, willingly or unwillingly. These sisters own everything except their own selves.

Moreover, the things Tara discovers about her family's past assist her in opening up to a more wider world, and in this process, her personal evolution comes about from dealing with something thrust upon her from the outside in the form of the false Chris Dey, as much as her own decisions and actions. The point is that though she is not completely free of her long ingrained prejudices regarding caste or religion, she is trying, gradually, to

break out of these mindsets and come to terms with the reality with an American mind. That is why some of her actions seem apparently contradictory: She is appalled at her sister's doubtful adultery; finds herself unable to slap her son being an Indian mother; calls her husband by his name only after divorce; yet she is quite comfortable while mentioning her lovers and knowing her son being a gay, preferring western clothes and food.

Having once been informed of the danger of the Dawood gang looming large, she is worried bout her ex-husband and son, decides again to be united with her husband, and to look after him when he is seriously wounded in the attack of some powerful explosives on her house. However, she tells him of her vision "a vision of discipline and self-knowledge and of misfortune turned to new energy" and that "the scale of her achievements made it difficult for a wife to set her own sights." (280) So, it clears the fact that she never liked to be shadowed, and now articulates this quite clearly to her male counterparts, without any hesitation. And after that, though she does not intend to return to India permanently, the first thing to come to her mind naturally is her "need to see Mummy and Daddy." (277)

In the end, what we are left with about her is that she is made equally of her Indian past and American present and is going to live life accordingly in future too, by reconciling the demands of tradition and the needs of her individual self. In the process, she has broadened her horizons. She has assumed a new identity that does not partake completely of her roots, or entirely of American values. She is now free to make her own rules, depending upon her choice. She finally ends with her acceptance of herself with all that experience has made her. In this way, she has regained her wholeness as represented in the self-examination, which she had denied herself since childhood.

The knowledge and realization of one's identity is something which induces a sense of being powerful, because then we completely own ourselves and not anybody else. Bharati Mukherjee herself has said in one of her interviews, "empowerment meant escaping the identity assigned by . . . tradition bound community." Her heroines show that kind of empowerment in them-

selves once they have realized themselves fully. Their inquiring mind, their inner strength for survival and sustenance, and their persistent efforts enable them to finally come out as victorious individuals; victorious in their efforts to shed off the imposed or passively accepted identity and assume a new, original one that they are comfortable with.

According to Stuart Hall, identity should be thought not as an already accomplished fact, but as a process always constituted within, not outside representation. And Bharati Mukherjee is among those who are ahead of their own time in treating themes like that of identity, globalization, migration, and assimilation. She explores the shifting identities of diasporic women both in the past and present-day United States and India. Talking in terms of the issue of self-identity and assertion in her novels, we find that she uses the choices of her protagonists as a metaphor for the human quest for identity, thereby establishing universality of her works. In an interview with Barbara Lane she says that her protagonists are composed of "a series of fluid identities." Therefore, it is clear that for them, self-identity is not a presence but is the redemption from a rigid, already established identity; it is what they create, changing the one that is imposed.

All of Bharati Mukherjee's heroines emerge much more strongly in their final version, with a stronger exploration of what it is to have a unique identity of one's own, though each of them responds in her unique way to dreams for a better, meaningful life. Their quest is associated with an imperative to establish a pattern of meaning in their life. It is only by exercising their own free will, exhibiting their own self that they get fulfillment in life and are at home with their own selves. Bharati Mukherjee was talking of the same thing when she said, "Once they are out of that bubble wrapped condition . . . once they are pulled out of that protective situation, they act out all their fantasies,"[10] and establish their true identity. In most of the cases it is the country they adopted which gives them that opportunity for "those kinds of wonderful, melodramatic errors." (*Ibid.*) In almost all cases, their inquiries and quest for establishing their assertive identity is addressed in the land they embrace as their

own once they are in it. Nevertheless, in her later novels, theirs seem to be a global identity, a reflection of a kind of globalization, one where "we take from each other's heritage what we need and sew it together into our own heritage."[11]

The way Bharati Mukherjee presents her protagonists' identity and maps the emergence of their newly found actual self, makes them quite unique; we see them standing apart, head and shoulders above everyone in the vast milieu of characters in the respective novels they appear. Their roundness is artistically quite satisfying; their human dimension quite absorbing.

NOTES

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5. Bharati Mukherjee, *The Holder of The World* (Viking-Penguin India, New Delhi, 1993), p. 104.
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7. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
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Female Sexuality and Introspection in Shashi Deshpande's *Moving On*

RASHMI GAUR

Deshpande's novels are about the possibilities of exploring changes within oneself. Her women protagonists are always willing and receptive for redefining attitudes and relationships. Shorn of undue romantic embellishments, they want to free themselves from the stultifying traditional concerns and cherish a spontaneous surge towards life. The spontaneity of life arrives only with a cessation of over-eager planning and openness to change—the commonality of this motif is discernible in all her novels. From Sara of *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), to Madhu of *Small Remedies* (2000), or more recently, to Manjari of *Moving On* (2004); one can trace the struggle of a woman protagonist to eek out a meaningful definition for her life, to free oneself from the stultifying social constraints and cherish a spontaneous surge towards life. Though in her essay "Masks and Disguises," Deshpande has advocated a "slant" in writing,[1] her own directness is palpable in her thematic handling; she vociferously puts forth the private truth about what women want. It can also be pointed out that her span is limited—like Jane Austen she works on her two inches of ivory, constantly refining and enriching it.

Her women feel their emotions strongly, yet retain a constant value judgement, about themselves as well as about other relationships they have to live through. Though they belong to conventional middle class families, they do possess an inner independence to experiment with their life. In the process, life yields self-knowledge, which imparts them the strength of accepting that a woman's desire to succeed like an individual is not incompatible with her desire for love or small pleasures of domesticity

and relationships within/outside marital frame. In *Moving On* also, she has taken up the theme of problematic relationships ("the inability or refusal of people to communicate with each other, as marriage partners, parents, friends and lovers is underlined by the intricately meshed structure of the novel"[2]), as well as of the certainty of change. Manjari comments, "I couldn't have survived if I hadn't changed." (69)

Portions of *Moving On* in which she has touched upon the underworld through the portrayal of Manjari's uncle Laxman Mama, remind us of the earlier novels of Deshpande—viz., *If I Die Today* (1982) and *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983). The theme of the existence/acceptance of a parallel criminal world is unequivocally peripheral though, and Deshpande has skillfully riveted the readers' attention to the central theme of the crisis of maintaining balance in relationships, "An identity becomes active, positive and meaningful only in relation to others. The whole potential of who we are and what we are is realized only through our relationship with others."[3] The story line begins with Manjari's attempts to know about her parents, not as figures she had created in her childhood as pacifiers and comforters she could hug for security, but as real individuals. (21) Simultaneously, her hesitations about the impossibility of ever scrutinizing fully any individual also become apparent, "But can there be any one truth about people? People are complex, undecipherable, protean—there is no absolute about them." (21) In several of her novels, Deshpande has taken up the parent-child relationship. Her portrayal of the mother-daughter relationship can be interestingly juxtaposed against the portrayal of father-daughter relationship. Never eschewing the contemporary context, Deshpande has shown how girls have to put up with victimization from their own mothers and get condemned to a life of bitterness (*The Dark Holds No Terrors, Small Remedies*). Her portrayal of father-daughter relationship on the other hand is sensitive and beautiful. *Come Up and Be Dead, That Long Silence, Small Remedies* and *Moving On* present a sensitive closeness between the father and the daughter, which imparts tenderness to the themes. Manjari is close to her father, "If Mai's 'no' withstood even Malu's pleas and blandishments, we would ask Baba to intercede for us." (26)

In "Family Stories," chapter three of the novel, Deshpande presents beautiful pictures of companionship and dependence Manjari has shared with her father in her childhood. She is protective towards Malu ["I liked having her depend on me" (46)], rather tentative with Mai ["Yes, I always knew I had to work harder than Malu if I wanted to be loved (44)"]; but in the company of her father she felt only effervescent joy. The gradual distancing, "a tapering off of bonds," had come later after Mai's rejection of Shyam, her lover (47). After a long gap of estrangement with her family, Manjari comes to stay with her father during the last few moments of his life. His chemo sessions become the point around which the cycle of their days revolve (60). Life has changed Manjari during these years. From a lanky teenager who needed everybody's approval and was willing to do anything to please others, she has changed into an assertive middle-aged person, who had to struggle hard to raise her children. She has learnt to be clear about her needs also (70). The unforgivable lapse of the time does not allow the old camaraderie to flourish—absence of Mai and Malu reminds her of things she wanted to forget (60). Gradually however a routine builds up, only to be crumbled soon. Baba's death leaves an emptiness within her, compelling her to review the life her parents had led as individuals. In the process it also enables her to re-identify her own self, and place her relationships with her parents, others and self in a better perspective.

The figure of a woman writer, her struggles to publish and be accepted and her concerns about the limitations of her craft, is again a common phenomenon in Deshpande's novels. Jaya in *That Long Silence*, Indu in *Roots and Shadows* and Madhu in *Small Remedies* are some examples. In *Moving On* also, we have Mai as a writer, "If she recognized her own talent, she also knew her limitations, her ability to write only a particular kind of story. Which she did, ensuring herself a steady readership." (126) Like the figures of women authors in Deshpande's other novels, Mai also does not take her writing ostentatiously. Manjari recalls, "she never, as far as I know, publicly proclaimed herself a writer. It was a kind of secret business, an activity she did in private, something no one in the family ever spoke of." (121) She is

shown as a prolific and popular fiction writer, creating images of happy romance, large families, satisfaction of living through conventional roles. One of her stories is converted into a movie also. Her behaviour though is dictated by the conventional gender stereotypes. She is always meticulous to give her husband a "paramount place in the house," muttering "*Annadata sukhi bhava*" after every meal (122). In her essay "Masks and Disguises," Deshpande has talked about the disguises women authors normally take up. One of the disguises which Deshpande's own mother had taken up proudly was to keep nothing of herself in her writing.[4] Making a cipher of herself is also the justification Mai has taken up for an activity which she regarded perhaps "not only as being outside her domain, but worse, something that could be called selfish and self-indulgent."[5] Thinking of Mai, Manjari always comes up against "a blank wall, an enigmatic silence" (102), and wonders how she could manage the professionalism of sending her stories before the magazines' deadline. Through her readings of her father's diaries, Manjari for the first time comes face to face with the writer self of her mother, and also comes to know of her sexual frigidity, her abhorrence for the naked flesh. Her mother was incapable of responding to her husband's sexual passions, and therefore found Manjari a complete mystery when she so desperately wanted Shyam. (109) Her father comments in one of his diary entries, "But I understood Jiji, oh yes, I did. As a father, I found it hard to be a witness to the raw sexuality of my daughter's feelings for a man, something Jiji almost flaunted. But as a man, I could understand her feelings only too well" (109). Insights gained from her forages into the past of her parents' life help Manjari to better understand the enigma of her own unfathomable self and creates a sensitivity about her parents' need to be individuals: how valuable freedom from the role of '*aamchi Mai*' was to her mother (125). It also helps her to correct her perspective about her own spurning of her parents after Shyam's suicide.

Moving On underlines the societal expectations from women while living through their various roles. Manjari's understanding of Mai, before she goes through the diaries, is symptomatic of a social/stereotypical understanding of the image of a mother.

"The traditional Indian concept of motherhood easily translates into a willing tolerance of a life of sacrifice, suffering and exploitation. Traditions encourage mothers to sublimate "a whole series of natural urges or at least believing that she should endeavour to do so."[6] In their roles of mothers and wives, women are expected to possess archetypal fortitude and follow an intensively rigid moral pattern of life. The possibility of individual choices is not discussed even theoretically. In *Moving On* too, the children's behaviour towards their mother is a product of this unconscious social conditioning. It is reflected not only in Manjari's attitude, but also in Sachi's attitude towards Manjari, "But Sachi, I remember, has always wanted me to be what I'm not, not to be what I am. 'Why can't you be like other mothers?' she'd asked me once." (209) Deshpande also depicts how marriage is treated as the final destiny for girls. Recalling her childhood Manjari comments, "we would all of us take the right path, leading us to our final destinies of becoming good wives and mothers." (93) For a wife, self-effacing norms are exalted to create an environment which pressurize women to mould themselves according to their husband's needs. In *Roots and Shadows*, Indu is afraid of becoming such an ideal wife. In *Moving On* we have figures of Kamla, Medha and Mangal—Kamla does not let BK indulge in any household chore. Soft, docile and silent (93), she even serves him drinks with averted face; Medha keeps pace with the widening social needs of Bharat; Mangal transforms herself into a mother figure to become the public face of her husband Laxman (171), silently putting up with beatings and ill-treatment (174). Gender conditioning makes women vulnerable and silent but it is a double-edged sword. Among men it generates an intolerance or condescension towards women's attempts at individuality. Patriarchal traditions make men aloof, occupying a privileged position, able to realize their potential within the total gamut of society, whereas women are expected to submit themselves passively, doing nothing outside their dependence on the breadwinner. Deep-rooted indoctrination of a patriarchal society corrupts the objectivity of psyche. Manjari's father, though a liberal person in many ways fails to empathize with her wife, and takes her work with a non-serious, noncha-

lance; treating it as a pastime to occupy her in her spare time (197). After Shyam's tragic death, Manjari spurns her parents. Through a minor character Roshan, Deshpande also hints at the possibility of overcoming social conditioning through the bonds of sisterhood among women themselves, a concept used by many African-American women writers effectively. Roshan helps Manjari to settle down in life, shaking her out of her apathy and hopelessness. (221)

In all her novels, Deshpande has taken up the theme of women's sexuality, within and onside marriage. A friendly and intimate male-female relationship outside marriage is often presented by Deshpande not as a matter of choice, but of compulsion. In her interview with Pallavi Thakur Deshpande has commented that such relationship gives a woman the freedom to be herself, and that it need not be necessarily an affair. In *Moving On* she has depicted a close relationship between Manjari and Raja, which has the openness and trust of mature friendship. Simultaneously she has portrayed Manjari's purely physical association with her tenant Rajan. To some extent it can be compared with the relationship of Indu and Naren in *Roots and Shadows*, where Indu had succumbed to her bodily desires. Manjari is also crippled by her physical needs and wants to treat it "like drinking water when you're thirsty." But it also draws her into ethical dilemmas, "Like a diabetic's craving for food. Nothing wrong with it. And yet, why do I bathe three times a day, why do I scrub myself when bathing as if I want to flay myself, why do I punish my body so angrily? The body and mind so much at variance with each other." (259) This episode is dealt with at a purely physical level. When Raja confronts her with it, Manjari is quite open about her sexual hunger. Disclosure of Raman's criminal association compels her to put an end to this relationship.

Another recurring theme of Deshpande's novels, which has been repeated in *Moving On* also, is of introspection and confronting the past, as only after it the process of amelioration can begin. Manjari's stay at her father's house gives her precisely such an occasion. She constantly reminiscences about Malu, Shyam, Mai, Baba, Raja, her children—above all she wants to find her own self, solve out her own inner intricate knots. She

gets the same message in her father's diary, "I hope that some day the pointlessness and emptiness of her life will force her into confronting her past." (304) Ultimately she gets rid of her anger, guilt and loneliness, and learns to reach out to other human beings. She realizes that life carries its own truth within it, and in order to change one's circumstances, they have to be accepted. Deshpande emphasizes an analysis of one's predicament and overcoming it with rational resolutions. Manjari also reaches this conclusion towards the end: "There's always a fork in a road, there's always a choice we have to make. It's no use going back, agonizing over the choice we made, imagining what would have happened if we'd taken the other road." (311) She shares her tortuous past with Raja, forgives Shyam and decides to communicate freely about her past to the children—her son Anand and Malu's daughter Sachi. She realizes that life is a mixed yarn of happiness, tragedy and villainy; and this mixture alone imparts it a charm. The novel ends on a hopeful note. Like the protagonist of her other novels, Deshpande also concludes that chaos, fear and disintegration do not stop life; it simply moves on, "we know that the wicked stepmother and the bad fairy won't have it all their own way. We know that there's still one good fairy to come—the damage control mechanism at work, goodness coming back into the arena to fight wickedness." (325) The search may be doomed to failure, yet "the search is what it's all about . . . the search is the thing." (343)

NOTES

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3. Shashi Deshpande, *Moving On* (New Delhi: Viking, 2004), p. 56.
4. Shashi Deshpande, "Masks and Disguises," p. 189.
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6. Vrinda Nabar, *Caste as Woman* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1995), p. 184.

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A Spiritual Search in Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca*

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Anita Desai, who "occupies a distinct and distinctive place in the realm of contemporary Indian English fiction,"[1] is undoubtedly "one of the most powerful" Indian novelists in English.[2] The exploration of human psyche, the problem of human relationships, the protagonist's quest for identity, the racial problems, the question of feminism are her main concerns as evident in all her novels from *Cry, the Peacock* to *Fasting, Feasting*. All these issues have been kept outside the purview of her novel *Journey to Ithaca* (1996). She shifts to a new subject, the persistent journey, in this novel. What keeps Anita Desai preoccupied here is the idea of a continuing journey, something like that of a well-known Upanishadic term 'Charaybeti' (go ahead; don't stop).

In this paper, the main focus will be placed on the journey undertaken by the protagonists with a fixed or unfixed intention in search of the root of spirituality. With this intention it is better to go in search of the roots from where the mystery of the truth, the eternal journey of the existence starts than live as slaves without making efforts to gain something new.

Journey to Ithaca is about the soul's journey to enlightenment and awakening. Unlike E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* which largely seems to grasp the 'mystery' and where the borderline between the 'muddle' and the 'mystery' is never clearly drawn, this novel is Anita Desai's "assertive statement that the truth, the enlightenment and the totality of an all-encompassing spirituality is in the heart of India."[3] *Journey to Ithaca* is another such journey where Ithaca ceases to be a specific place. Ithaca is the symbol of that certain light-house which eternally summons

man to wander, to be in quest of spiritual truth, heart's truth, a quest for reaching one's homeland. And man's inner self is his true homeland.

In a way, *Journey to Ithaca* is about one's journey within oneself, a journey towards India—the land of the destination, the thought, the vision, and the philosophy. This novel is a saga of multiple journeys undertaken by three different characters at different planes of existence. While the journey of the first two, Matteo and the Mother, culminates in India, that of Sophie commences from India. Each of these journeys is interlinked to the other and it never ends. As Desai quotes in the epigraph to *Journey to Ithaca*:

> Always keep Ithaca fixed in your mind.
> To arrive there is our ultimate goal.
> But do not hurry the voyage at all.
> It is better to let it last for long years.[4]

Anita Desai's inclusion of *Prologue* in the novel helps her disclose the inner human motives for higher values of life. In *Prologue*, the protagonist, Matteo's early life is exposed to us. To Matteo, the school was like a "theorem set within a larger theorem." (17) We are informed that the school life "baffled him like the geometry and algebra." (17) He fails in school, as his answers to questions appear sullen and monosyllabic. In *Epilogue*, information about Matteo's journey to India, his marriage with Sophie and the role of his parents in nurturing their children is given. Matteo's reading of *Journey to the East* acquainted by Fabian moulds his mind towards the philosophy of *Vedanta*. Later he admits to his wife, "It was the book that opened my eyes." (8) It was "my destiny to join in a great experience . . . a unique journey." (22)

Matteo's journey to Ithaca forms the centre-stage for the first part of the novel. Born in a luxuriant Italian family Matteo makes his journey in search of brightness in the heart of his Ithaca—the mystery that is in India, the India which alone is aware of that mystery. It is the India *'a punya bhumi'* where man comes across the blessed people and quenches his insatiable

thirst and which has continued to influence and fascinate the Western mind. Matteo right from his childhood had been a peculiar child defying the decency and decorum of his home. "He found the villa with its velvet hanging and tapestries and brocades stifling." (19) He considers money, more money, business, cars and hundreds of luxury items only material things. (5) He feels that he does not belong to this world of his land but somewhere else lies his real life.

Thus Matteo and Sophie move towards India in search of peace, tranquillity, the divinity, the meaning of existence and the ultimate Truth. All this is a well thought of and fully planned objective of Matteo. He wants "to find India, to understand India, and the mystery that is at the heart of India." (54) But Sophie comes to India only to provide company to her life-partner, Matteo. She asks Matteo: "I want to know why we are here." (54) He replies that it is only in India that it is possible to understand the mystery: "over there people don't even know there is a mystery. . . . There are people—great sages—to guide you. I need such a person." (55) Sophie, on the other hand feels suffocated and wants to leave the unsavoury atmosphere of the ashram. For Matteo, "There is the path of joy and the path of pleasure. . . . Pondering on them the wise one chooses the path of joy, the fool takes the path of pleasure." (32)

Thus from Hotel Monaco begins his designed journey. In India Matteo is dressed up in wide pajamas and a cotton vest. He feels disgusted whenever Sophie reminds him of his own country. "The past is over, Sophie, . . . over, over, over—not to be repeated. Don't repeat it, and he pressed his finger on her lip, hard." (41) There was an added drug of self-delusion for Matteo. The path chosen by Matteo since his early boyhood was to be a difficult task. Shuttling from one ashram to another in search of a guru, he steps on the first step of the ladder leading to spirituality in an ashram on the mountains in the North and at last he finds peace, joy, deep contentment under the guidance of the Mother, the head of the ashram. It seems that he is very close to his goal. He is transported to a unique experience "an experience of unity, the unity of the spiritual with the physical, the dark with the

light, the human with the natural." (99) In this way, his journey comes to an end in total surrender to the mother with the firm belief that she is the "one who can reveal the unknown to me." (141) Matteo realizes that truth comes to him in the form of an experience of bliss—called "*anandam kevalam*" in the *Upanishads*. A 'bliss' that comes with a sense of being 'loved.' (93)

Helpless, unhappy, exhausted and constrained, Sophie feels like "a beast in cage" (79) following Matteo. She never wants to move from ashram to ashram scratching mosquito bites; she only wants to lead a decent, comfortable life of a normal western couple, no-nonsense life of hard work what she finds at last living with Matteo in the ashram—nothing but hostility and unacceptance. She urges Matteo to return to his land to work for his father's business, not to work here for the Mother. But Matteo shouts back, "Mother does not make me work for anything—she teaches us, work without desire, work without fruit . . . the higher way of life." Thus the distance between them widens to complete breakdown and she finds "Matteo had vanished in the heart of the world that remained shut to her." (121) Sophie considers the Mother only a woman: "Call her what you like—the cosmic, the absolute but she's a woman." (141) She feels jealous of the Mother and regards her "a monster spider who had spun this web to catch these silly flies." (121)

The constant jealousy of a woman in Sophie makes her enquire all about the past of the Mother and so she leaves the company of her husband. Her curiousness paves the way for her to find out her arrival in India as a dancer, "looking for a rich somebody to pick her up." (131) Thus Sophie undertakes a more interesting and complex journey to peep into the past of the Mother "to travel back, back in time, although not her own time but the Mother's," (155) and also to explore into the past of the "paradoxical, contradictory" woman who "looks Indian, sounds Indian, but is not Indian." (125)

Finally Sophie leaves India with her children first to her parents' home in Frankfurt and then to the villa on the lakeside which was larger, warmer in Italy. Out of the ashram she alienates herself from the mundane world outside. She finds herself

misfit with the so-called normal people which she had longed for. The thought of Matteo living in the ashram in India torments Sophie's soul. Unconsciously she too was pursuing the ways of Matteo. She thought of not talking about India, but when a telegram informed that Matteo was taken to the hospital, she at once packed her bag, bought the ticket with such speed that it seemed nothing mattered to her now, she just wanted to be with her Matteo. She realized that though physically away, her mind had been with Matteo all this time. Feeling relieved regarding her children's safety with their grandparents, she realizes that in her determination to discover the truth about the mother she had actually abandoned her children as much as Matteo had abandoned her in his search and that "in following her she is entering an area of the chill, bleak, bitterness of renunciation." (238) "The Mother's life, her past, the reality behind legend, is rediscovered in pieces and plots, through which ultimately the whole emerges. It is not merely Sophie's journey through Alexandria, Cairo, Paris, Venice, and New York to India, that Sophie reaches her Ithaca, her truth, her enlightenment, it is ultimately a journey within, a real pilgrimage into the heart of the beckon, a meaningful journey, a sojourn into the awakened awareness of the real face of India where all masks dissolve into insignificance."[5]

Sophie is now very eager to see Matteo, to share the truth about the Mother that she has discovered. When Sophie arrives at the hospital, they inform her that Matteo has left the hospital and gone. No one is able to tell her where he could go. Sophie is confused. She realizes the futility of her quest, for the Mother is already dead and Matteo has left the place to pursue his search. As she herself admits, the journey provides her "nothing much" about the mother (296); it has revealed to her "why the Mother went on that pilgrimage, why everyone goes on a pilgrimage and why she must go too." (298)

Sophie's search reveals another peculiar journey of a young, different and determined girl Laila, the daughter of Hamid and Alma. Laila, like other heroines of Anita Desai, seems to become rebellious for her spiritual quest and finally comes to India for her spiritual emancipation. Her strong conviction that there must

be a master somewhere to show her "luminous wisdom, . . . the answer to her queries" (283) finally enabled her to find him in the North of India. For Laila, the truth lies in India and it is in India, through the means of dance, that she arrives at her Ithaca, her enlightenment. On her journey to the Himalayas, with the desire to be free of this world, to escape into a better and brighter one, she had the vision of Eternal light setting her on fire: "I was on fire, the tree was on fire, light blazed and the whole sky was illuminated." (286) At the mountains her "soul too set out in quest" and her dance in prayer and joy brought the Master to her pronouncing her 'Shakti' and the 'Supreme Power.' Her earlier attempts to seek through dance the harmony between the body and the mind, thought and action, the world and the spirit had brought her only disharmony. But now her soul got satiated. Henceforth the Master and the devotee became one and she became the Supreme of the ashram after him. There ended the most turbulent phase of her search providing her bliss, wisdom, enlightenment and her great transformation from Laila to the Mother which paved the way for many a search. As a dancer she fails, but as a seeker after truth, she succeeds in fulfilling the final goal of her life.

There are thus two women who revolt in this novel against their surroundings: Sophie and Laila. Sophie longs for worldly freedom while Laila aspires for spiritual freedom. In *Journey to Ithaca*, Anita Desai tries to achieve something unmatched. She is of the view that all religions of the world would mingle into a single stream, representing the religion of humanity symbolized in the character of Laila. She also concentrates on how to bring spiritual change in man and "attains a harmonious, clear vision of India, a sense of delighted, joyous, serene fulfillment."[6] Thus *Journey to Ithaca* is a totally different novel from the other novels of Anita Desai, a novel of persistent journey tracing the root of spiritual origin (*Gyan*) like the Indian concept of *anantyatra*, the seed of which lies deep down in the Indian heritage.

NOTES

1. A.K. Bachchan, "Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca*: A Novel of Spiritual Quest," *The Indian Journal of English Studies*, Vol. XLI (2003-4), p. 161.
2. R.S. Pathak, "The Alienated Self in the Novels of Anita Desai," *Indian Women Novelists*, ed. R.K. Dhawan (New Delhi: Prestige, 1991), Set 1, Vol. 2, p. 11.
3. Suman Jana, "*Journey to Ithaca*: a Quest Novel," *Critical Responses to Anita Desai*, ed. Shubha Tiwari (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2004), Vol. 2, p. 353.
4. Anita Desai, *Journey to Ithaca* (New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1996), p. 3.
5. Suman Jana, p. 366.
6. Rama Kundu, "'Journey to the East' Once Again: Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca*," *Critical Responses to Anita Desai*, ed. Shubha Tiwari, Vol. 2, p. 283.

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Shades of Life in Usha K.R.'s *The Chosen*

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Over the years I have realized that it is easier to write on books that one does not like completely and it is difficult to write on books that one accepts, assimilates, and identifies with totally. I did not expect when I first picked up *The Chosen* by Usha K.R. the pleasant surprise that awaited me. To begin with, it is a good novel. Nagaratna, the heroine, the soul of this novel comes from a lower middle class background. She and her mother from a village in Karnataka come to live in the outskirts of Bangalore where Nagaratna's brother Satya and his wife Pushpa are already staying.

Nagaratna carries a head of her own over her shoulders. She thinks. She does not copy the style of her classmates, not even of the most charming and beautiful of them, Shylaja. She is self-composed, every bit an original. I am reminded of the Freudian concept of psychic energy. In fact, throughout our discussion in this paper we will need psychological, and para-psychological viewpoints to demystify the text and build our understanding of it. Mental energy is energy in the physical meaning of the word i.e. probably something that can be transformed into another kind of energy analogous to the transformation of mechanical into thermic energy. Energy is not perishable—it can be accumulated, preserved, discharged, dissipated, blocked—but it cannot be annihilated. This postulate of preservation of mental energy, its transformability, its functioning in a close analogy to physical energy, is one of the guiding principles of psychoanalysis.[1]

Nagaratna or let us call her Naga is no meteor but she certainly is quite a person, especially keeping her age in mind. What I like most about her is her observing power. She carefully looks at people, compares and contrasts, and draws her own conclu-

sions. The big thing is that she wants a better life. She is not satisfied with the mundane, low, cheap, inconsequential existence. She has that necessary hunger, that sparkle that makes one move forward in life.

When Naga enters the school, there is an undeclared war of nerves between her and Shylaja, the most beautiful girl of the class. In Nagaratna, Shylaja recognized an original. All she usually saw around her were pale imitations of her. When she wore a pair of earrings or bangles, or the latest hair clip, the very next day half the class would be wearing the same thing. They also tried to copy her laugh, she knew, and the way she looked up from beneath the flip of hair across her eyes. But Nagaratna continued to plait her hair tightly. When all the girls were swarming around her, admiring her latest hair band, Nagaratna would not even ask her where she had bought it. To Shylaja, Nagaratna had the appeal that the elephant with its lumbering grace has for the deer.[2]

The two girls work as a contrast only to show what the other is not. Eventually they become friends or 'best friends' in their adolescent terminology. To the world of adolescent girls where style of hair, dress, feminine charms, lisping, eyebrow depletion, sideway glances and a touching faith in one's own attracting power are everything, Nagaratna by and large, remains an outsider. She is the only one in her class to know that the plural of mouse is mice and the correct way to end an application is 'yours faithfully.' With her sound knowledge of English grammar, she stands first in her class. Ultimately she is accepted by her mates, acceptance being such an important factor in any individual's life, particularly in the transforming age of teens.

Two girls, Shylaja and Nagaratna, choose two opposing directions. When the short hand tutor, NPP Sir, writes a letter of admiration and invitation to Nagaratna, she decides not to go. Instead, Shylaja goes and hooks him as we come to know quite late in the novel. Nagaratna wants a job. She wants a neat and clean home like that of one of her neighbours, Nirmala. Even amidst such hustle bustle, Nirmala manages to live with some grace. Her children are clean and tidy. Her home is peaceful. This is the

promise that life holds for Nagaratna, a ray of hope, a distant possibility.

Then come real life drama and experience in worldly affairs. For all her psychic energy, her personality, and her good English, the system does not see Nagaratna any different from countless others with a B.Com. degree and a diploma in short hand. Her sandals wear out. Her confidence is on the brink of falling into the abyss of depression. She is desperate for a job and a job is not in sight. Her state at this stage depicts the fate of so many young men and women in our country who are bright in their own way.

She gets the job of an office assistant in an ashram school. The cacophony of Saikrupa Apartment in Vithala Colony where Nagaratna lives and the expansive, cool, soothing peace of the ashram premises where she works, are two opposing and most drastically different facets of human existence. The school sprawls across acres. Disciples of Swami Mukteshwaranand, popularly known as Guruji, run it. The present heir is Tejas Pandit. His daughter, Ms. Damyanti Pandit, runs the school. Tejas Pandit lives in another ashram at Muttu. This world of spirituality cum social service is new for Nagaratna. She is drawn to it as magnet does to iron. She is fascinated and impressed by the graceful living and thinking of Ms. Pandit, her nephew Priyam, her friend and benefactor, Vasant Chandra, and Tejas Pandit and his entourage. To top it all, Vasant, a trustee of the school, son of a big businessman makes romantic advances towards her. Our Naga is on seventh heaven. She is happy.

Then comes her fateful visit to Muttu, the Ashram headquarters, where the great Tejas Pandit lives. The need of a spiritual guru is fundamental to human nature, just as love, hate, deceit, friendship or bigotry are. There is no escape from it. Since the very beginning, people have gone to and assembled near the wise one, the radiant one, the most compassionate one among them and have relieved themselves of their anguish, their failures, and frustrations. And frustration is also fundamental to human nature. No one, howsoever successful has escaped from it. Sudhir Kakar writes, "To be approached in awe and reverence,

he [the guru] is someone who makes possible the disciple's fateful encounter with the mystery lying at the heart of human life. He is also the Rasputin look-alike, with piercing yet warm eyes, hypnotic and seductive at once, a promiser of secret ecstasies and radical transformations of consciousness and life. The guru is also the venerable guardian of ancient, esoteric traditions, benevolently watchful over the disciple's experiences in faith, gently felicitating his sense of identity and self."[3]

Naga's encounter with Tejas Pandit and of many others with him resembles the above description. Dumped and buried by the trivialities of life, cheap talk and dirty politics, the guru's touch and look is like an unlocking of the spiritual reservoir. "He simply held her hands in his and smiled at her and she felt a sudden liberating gush of happiness, as if a secret valve had opened in her heart to let the blood through. It was his eyes that locked you in—serene, luminous, and very, very kind as if they had instinctively divined your uncertainties and your troubles and would provide all the answers." (194)

Tejas was marked for his 'tej' (radiance) right from the beginning. Swami Mukteshwaranand chose him to be his heir, the inheritor of his spiritual legacy. He sidelined the old timers like Biswas (Mauni Baba) and Chandana (Tejas Pandit's first wife and Damyanti's mother). Now, this selection of one and rejection of others is a tricky business. It gives birth to what we have in *The Chosen*, a parallel text or story. One story is what is usually accepted and propagated by Tejas Pandit and Damyanti. But Mauni Baba's daughter, Shyamoli tells Naga a story not known to the world, the suppressed, and ignored story. "I could never say this in front of my father. But Guruji himself was not free from flaws,' she said slowly. 'My son in spirit, he called him and loved him like a father—blindly, unconditionally. Of the three of them, equally worthy, he decided that only Tejas would be sent to Shantiniketan.

There are several hints all along that suggest that all is not well in the ashram. In the present times (or who knows, it might have been the same in olden days), spiritual conclaves have been badly marred by reports of bad moral conduct. Spirituality, 'the

preparation of soul-curry,' has become a profession just like any other profession. The sheer intensity and totality of a devotee's surrender before the Guru paves way for perversion. It is very difficult to overcome the temptation when you are surrounded by beautiful, attractive males and females of all ages, sizes, and shapes. Chandana, Tejas Pandit's wife objects to his spending private moments with his secretary. Then follows punishment for his wife. He neglected her so completely that her existence itself zeroed. She did not exist for him. He drove her carefully and calculatedly to commit suicide; Shyamoli says, "the Pandit is too clever—yes, very clever—and that's the last thing you expect a guru to be. . . . I can forgive him anything, but not the way he treated her, his wife. She practically ran the ashram, along with my father. Chandana will take care of that, Biswas will see to this, their names were always on everyone's lips, but he did not see them. He has that remarkable quality of not seeing what he doesn't want to see and of making people feel worthless when they don't agree with him. . . . She committed suicide. . . . But he drove her to it." (245-46)

This is the sidelined, parallel tale. There is a big gap between how the Pandit is perceived by the world as a spiritual guru and the cunning manoeuverer that he actually is. The last bit is also cemented in the whole scandal when he finally marries his secretary, Suguna. Damyanti, his daughter is thrown out of her mind. She has remained a spinster just to take over the spiritual legacy. She felt to be 'a team' with her father. But the 'tilism,' the chimera, the charisma, the myth is broken for her and for the reader as well. For Damyanti, the most painful thing is not the relationship but the act of marriage—marriage for her being 'the most common, most middle class thing' in the world. But then, this is all part of the spiritual game—the risks that a guru-devotee relationship usually runs into.

The Chosen evokes ideas in many other spheres as well. The very words 'the chosen' suggest the looming fate of human lives. You do not do a thing, you perform no role on your own—you are chosen to do it. Tejas is chosen for the guru role, Naga is chosen to have a glimpse of sophisticated life, Damyanti is cho-

sen to act as an inheritor of spiritual legacy. It is the destiny, the preplanned scheme of things that chooses some, discards others, and how it discards after choosing. It is more painful to be cast off after being chosen. Damyanti receives a jolt from her father; and Naga from Damyanti and Vasant. Without a word or hint, without any reason or rhyme, Naga is left in the lurch, as though she is nothing, she does not exist, she is of no importance to anyone. She is rejected just as husk is separated from grain and blown into the wind. Naga is simply dropped out of scheme of things. After roaming in the town with Naga, after offering flowers to her, after showing her concept shops where food, junk jewellery, and artifacts are all available in one sweep, Vasant leaves Naga without any explanation, without even a word of formal excuse. It is appalling to our middle class sensibilities.

As if to seal her tragic fate completely, Naga is thrown out of the school as well. Damyanti, disappointed by her father, leaves school and goes abroad to her sisters. Damyanti's nephew, Priyam is the new man in command. And it is told to Naga that just as a US President goes for his own team, every Principal also needs her/his people to man the system. Naga tries to commit suicide and fails there too. She is nursed back to health and brought back to Sai Krupa courtyard amidst the realization that she has no job to return to and the 'nursing home bill has eaten into the rest of the nest-egg her father had left for her wedding.' (321)

The lower middle class existence is so pathetically brought out in this novel. The street described in the novel seems directly coming out from the phenomenal tele serial by Aziz Mirza, 'Nukkad.' Spirituality is personified by Nillakai Swami, the healer of the poor. There is a matching centre, a barber's shop, a grocery store, as also the goddess, Plague Amma, who came into existence in some remote past when plague had hit the area. The sheer congestion in homes, the forced proximity of one home to the other leaves no space for privacy. Tears are public, so is laughter. There is no possibility of thought except crude generalizations ruling human life. Naga has her 'private' space in the living-cum-drawing room near the window overlooking the

street where she sits and combs her hair. The stairs of the apartment, and the common space downstairs serves as a courtyard to all the occupants of Sai Krupa—children do their homework there, women take nap, clean grains and pound masalas. Everything is discussed out in the open—honeymoon of someone, someone else's efforts to get pregnant, daughters and their marriages—everything is out for public display. There is no such entity as an individual in Sai Krupa. All vows, the ills of life are hurled at Shani, the evil planet. Petty affairs and trivial talk are the order of the day. I am reminded of Dominique Lapere's words when in *The City of Joy*, he calls the dwellers of Anand Nagar slum as sub humans. Although, the conditions here are a shade better than Anand Nagar but the roughness, the thick-skinned attitude is sickening indeed. Lemon lamps are lighted to appease gods. Naga's exposure to the fine aspects of life are of no meaning to Sai Krupa residents as well as to members of her family. What is the meaning of a job if it does not pay you well? What is promotion without increase in the salary? Naga, in her airy, seventh heaven days is fed up of this obsession with money. She declares, 'Anyway, you wouldn't understand.' (95) The same Naga, when faced with the bitter truth of being used and thrown off, decides to talk about a pay hike. But then, it is already time for her to leave the school. After the betrayal and humiliation, knowledge comes to Naga in painful pangs. She cannot escape the truth of her birth, her family, and surroundings. Her fate clings to her very closely.

Amidst all these dreary affairs, life goes on uninterrupted. Births, heroic deeds, love affairs, and survival—everything moves on smoothly. For example, Indramma, the owner of the apartment, is a single woman with a son. She runs her catering business from her own kitchen, serves and packs for office goers, school and college goers, earns a somewhat dignified existence. These are unsung, unrecognized heroines of the lower rung of the Indian social matrix. A millionaire's daughter goes for charity work in her white starched handlooms, and the whole world goes mad at her goodness, kindness and gives a standing ovation. And here are women, exploited and abused, struggling hard to

hold their heads high. The book pricks the sensibilities of the reader continuously as the two worlds, one exuberant and elegant, the other, decayed and poor, are juxtaposed.

It is a unique experience to see life in two stratas, two hues, two compartments only to realize in the end that the apparently better one is actually dirtier. Perseverance, comradeship, and companionship are found in lower strata. The human virtues, the godliness, is not in ashrams; it is in chawls, slums, and apartments like Sai Krupa. Our Naga is no ordinary woman. At twenty-one, she has all the necessary experience to face life. And the miracle is that she is not dumped, not stumped. Life goes on unabated. Happiness and zest also go on. The very last sentence of *The Chosen* says, "But today, Naga knows, though it is neither a festival nor a birthday, today there will be a row of ghee lamps on the God shelf." (321)

'Sinner and saint, beloved and betrayed,' in Kamala Das's terminology, at the tender, young age of twenty-one, Naga begins her innings in life. Das writes and I conclude with her lines:

> I am sinner, I am saint.
> I am the beloved and the betrayed.
> I have no joys which are not yours,
> No aches which are not yours.
> I too call myself I.[5]

NOTES

1. Benjamin B. Woleman, *Contemporary Theories and Systems in Psychology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 208.
2. Usha K.R., *The Chosen* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2003), p. 15.
3. Sudhir Kakar, T.G. Vaidyanathan, ed. *The Essential Writing of Sudhir Kakar* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 141.
4. Kamala Das, *Poems Old and New* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2002), p. 178.

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Being and Nothingness of Akhila in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*

MANJU ROY

> I do not so much care about what the woman *feels*. . . . I only care about what the woman *is*—what she IS—inhumanly, physiologically, materially.[1]

This article is a modest attempt to dig deep into Akhila's character (i.e. the main character of *Ladies Coupe*) from the perspective of Existentialism. The decision to explore her character from this viewpoint has its origin in the observations and commentaries made by some critics and Anita Nair, the novelist herself. Urvashi Butalia remarks: "She [Akhila] releases herself from the hold of convention and family expectations, at least mentally."[2] Geeta Doctor is surprised to discover Akhila suddenly "filled with the idea of revolt." She finds Nair's story "filled with the incantatory power to burn up the tracks, to seek a new destination."[3] Anita Nair in one of the interviews with Bindu Menon affirms: "There is a lot of strength in women that doesn't come out naturally, it has to be forced out of them—it could be circumstances or a change in lifestyle."[4]

Here it would not be out of place to discuss some of the tenets of existentialism. Existentialism emphasizes "the risk, the voidness of human reality" and admits that "the human being is thrown into the world in which pain, frustration, sickness, contempt, malaise and death dominates."[5] In fact, it was during the Second World War when Europe passed through a phase of death and destruction and naturally it was a good period for existentialism movement to flourish. It was the time when they started to believe that there is almost a complete lack of design and purpose in the universe. The most important advocate of ex-

istentialism was the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980).

This paper studies the character of Akhila keeping in view some of the beliefs of existentialists into consideration. They believe that human being is free to do whatever he pleases, but this is surely not the case, as his freedom is curtailed not only by the objective reality he encounters, but also by his own limitations.[6] Taking this view as a central point the paper attempts to find if Akhila lives a totally authentic life pursuing her dreams and ambitions, or she lives a life which society has designated for her—a life where her personal happiness has no value, a life where she is known by the quality and quantity of sacrifice she makes for others. It also tries to find out if Akhila keeps on oscillating between her being and nothingness.

Several critics have discussed Akhila's being and nothingness and recognized her helplessness as a human being. For instance, Urvashi Butalia finds Shukla as "her family's sole breadwinner, whom everyone takes for granted." However, some critics also feel that as a human being she also gets the urge to live a life of her own, not a life designated by the society. For example, Bindu Menon stresses, *Ladies Coupe* "is a story about a single woman's decision to break free from claustrophobic traditions and multiple identities as daughter, sister, aunt, provider, and live life on her own terms." Thus, it seems that Akhila's life is a life of oscillation between two points—being and nothingness. It may be interesting to research how much time she spends being instinctive and how much time she has been made to live a life of an object (with no choice of her own).

Akhila was only nineteen when her father, an income-tax clerk, died in an accident. As she is the eldest of four children (two brothers and two sisters), she becomes the man of the family. She gets a job in the same department, and with this job comes a great responsibility of running the whole household and keeping everyone maximally happy and in this way begins her journey of nothingness. She remains instrumental in arranging the marriage of her two brothers—one elder and the other younger—the same day, but no one ever thinks if she also wants

a husband, children, or a home of her own. "In their minds Akhila had ceased to be a woman and had already metamorphosed into a spinster." (77) At the age of thirty-four she gets all her three siblings married and settled in life. Nonetheless, she does not find any charm in her life. On every Monday she and her mother visit the Shiva temple at Thirumulavayil. Once while her mother worshipped, she stood near the entrance and thought of herself:

> Akhila would touch the flanks of the stone bull that unlike all other Nandis rested with its back to the sanctum sanctorum. An aberration like me, she told herself with a wry smile every Monday. (78)

She is reminded often of a Tamil film whose heroine is just like Akhila—a workhouse and a woman who gives up her life and hope of her marriage:

> . . . when Akhila thought of the film, she felt darkness lick at her. Would her life end like the life of the woman in the film?

Akhila, troubled by her constant realization of nothingness, sometimes listens to the calls of her being and also dares to translate them into reality. Her decision to get enrolled in the Open University for a B.A. is a step towards asserting her own being. Further, she falls in love with Hari, a boy much junior to him, contrary to the social norm and on her 29th birthday, she goes to Mahabalipuram and spends sometime with him. Satisfying the call of her innermost being even at the cost of lying to her mother speaks volume about the pulsating urge of her being and reminds us of the fact that she is not an object but a woman who has a free will. Her mother asks her to seek her brothers' permission before she steps out but she reacts vehemently:

> Amma, I'm their elder sister. Why should I ask them for permission to go on an office tour? (150)

She enjoys sensual pleasure unknown to her so far for a small period of time and realizes a fullness, a flowering of her personality:

> Akhila felt a warmth rush over her . . . she had never known anything like this before. An unfurling. Beads of sweat. A rasping edge to her muted breath. A quiet flowering. (139)

Later in her trip to Mahabalipuram she makes love with Hari for the first time and she feels overjoyed. This proper adult love was different from 'all those tentative fumblings that had been the sum total of their lovemaking before.' (152) She enjoys Hari's company but this relationship has a very short life span. This relation dies very soon partly because of her social awareness of any such relationship being a taboo and also because Hari is younger to her:

> 'Everything is wrong, Hari,' Akhila said. 'All these days, I tried to tell myself that it didn't matter. That we could bridge the years between us with love. But I don't think I can. . . . It bothers me that we are not suited. That I am older and look older, and I can't live with the thought that some day you might regret the relationship, that you might turn away and I would be left with nothing.' (153)

On most of the occasions, Akhila has been projected as a social being who should abide by all the written or unwritten social norms. So there is always a conflict between her being and nothingness. Further, when Akhila comes out with a proposal of living alone and Padma remarks that she needs her brothers' permission, Akhila retorts:

> For heaven's sake, I don't need anyone's consent. . . . I will do exactly as I please and I don't give a damn about what you or anyone else thinks. (204)

She asserts herself in one of the conversations with Narayan, her elder brother:

> For twenty-six years, I gave all of myself to this family. I asked for nothing in return. And now when I wish to make a life of my own, do anyone of you come forward and say. . . . You deserve to have a life of your own. (206)

In the light of the above discussion, it may be concluded with some reservations that Akhila's free will has been curtailed, to a large extent, by her own family and society, but she is coura-

geous enough to listen to the voice of her own being and at times reacts to the dictates of her family and society. Besides, sometimes she is bold enough to take some drastic steps to please her own being. However, she does not try to change the course of the society or the family substantially. To an existentialist she may appear to be a weak character, as she lives in a predetermined world; she is not free to realize her goals, to translate her dreams into realities. Existentialists seem to imply that the human being is free to do whatever he pleases. But this is not true always. Man is, to a large extent, the outcome of his own situation. His being in the world is something over which he had little choice. In the case of Akhila, there are situations where she does not have any control—for instance, her father's death and her being the eldest in the family of four children. However, there are situations which can be changed. For instance, her remaining a spinster throughout her life could have changed, if she had taken a strong initiative. Further, she could have lived alone and not in the midst of her sister's family. In addition, she could have enjoyed the freedom to choose her friend and maintain the everlasting relationship.

Taking a broad view of her life, it may be inferred that she keeps oscillating between her being and nothingness. Mostly, she lives a life designated by her society or family. On a very few occasions she listens to the voice of her innermost being and then she appears a rebel, but mostly she has been shown like an object used to serve various purposes. She takes her mother to the Shiva temple on every Monday, collects dowry for her sister, arranges a marriage for her brothers, does not enjoy the freedom of choosing her favourite food (like eggs) even in her own house while living with Padma and remains conscious of Hari being elder to her and, therefore, severs all the ties with him for ever. This demonstrates that she lives a life expected of her. In fact, her character appears to be a continuum of nothingness and being. On this continuum, nothingness shades into her being very slowly and only occasionally. Even Virginia Woolf was aware of the complexity of a character and, therefore, she saw character as a flux and wanted to "record the atoms as they fall upon the

mind."[7] Coming back to the issue of Akhila's character, we see many similar characters in real life too. We do not find many who live a life advertised by existential philosophers. Priyanka Sinha sounds right when she mentions the commonness of Anita Nair's characters: "Hers are commonplace, everyday characters. They are alive, their tears real, their exasperation genuine and undramatic and their dilemma understandable. It could very well be a story of anyone of us. We could be them, they us."[8]

Geeta Doctor also reiterates Priyanka Sinha's observation: "Nair's characters . . . are singularly life-affirming." Even Anita Nair in an interview with Sheela Reddy expresses the same feeling: "I like to write about ordinary people and don't want to write about characters larger than life."[9]

NOTES

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Language Literature and Metaphor: A Study in Centrality

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In my paper titled 'Metaphor: Analysis and Interpretation, I had briefly proposed a new approach to the subject (1982). In the present paper, I wish to develop the idea further with the help of additional evidence. In the above-mentioned paper I treated metaphor as a linguistic device (p. 29) suggesting that metaphorizing is an integral part of human competence for the creative use of language and it is manifested centrally in common discourse as well as literature. Commenting on the pervasiveness of figurative language, David Crystal has remarked:

> The point emerges even more strongly when these features are studied in relation to every day conversation, where metaphor in particular has been shown to be of great significance. We argue with each other using the terms of battle (*she attacked my views; he defended himself, I won the argument).* We talk about countries as if they were people (*America's been a good friend to them; France and her neighbours*). We discuss economics in terms of human health (*oil is our lifeline; an ailing economy*). . . . Metaphor plays a major role in structuring the way we think about the world, though most of these everyday metaphors go unnoticed. (421)

Both autogenetic and phylogenetic evidence points towards the centrality of metaphorizing in language. Hans Hormann has noted that, above all, Wegener, and, following him Langer, have dwelt on the importance of metaphor in the genesis of genuine symbols. "If someone says for the first time, 'The brook runs swiftly,' the hearer is forced by the context of 'running' to forget that legs are originally included in the use of the word 'running'." (226) R.A. Waldron has observed that metaphorical uses shared by several languages are so common along the diachronic

dimension that "they provide some testimony to the universal element in human cognition." (178) The last statement regarding human cognition enables us to move on to the remarkable thesis developed by Mark Turner in *The Literary Mind* subtitled, 'the origin of thought and language.' He holds that all mental activity of humans is characterized by what we may call literary competence, which consists of a few operative factors, active in all types of language use whether it is common discourse or literature. In Turner's model, metaphor in a cognitive sense comes under *projection;* he also deals with what he calls direct projection in basic metaphors like *'life is a journey.'* His discussion of the phrases "intellectual progress" and "mental journey" is particularly interesting because he makes a distinction between conventional and less conventional expressions. (87-88)

Proceeding from this position, we are obliged to set up two levels of expressive effect, literal and metaphorical. Although just like conventional and 'less conventional' the two levels cannot be clearly demarcated in all cases, we intuitively know which is which. The exact line of demarcation between the two levels will vary from language to language and also the proneness of various classes of metaphors to sink into the literal level. But the dictionary will serve as a rough guide to literality and metaphoricity of an expression. Some dictionaries use a label for a metaphorical use.

Metaphoricity being a fundamental and all-pervasive feature of linguistic expression, it permeates both literary and non-literary discourses, and new metaphors are generated in conventional as well as literary register. Therefore, setting aside the demarcation for a moment we can classify metaphors into, *living dead* (or *fossil)* and *sleeping* (or *faded)* metaphors. *Morning* (for youth), *evening* (for old age), *garden* (for a happy state), *night* (for death) are examples of living metaphors used in every day communication. In poetry these words are often used with metaphorical force, but we must not forget that the poet is also a creator of new metaphors. Consider for example the following:

Taking me down the *vista* of years (D.H. Lawrence, 'Sorrow')

History has many cunning *passages, contrived corridors*
(T.S. Eliot, 'Gerontion')
Even so distant, I can *taste* the grief (Philip Larkin, 'Deceptions')
And the earth's *face* upward for my inspection
(Ted Hughes, 'Hawk Roosting')

Waldron mentions the following words as dead metaphors in which the original metaphor is lost while the metaphorical meaning is still understood in a literal sense: *object* ('something thrown in the way') *magazine* ('a storehouse'), *debate* ('to beat down') and complicated (folded together). Grash (to comprehend) is a sleeping metaphor and *comprehend (to* 'seize with the hand') is a dead metaphor. Waldron further remarks: "the distinction between a dead and sleeping metaphor is, of course, partly a question of linguistic awareness (178-79). This again shows how metaphorization plays a central role in the lexicon and usage of a language. It is also worth pointing out here that in poetic discourse, a writer may refill or recharge a dead or sleeping metaphor and give it a renewed life.

Let us look at some examples in which a dead or hackneyed metaphor is revived. Consider the following line by Dylan Thomas:

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower.

The word *fuse* (as a noun) came through metaphorical transfer from Latin *fusus*, meaning 'spindle' via Italian *fuso*. It refers to a cord-like device that carries the flame to the other end for detonating an explosive. The word operates within literal bounds, but in the above line about the plant energy that moves like a spindle to the flowering point and sets the bud ablaze, the term's metaphorical meaning is revived. In his popular poem 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' Robert Frost recharges the word 'subside' with fresh metaphorical power in: "Then leaf subsides to leaf." The word comes from Latin *subsidere* (sub + sidere) meaning 'to sit down.'

Some major analyses of metaphor are based on the assumption that likeness is at the root of both metaphor and simile, that there is no essential difference between the two. "In fact it is

sometimes assumed that simile is metaphor's poor relation, offering only the 'bare bones' of the transferring process in the form of a limited analogy or comparison, whose 'range' is narrow, because predetermined. (Hawkes, 3)

In a brief digression at this point, I must submit that I hold a different view of metaphor; as will become clear later, my understanding is that metaphor is an enrichment of meaning and effect and it involves a complex process of semantic addition and subtraction. But first, I must deal with two theories of analysis which are based on the assumption that a metaphor is like a simile.

The first pioneering work is to be credited to I.A. Richards. In his book, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936) he proposed two terms, *tenor* and *vehicle* which are employed in the analysis of metaphor. He says the meaning of a metaphor arises out of the interaction between tenor and vehicle. Tenor is the general drift or the underlying idea or the subject of metaphorical expression and vehicle the words used to convey the analogy. The metaphorical meaning "is not attainable without the co-presence of the vehicle and tenor." (100)

Adding the concept of 'ground' to tenor and vehicle (which he handles in his own way) G.N. Leech presents a three-stage analysis of metaphor in his A *Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (153-56). Let us look at his procedure as illustrated in his analysis of the following line:

> The sky *rejoices* in the morning's *birth* (taken from Wordsworth's *Resolution and Independence)*. In the first stage the literal and figurative uses are separated:
>
> L: The sky . . . . . the morning's . . . . . .
>
> F: . . . . . rejoices in . . . . . birth

At the next stage the author asks us to construct tenor and vehicle, by postulating semantic elements to fill in the gaps of the liberal and figurative interpretations. The picture that emerges is represented in the following way:

> Ten.: The sky [looks bright at]: the morning's [beginning]

Veh.: [animate] rejoices: [animate]'s birth

The final stage requires us to state the ground of the metaphor, the ground is stated by Leech in the following words:

> Here are two separate comparisons; that between brightness or clearness of the sky, and a person's rejoicing; and that between dawn and birth. The second is the simpler: the connection is plainly that both are beginnings—dawn is the beginning of life. The first comparison rests on a commonplace metaphorical link between visual brightness and 'brightness' in the sense of cheerfulness, happiness, liveliness. On a less superficial level, these metaphors, which attribute life to inanimate things are justified by Wordsworth's philosophy of nature. (156)

It should be noted here that the tendency to humanize the non-human world by metaphoric means is a fundamental trait of the human mind, because, truly speaking, there is no communication between man and the non-human world. In another paper, I have demonstrated through numerous examples of metaphorical expressions, how the process of 'humanizing' is at the root of metaphor and language itself (1987). This can be easily verified from the examples quoted by G.N. Leech (153).

More importantly, the models of analysis offered by I.A. Richards, Leech and many other scholars are heavily oriented to subject/ predicate division and they are also unable to account for and discover methodically the unstated element of the metaphor. Let me make this clear with the help of an example:

There is a garden in her face
Where roses and white lilies blow;
A heavenly paradise is that place,
Wherein all pleasant fruits do grow;
There cherries grow that none may buy,
Till Cherry-Ripe themselves do cry.
Those cherries fairly do enclose
Of orient pearl a double row,
Which when her lovely laughter shows,
They look like rose buds filed with snow;
Yet them no peer nor prince may buy,
Till Cherry-Ripe themselves do cry.

(Thomas Campion, 'Cherry Ripe')

These lines represent a complex process of metaphorization in which the unstated referents are charged with beauty of expression through figurative language—the unstated parts of the beloved's face are cheeks, forehead, lips and teeth. Note that *eyes* and *brows* are not mentioned here. The poet says: 'There is a garden *in* her face' and not something like 'her face is a garden,' because eyes and brows which are also parts of the face are assigned different roles, and to mark the difference rhetorically clear, simile instead of metaphor is employed in the final stanza:

> Her eyes like angels watch them still;
> Her brows like bended bows do stand,
> Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill
> All that approach with eye or hand,
> These sacred cherries to come nigh,
> Till Cherry-Ripe themselves do cry!

No doubt a more complex syntactic-semantic apparatus is called for if we have to give a full account of the metaphorical dynamism. The approach suggested by transformational generative grammar does take us some way forward, but it suffers from serious drawbacks and appears to have been discarded by many analysts of metaphor.

Transformational analysis of metaphor developed out of the work of Chomsky (1964,1965) and Katz (1964) and has been further refined by scholars like Matthews (1971) and Haley (1980). The original approach treats metaphors as deviant expressions and employs selectional restrictions as the main tool of analysis. So far, this approach has failed to discover a finite set of rules which can generate an infinite number of metaphors—in fact this is an impossibility where a different kind of creativity is involved. Part of the task must be left to the literary scholar who will take analytical decisions eclectically on the basis of sensitive and insightful reading, because even metaphors of common *parlance* contain poetry.

Before moving on to a satisfactory proposal, I must point out that metaphorical restructuring involves both grammar and lexis.

Now I introduce my proposal by saying that metaphor is an enrichment of meaning by semantic transfer and it involves skillful handling of selectional features and subcategorization rules. Heuristically speaking, we proceed in our reading until we reach a point where the literal interpretation breaks down. This is the first step. I shall illustrate this and the remaining steps in decoding a metaphor with the help of a few examples, some of which have been discussed by Leech and Halliday in their own ways:

1. A flood of protests poured in following the announcement. (Halliday, p. 319)
2. He oozes geniality. (Halliday, p. 319)
3. But ye lovers, that bathen in gladnesse. (Leech, p. 153)
4. Here, where the taut wave hangs
   Its tented tons, we steer
   Through rocking arch of eye
   And creaking reach of ear,
   Anchored to flying sky,
   And chained to changing fear.
   (W.R. Rodgers, 'Life's Circumnavigators')

In (1) we meet a stumbling block in *flood,* but only after reading the syntactic unit, *A flood of protests,* In (2) the problem appears right in the beginning, in (3) we are surprised at *in gladnesse* and forced back to the verb *bathen.* Example (4) first startles us with *tented tons.* Example (4) must also make us realise that an extended poetic metaphor is a complex structure and we must search out the centre or nucleus of the whole metaphorical expression in order to be able to loosen the smaller knots; the second point about a complex metaphor is that our decoding will be of an exploratory nature without any kind of scientific certainty and predictability, because genuinely creative acts are unpredictable.

The second step is to work out the semantic features (not necessarily in binary opposition) of the problem word or phrase and see which ones enrich the literal meaning. In (1) *flood* is marked by 'overwhelming force,' 'massiveness' and 'destructive potential' among other features. These attributes to numorosity in modification of *protests* solves the first metaphor and makes it

easier to tackle the second in *poured*. In (2) we meet a problem of subcategorization as well as semantic interpretation. *Ooze* takes an inanimate subject which can release something from its entire body surface, and it takes an object denoting a fluid matter which may be pleasant or unpleasant; the process of oozing is natural or spontaneous, not requiring a willed effort. *Ooze* which is the nucleus of the expression requires a bidirectional exploration and attribution of new features to *he* and *geniality*. The object of ooze, *geniality*, acquires fluid concreteness and it ensures a positive connotation.

In (3) the difficulty arises at *gladnesse*; there is no problem in 'lovers who bathe,' but we must be puzzled that it is not water they are bathing in. The verse we are discussing is taken from the fourth stanza of *Troilus and Criseyde* by Geoffrey Chaucer where he is addressing lovers having a nice time; for Chaucer '*gladnesse*' meant pleasure, joy, comfort, happiness. Joy, like water in a bath or river, surrounds the lovers on all sides, but adds a positive meaning which is absent in water; *gladnesse* also casts a metaphorical backlash, as it were, towards *bathen*, which brings a playful activeness that we miss in *immerse* or *sink*.

The fourth example presents a number of puzzles and demands creative cooperation from the reader. The title of the poem from which this passage has been taken is itself metaphorical 'life's circumnavigators.' One's passage through life is often metaphorically described as journey or voyage with two different sets of connotations. T.S. Eliot exhorts his fellow human, with the words "Not fare well,/But fare forward, voyagers" (The Dry Salvages III). In this light, 'here' stands for 'this world'; it adds the feature, present location or 'life in this world.' 'Taut wave' suggests fully stretched, packed with activity, very busy existence and adds the idea of an ever-present threat. 'Tented tons' might stand for trends in dresses or 'waves' of fashion: in the dictionary *ton* means 'the prevailing fashion': A *clergyman cannot be high in state or fashion.* He must not . . . set the *ton* in dress—Jane Austen. 2. the quality or state of being fashionable (*The New Penguin*). If we take the other homonym (which has a different pronunciation meaning 'a unit of weight,'

then the expression will convey the idea of 'heavy load of work'; 'Tented tons' signifying masses of water overhead, when the wave is high will, then, be suggestive of tremendous pressure on the mind. 'Rocking arch' and 'creaking reach' continue the marine metaphor adding the attributes of 'weak' and 'unstable' to visual and aural capacities of human perception. The metaphors in the last two lines underline the paradox of fixity and motion. 'Anchored' and 'chained' suggest fixity, but 'flying' and 'changing' point to variability. 'Flying' metaphorically perhaps alludes to 'clouds' which, again, is a metaphor for threatening environment. In the last line 'chained' and 'fear' reinforce the idea of dangers in life. The basic thought underlying the metaphorical complex is that man passes through the vicissitudes of life in a state of bondage to the forces above ('sky') and the forces within (fear). The repeated use of *ing* (rocking, creaking, flying, changing) is a good example of grammatical metaphor—it adds and maintains the idea of continuity or progress through life. The various metaphors collectively convey the connotations of fickleness, threat, weakness and bondage.

A question may be raised here: How far should we go in exploring a metaphor. The question is particularly relevant to the interpretation of poetic texts. But let us begin with a simple example:

The countess sailed across the room.

If we assume that this metaphor is a condensed form of a simile 'sailed like a ship' or 'moved like a ship'; we cannot say 'walked like a ship.' Now if we bring in the image of *ship*, then how can we bar the hints of size and chimney smoke. A bulky woman walking with a lighted cigarette in her mouth could be appropriately described by 'The lady sailed across the room.' We must see how the metaphor can be judiciously explained. My idea regarding enrichment of meaning would suggest that we think only in terms of relevant semantic features and add them to the features of the literal term and also subtract the unwanted components. The resulting table for the above metaphor will be something like this:

- use of feet
Vmet - jerky motion
+ smooth motion
+ graceful

where V means verb and met means metaphorical.

This issue has been raised in an interesting manner by Archibald A. Hill in an article, 'Principles Governing Semantic Parallels' (in Allen, 1976). In order to deal with this article adequately, we must read the whole poem under discussion:

Bereft

Where had I heard this wind before
Change like this to a deeper *roar?*
What would it take my standing there for,
Holding open a restive door,
Looking down hill to a frothy shore?
Summer was past and day was past.
Sombre clouds in the west were massed.
Out in the porch's sagging floor,
Leaves got up in a *coil* and *hissed,*
Blindly *struck* at my knee and *missed.*
Something sinister in the tone
Told me my secret must be known:
Word I was in the house alone
Somehow must have gotten abroad,
Word I was in my life alone,
Word I had no one left but God. Robert Frost

The questions being debated were, whether *roar* in line 2 involved a reference to a lion and whether the words *coil, hissed, struck* and *missed* must invoke the image of a snake. Hill says his 'own position was that there was indeed a snake, but that the lion was unnecessary[5] (p. 506). In the remaining part of his article, Hill attempts to justify his position on the basis of the two principles, which, in his opinion, govern semantic principles.

One thing is certain: if we begin asking the kind of questions raised above, there will be no end. We may, for example, like to know whether the lion is roaring in his den, on a crag or under a tree, etc. Or whether the snake was waiting for a prey, had been

provoked, was hungry, etc. There is another solution suggested by me in the foregoing discussion. The solution is we abstract from each term the attributes that are appropriate and enrich the meaning and connotation by applying them to the image concerned. In the present case the relevant attributes can be singled out by re-reading the whole poem perceptively. The poem expresses the poet's sad mood of utter loneliness in which nature suddenly takes on the role of a sinister alien being ready to threaten and destroy. So, if we add + creaturehood and + sinister to sound of the wind and the behaviour of the leaves, we have satisfied the requirement of the metaphorical effect in the poem.

Finally, I must make some comments on solving a mixed metaphor. When two or more metaphors are intertwined or nested one into another the resulting statement is often quite humorous, because the terms of the metaphors clash ludicrously. Here we have some examples:

> "Mr. Speaker, I smell a rat; I see him forming in the air and darkening the sky; but I'll nip him in the bud."
> "If you take that stand, when you run,
> You'll have a walk over."
> "He left no stone unturned until the apple of his eye had reached the top of the tree."

A much-discussed example from literature comes from a line in *Hamlet* for which Shakespeare is sometimes criticised. It occurs in Hamlet's soliloquy in Act. III Sc. I: "Or to take arms against a sea of troubles." I suggest we enclose the constituents within brackets and start solving the metaphors by beginning with the innermost, as is done in solving mathematical expressions like

$$5 + [21 - \{2 + 4\,(3-1)\}1$$

Recasting the above example in this way, we have 'Or take arms against (a sea of troubles). We decade the inner metaphor by adding to the noun modified + deep, + massed,

> Or take arms against = deep and massed troubles
> = overwhelming and numerous troubles
> Or fight vigorously against overwhelming and numerous troubles.

So, as we start solving the metaphors, beginning with the innermost, the absurdity which arises from the literality of the metaphorical vehicles begins to dissolve.

In the present paper, I have renewed the argument that metaphor is a central linguistic device in common as well as literary discourse, adding a recent view which holds that the human mind is fundamentally a literary mind and no human thinking can take place without story, projection and parable. Next, my concern was to examine critically the analytical models suggested by I.A. Richards, G.N. Leech, and Chomsky along with other transformational grammarians.

I have sought to make a contribution based on the assumption that metaphorical impact rests on enrichment of meaning—both denotative and connotative. The enrichment takes place by means of addition and subtraction of semantic features involving the literal and metaphorical terms. I have demonstrated the operation of metaphorical enrichment by analyzing and interpreting a number of metaphorical expressions both colloquial and literary. I have also traced the cause of absurdity and humour in mixed metaphors and proposed a procedure for analyzing a mixed or complex metaphor. For this purpose, I chose the well known mixed metaphor, "Or to take arms against a sea of troubles" in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

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Tagore's Woman: The Reality behind the Illusion

MELVA POPE

O Woman: lovely woman!
Nature made thee to temper man,
We had been beasts without you. Otway

For generations we have been living in a society largely dominated by male concepts of womanhood. Greek civilization, one of the oldest and richest, placed woman in the category of slaves, deeming it fit that they should humbly accept and obey, without question, the demands of their masters. Notwithstanding the periodic emergence of male philosophers, from the ancient Plato to the more recent John Stuart Mill, who argued that no society could hope to approach justice so long as one half of its people were in a state of subjugation, the situation remained more or less the same. However, a far more ambiguous approach to the essential requirement of an egalitarian society is evident in the dichotomy that persists between rhetoric and inner perception. Not much has changed since the setting up of the social infrastructure of some of the earliest civilizations. At the most, man has progressed from the use of the whip to a finer, more sophisticated means of rhetoric, bribery and cajoling, in order to keep woman 'in line.' The present paper is an attempt to see R.N. Tagore's essay entitled "Woman" as a significant representative discourse which gives full-throated voice to the modern man's subtle means of exploitation and to examine it in the Indian context, as a social construct arising out of imperialist politics.

"Woman" is one of the six Personality essays written by Tagore in 1917. In this essay, Tagore brings into focus the individual roles of man and woman in accordance with the Plan of Na-

ture, and reviews the position and responsibility of woman in a world where man is born with free energies and comparative freedom from physical and emotional bondage, and where the "ideal of stability is deeply cherished in woman's nature." According to Tagore, woman is born directly into the centre of her own true world, the world of human relationships, and the "domestic world" is "God's gift" to her. Woman has been crowned the cosmetic queen of humanity whereas man has been firmly enshrined on the throne of power. In the process of development by man the gain has been considerable but the waste and destruction greater. Tagore acknowledges that this civilization of power is "exclusively masculine, one in which woman has been thrust aside into the shade. Therefore it has lost its balance."[1] In the chaotic atmosphere that pervades, woman must step in and "impart her life rhythm to this reckless movement of power." However, despite the perception that woman must be considered a part of the mainstream, it is interesting to take a look at the image of woman as projected by Tagore in a few of the more prominent statements made in the essay. Tagore says:

> woman's function is the passive function of the soil, which not only helps the tree to grow but keeps its growth within limits. . . . Woman is endowed with the passive qualities of chastity, modesty, devotion and the power of self-sacrifice. (412)

Clearly, the liberal-thinking Tagore too would have women believe in a passive natural self, blessed with self-sacrificial, divine-like instincts and a love for the ordinary and monotonous. The process of socialization into fixed male/female roles continues with the firm assertion:

> Man has to do his duty in a world of his own where he is always creating power and wealth and organizations of different kinds. But God has sent woman to love the world which is an ordinary world of things and events. (414)

Tagore, like many acclaimed emancipators, past and present, would rather restrict woman to the boundaries of the domestic sphere and the like, than have her exercise skills and creativity and intellect in the larger world. The political environment, how-

ever, and the pressures of the National Movement demanded that they gain the favour and support of woman. It is, perhaps, in the backdrop of such a politically charged atmosphere that Tagore states:

> The time has come when woman's responsibility has become greater than ever before, when her field of work has far transcended the domestic sphere of life. The world with its insulted individuals has sent its appeal to her. (415-16)

The rebellion and reaction to foreign aggression had taken on several forms which had a bearing on the woman's situation and the attitude towards women, within which there was a growing development of bourgeois democratic institutions. It was in the political struggle against imperialism that women were encouraged to participate outside the home and in this they had the support of the nationalist leaders. The same voice that had only moments before vehemently limited the woman's world to that of the 'common' and 'insignificant,' now exercises, as with all hegemonic forms of dominance, a coercive authority with a subtle force of persuasion. Tagore, as also his nationalist contemporaries, saw the advantage of mobilizing women and was conscious of the power they could have in a non-cooperation struggle. The new liberal patriarchy, advocated by nationalism, conferred upon woman the honour of a new social responsibility, and by associating the task of 'female emancipation' with the historical goal of sovereign nationhood, bound them to a new subordination. They were cajoled into believing and yielding to a role of passive participation, one in which they were chiefly responsible for bringing comfort to a 'wounded civilization' through self-sacrifice, as may be observed in Tagore's remark:

> God, with his message of love has sent them as guardians of individuals, and in this, their divine vocation, individuals are more to them than army and navy and parliament, shops and factories. They have their service in God's own temple of reality, where love is of more value than power. (414)

Woman did not share the same platform of power but being relegated to the pedestal of goddess was invoked by Tagore to

"bring her . . . power of sympathy to this new task of building up a spiritual civilization" and further persuaded with the sweetness of hope: "just because woman has been insulted, has been living in obscurity, behind man, I think she will have her compensation in the civilization which is waiting to come." (416)

A great number of women of the bourgeoisie were struck by this newfound fame and attention, and themselves took up the Gandhian ideology. They played a key role in movements such as 'ahimsa' and 'satyagraha' which were considered suitable to woman's nature, and thereby became allies of their own exploitation, accepting their limited tactical function within the independent movement which made them excellent *instruments* in the struggle. The seemingly radical change in the status of women was in effect an essentially conservative one. While emphasizing education and mobilizing women to participate in 'ahimsa' and 'satyagraha,' revolutionary alternatives and radical social changes were relegated to the background. Not only this, even their struggle in the nationalist movement had to be within the social constraints of *feminine* attitudes. In this context it would not be irrelevant to refer to a statement made by Mahatma Gandhi which projects the role or function of women in a light similar to that advocated by Tagore: "The feminine sex is not the weaker sex. It is the nobler of the two; for it is . . . the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge."[2] It is perhaps not surprising that even icons of humanity like Mahatma Gandhi have not been hesitant in rendering "woman" as cosmetic idol rather than as a source of power and strength in her own rights. Even in the struggle for the nation's freedom the bolder, more courageous female warrior was not so easily acceptable simply because such acceptance seemed to pose a threat to the male bastion. Tagore himself takes exception to such women in his essay when he writes: "Women are screaming themselves hoarse to prove that they are not women . . . because men praise with pious unctuousness the idolatry of their manufactured images. . .women in their shame are breaking their own true god, who is waiting for his worship of self-sacrifice in love." (414-15) Clearly there seems to have been

much apprehension about militant women revolutionaries like Bhikaji Cama, an active nationalist who went abroad to advocate the cause of Indian independence, Roopvati Jain, aged 17 who headed a chemical factory that produced bombs, and several other such revolutionary leaders, who were not in tune with the over-emphasized passive requirements.

Taken in this light, the essay merely serves as an illusion of social change, so far as the de-socialization of feminine attributes go. It may be seen as a strategic manipulation of woman to lend her grace and glory for man's advantageous use, and which in effect, does nothing more than raise woman to the spiritual heights or else relegate her to a dull world of the insignificant, suppressing her roots beneath the fertile soil. Tagore seems to avoid, on purpose, the real human world which woman inhabits. There seems little regard to understand the nature of woman in 'sameness and difference' and therefore there is no mention of a world of harmonious coexistence, a world in which woman may realize her own practical potential which will truly enable her *to share* the responsibilities of a 'decaying civilization.' Tagore's renderings can at best sound sweet to the idle ear tuned to flattery and blind to subtleties. On closer examination they are the trappings of a web that have created widespread misconceptions. It is ironical that even great thinkers like Tagore, known for an otherwise positive role in the emancipation of the marginalised are themselves socialized in the constructs of feminine/masculine attributes and the roles of each in society. Being a part of the patriarchy they too work towards limiting the role and status of women, who if per chance step out of this framework or reject the softer *feminine* options, are seen in poor light by her worthy emancipators. Such thoughts inevitably negate the rationale that equilibrium and balance of power can only become a reality when one is unfettered, for, how can a being be virtuous, who is not free? Therefore, society everywhere needs to reject such subtle and oppressive means of exploitation and achieve the power of the real world, for, in the process, we have nothing to lose but our chains. We have a *whole* world to gain.

NOTES

1. Rabindra Nath Tagore, *The Writings of Tagore, Plays, Short Stories and Essays*, ed. Sisir Kumar Das (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1996), p. 412.
2. Qtd. Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (The Hague: Institute of Social Sciences, 1982), p. 95.

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Symbolism in *A Farewell to Arms*

A.K. BACHCHAN

Symbolism in one form or another has been used by nearly every great novelist and poet. According to W.H. Auden, "A symbol is felt to be much before any possible meaning is consciously recognised, i.e., an object or event which is felt to be more important than reason can immediately explain."[1] This is true with Hemingway. The true success of Hemingway's symbolic presentation of ideas is that it stimulates the unconscious or sub-conscious apprehension of ideas. It takes us to different heights and depths of meanings.

In *A Farewell to Arms*, throughout Book I, Hemingway consolidates the mountain image on the way up towards the Isonzo from Gorizia, Henry looks across the stream and plain to the Julian and Carnic Alps. He lowers his eyes from the far-off ranges, sees the plains and the river, the war making equipment and the broken houses of the little town. The mountain image thus develops associations with the man of God and his homeland, with clear dry cold snow, with kindly people, with hospitality, and with natural beauty. It has its opposition in the low land obscenities of the priest baiting captain, cheap cafes, one night prostitutes and drunkenness.

Frederic Henry's experiences are cast against the grim background of an inherent and almighty death which determines the quality as well as the outcome of these experiences offering at the same time a tasting ground for values, meant to be explored. The sense of futility of human endeavour is conveyed both by the death and destruction on the battlefield, and the final tragedy that ends the love story. In the metaphysical vision, the individual seems to be pitted against invisible forces beyond their control as projected in the novel. They go through the possible

courses of life, that of love and war, but realise the futility of their endeavours against the cosmic force that seems to rule the universe without any respect for human endeavour and human aspirations and ideals. This lends to the novel a deep tragic vision. Hemingway projects it through the use of rain, plains, mountain, dust and other symbols as well as other similar devices.

In the first paragraph of Chapter I of the novel, the leaves and tree trunks are laden with dust whipped up by the marching troops, leaves fall early, their summer time cut short, as it were. It is a perspicuous suggestion of premature death which sits somewhere in ambush, awaiting the doomed cannon fodder. After the troops pass, the road is bare, and white, conveying the suggestion of emptiness and desolation. There is also a reference to the change of season and beginning of rain on mountains. Hemingway refers to rain as a symbol of gloom, dampness, mud, chill and miseries of war. The mud splashed on the road by the trucks suggest the disorder and chaos of war. The image of the soldiers with bulging loads of cartridges, looking "as though they were six months gone with child,"[2] foreshadows Catherine's death in childbirth.

Chaman Nahal remarks that Hemingway's novels are deeply religious and *A Farewell to Arms* is still more so. Here paradise—an inner paradise—gets situated in a room: "In most of his fiction, Hemingway slowly takes us to an intense religious experience. The religiosity is not of the conventional type, it is not the quest of man for a personal God. . . . Hemingway produces in it a measure of intensity which though human in origin, carries with it a spiritual impact."[3]

In Book One of the novel, war seems to predominate and Frederic comes across different people like the priest, the surgeon Rinaldi, the nurse Catherine and other soldiers of the field. Frederic finds people shirking work and indulging in sensual pleasure quite contrary to his expectations. His wavering mind drifts from one interest to the other. The priest suggests that he should spend his leave in Abruzzi, and others call him to the whorehouse. Frederic goes to the whorehouse, and for sometime,

lives in the random world of sensual gratification, but behind that there is dissatisfaction and disgust. He does not join others in their pastime of baiting the priest, which indicates that while fighting like a soldier he was also in the grip of a spiritual dilemma, or rather his soldiering was a mode of working out his spiritual dilemma. After his return from leave, he tries to tell the priest how sorry he is for not going to Abruzzi, the clear cold and dry country. It indicates that he is sadly aware of the unreality of night-life in a dark room and the disillusionment resulting from the indulgence in sensual pleasure. He talks of the frozen road which seems to suggest a different course in contrast to the crowded or muddy one. The symbol of road recurs when Frederic and Catherine are in Switzerland, living in a brown wooden house in the pine trees on the side of the mountains. The road referred to in highland countries of Abruzzi and Swiss Alps seems to suggest peace and love.

Frederic is disillusioned when he finds spiritless soldiers, the sensualist doctor, and the disinterested nurses in the hospital. Everybody seemed to be tired of war and yet tied to it as an unavoidable evil. The nurses talk of their lack of interest because they are trusted only when there is work. There are nurses who cry when the patients are admitted at night, for it means sleepless nights for them. The soldiers, on the other hand, pay a deaf ear to the bursting of the shells and carry on with their eating and drinking when they should be sitting alert.

Catherine, the nurse, who was introduced to Frederic by Rinaldy sometime ago, and in whom Frederic then was casually interested, is now posted at the same hospital in Milan where Frederic is convalescing. His interest in Catherine turns into a genuine feeling for her. The war-shattered man finds solace in love, though, like other things, this too is destined to prove elusive.

In Book II we move to the second stage of this story of war and love and the emphasis shifts to love. Frederic remains in touch with the front through newspapers and, as he is haunted by the nightmares of frontline action, he tries to keep his nerves stable by drinking secretly, contrary to the hospital discipline or the

doctor's instruction. Catherine Barkley represents the forces of life, as opposed to the forces of death. What began as a casual war-time romance becomes, from now on, a serious involvement. The touching of their hands appears to be a turning point for them. Their love for each other grows in its intensity. It does not worry her if Frederic had been with other girls. The only thing that worries her is Frederic being sent away from her. To Catherine, he is a substitute for religion. He is all that she has. She does not become a nymphomaniac like Brett of *The Sun Also Rises*. She is disappointed and disillusioned like Brett in the sense that both of them lost their first love in war. Catherine remains docile and self-effacing whereas Brett is independent and assertive. War has not reduced Catherine into a moral wreck like Brett.

In this section, where the love theme is predominant, and where the consummation of love is being achieved, the sense of impending doom is not absent. The moments of joy are always fleeting in Hemingway's world. The coming events cast their shadows on the sanctuaries, his characters build for themselves and these premonitions are communicated by Hemingway through exquisitely employed symbols. We get a reference to a bat flying in the room where Frederic and Catherine are making love at night:

> That night a bat flew into the room through the open door that led on to the balcony and through which we watched the night over the roofs of the town. It was dark in our room except for the small light of the night over the town and the bat was not frightened but hunted in the room as though he had been outside. (80)

The bat appears as the shadow of the gloom that is to follow a short while after Frederic and Catherine start dreading the thought of separation when Frederic will have to get back to the front.

The rain is again shown as another element foreshadowing the impending doom. Rain, used in the novel as a symbol of fear, is referred to constantly in the rest of the novel. It seems to stir up some awful association in the mind of Catherine. Although

she assures Frederic that she will love him in rain, in snow and in hail, yet she is afraid of rain: "I'm afraid of the rain because sometimes I see me dead in it." (100)

The instinctive dread of rain turns out to be a foreboding of her end, for she dies in the hospital later, when it is raining outside. The symbol of rain was first used by Hemingway in his short story *Cat in the Rain* and later used as a major symbol in *A Farewell to Arms*. In the story *Cat in the Rain*, the American wife notices from his hotel window a cat crouched under one of the dripping tables. The American wife goes down in the rain to get that cat, but is disappointed to see her gone. She feels that having a cat, at least, would keep her content. But the rain obstructs her wish. Catherine, similarly, is Frederic's cat in *A Farewell to Arms*. Being disillusioned in war, it is Catherine's love in which he seeks some consolation and happiness, but the rain washes away his hopes when she dies prematurely in childbirth. Her death justifies her earlier premonitions, of seeing herself dead in the rain.

The rain is anti-sun, anti-hero, anti-life. The sun symbolises life and the rain means clouding of this life, the sun. It anticipates Frederic's convalescence and the end of his idyllic love-affair with Catherine in Milan. The doctors diagnosed it to be jaundice, for he has been drinking against the advice of the doctors. This does not entitle him to a convalescent leave. When his leave is cancelled, Frederic has his second disillusionment in the field of love, where he spends his time with Catherine in a pleasant way, his relationship seems to be brittle. He has to get back to the front which is a return to the landscape of death.

Frederic and Catherine keep boosting up each other's morale, but the grip of gloom becomes tighter on them. They happen to be walking on the side of a cathedral. Frederic does not have any plan of going in, but he asks Catherine whether she would like to join. She refuses, for she feels she does not have any religion. For the two lovers 'being together' is the only religion that they believe in. Catherine had rejected the idea of marriage earlier too which confirms that she had no faith in religion. Catherine's rejection of the refuge of religion leads her to her

premature death.

Frederic and Catherine go together to buy a pistol. Frederic wants to be fully armed before going to the front. They come back to the hotel. Once again they hear the sound of the rain.

The hawk, like the rain, calls them back to reality and both suggest the distant call of the doom that is going to intrude in their pleasant love life. With this we also notice that the summer of love and contentment is over and the autumn of grim truth—the moment of reckoning with death—arrives.

In Book III once again the war scenes take predominance. It opens with a description of 'The Fall' when the trees were all barren and the town Gorizia, was under the blanket of mist, cutting it off from the mountains. Frederic returns to the field and meets his old friends. Everyone, the major, Gino, Rinaldi and others seems to be tired of war. The major tells Frederic: "I am very tired of this war. If I was away I do not believe I would come back." (129)

With the disaster of the retreat, the rain or the road symbol is intricately linked. It rains intermittently and there is a reference to muddy and crowded roads. The muddy roads and rain are designed to convey effectively the full impact of the retreat and the final outcome of the war. They constitute a commentary on the horrors of war and through them the novelist has been able to dispense with a lot of detail and moralising sermon.

Rain and war go well together, for they both symbolise death. The symbol of wet road brings out in full relief the implications of Caporetto retreat and helps to make concrete the picture of an army in utter chaos. The disorder suggested by the muddy road as opposed to the meaningful order traditionally associated with roads, is also made apparent in juxtaposition of the two kinds of women, or girls, whom Frederic encounters on the road—prostitutes and virgins. In Gorizia, Frederic and the crew of his ambulance come upon the evacuation of the brothel.

Frederic and his crew pick up two virgin sisters, one of whom 'looked about sixteen.' Through this artful juxtaposition of whores and virgins, Hemingway further intensifies the suggestion of the disorder and chaos of the retreat, of war and per-

haps of modern life itself. He comments on the disorder caused by war when Frederic thinks: "A retreat was no place for two virgins. Real virgins. Probably very religious. If there were no war we would probably all be in bed." (144)

It rains all night. Frederic constantly thinks of Catherine and we can anticipate the impending gloom associated with the big rain. During the retreat Frederic thinks of Catherine and premonitions. As his longing for Catherine remains sharper and his disgust with war was still more intense, he finds an open exit before him, the Tagliamento river. Frederic, afraid of trial on the charge of espionage, with his head down, trips at the edge and jumps in with a splash, bidding farewell to arms, and to all his obligations. The plunge is designed to cleanse himself of all commitment to war in the purifying waters of the river.

Frederic takes a new direction towards Catherine again. In Book IV we see triangular relationships; the shift is again from war towards love. In the hotel with Catherine around, Frederic has a feeling of rebirth and of being in the midst of a new reality. His room in the hotel, is a clean well-lighted place, and he enjoys the moments of peace and contentment in this lover's paradise. Frederic is able to enjoy the consummation of love, consummation made richer and fuller by his nightmarish experience of war that preceded it. It is raining outside, but lovers at the moment manage to be oblivious of its death-symbol impact. Frederic is making a conscious effort to suppress the associations of night with death in order not to spoil the bliss of the moment. Frederic's philosophic words seem to be a reflection in retrospect on the part of the author regarding the fate of lovers.

When Frederic is away from Catherine even for a moment, his mind goes back to the situation on the field. The fear of being caught is still there, so the lovers decide to escape to Switzerland under cover of darkness. They sail across the lake together and the sight of the border of Switzerland gives them a sense of security. They start leading a happy life in Switzerland. They have come to depend on each other so much that one cannot live without the other even for a short time. However, this idyllic love does not last long.

A Farewell to Arms ends with Frederic walking back to the hotel, alone in the rain. The rain has finally washed away his dreams leaving his road of life muddy and slippery. He sets out to test some ideals in war and finds them hollow. He turned to love to seek fulfilment, but in the very process of fulfilment there lurked the seed of death. Frederic Henry is forced to say a farewell at all levels—physical, psychological, emotional, metaphysical and spiritual. The retreat at Caporetto turned to be the symbolic alienation of the hero completely. The wound of alienation requires a balm of love and flight. And this is obtained from Catherine's love. But with her death, Frederic Henry is left alone in a strange land without direction. He escapes into a world of human needs—for amusement, food, companionship, love and spiritual wholeness. But he does not get anything in the end, wounded and haunted by his own inadequacy. He has known love and death bound to the level plain, he has finally sought the mountain. Even if he might never learn to climb, he could not now die by his own hand but remain forever a symbol of helplessness and ever groaning under the pain of perennial wounded consciousness.

NOTES

1. W.H. Auden, *The Enchafed Flood: The Romantic Iconography of the Sea* (Random, New York, 1950), p. 21.
2. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (Penguin, 1970), p. 7.
3. Chaman Nahal, *The Narrative Pattern in Ernest Hemingway's Fiction* (London: Vikas, 1971), pp. 71-72.

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The "Anti-Feminist" Feminist Thought: A Current Perspective

SUSHILA SINGH

Feminism is generally thought of as a phenomenon of the 19th and 20th centuries. Most Anglo-American studies of women's movement acknowledge some forerunners in the English and French Revolutions and in individual figures such as Anne Hutchinson. Joan Kelly demonstrates in her study *Women, History and Theory* a solid, four-hundred-year-old tradition of women thinking about women and sexual politics in European society before the French Revolution. French feminism claims a longer past and identifies the poet and author Christine de Pisan (1364-1430) as the first to have held modern feminist views. She was the first feminist thinker to spark off the long debate on women which came to be known as *"querelles des femmes."* French feminist critics attempt to relate ideas from philosophy, linguistics and psychoanalysis. Anglo-American criticism presumes that there definitely is a female tradition, buried like hidden treasure in literary history. The American literary critic, Elaine Showalter, refers to it as something like the lost continent of Atlantis rising from the sea. The French perspective contends that we cannot know what women are. The feminine is that which has been repressed and women's vision is only evident in what you don't see, what is absent. While Anglo-American critics are looking for women in history, French women writers are looking for women in the unconscious. *Cherchez la femme* (search for woman) is one major preoccupation of French thinkers. Critics and theorists like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan are at the core of conceptualizing the present-day feminist thought. They envision to name the woman by centring and deconstructing femininity as

lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos, and darkness in the patriarchal symbolic order.

The Anglo-American feminist thinkers/critics look for the "woman" in history—in recording the wrongs, and making woman visible. The French theorists' definitive characteristic project is of founding a woman's discourse reflecting a coalition with the continuing tradition of the French avant-garde (unconventional literary and philosophical movements), between Expressionism and Realism. Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous seem to suggest that if woman can accede to the avant-garde in general, they will fulfill the possibilities of their discourse.

The search for a discourse of woman is related not merely to a literary but also to the philosophical avant-garde. The plan of avant-garde is set in Jacques Derrida's "The Ends of Man." Here, Derrida describes a trend in contemporary French philosophy, "man" is neither distinguished from woman nor specifically inclusive of her, "man" is simply the hero of philosophy. In existentialism (doctrine that existence takes precedence over essence), the subject (privileged) zone is represented by the philosophers always signifying "we-men," the total horizon of humanity. Even in the theme of history, the concept of "man" is never questioned and is not limited by history, culture or language. Derrida's description would locate the landmark texts such as *Economie libidinale* by Jean-François Lyotard establishing affinity of the French feminist thinkers with Marx.

The deconstruction of the general sign of "man" as it exists within the "metaphysical" tradition can produce a female element which does not signify female person. In this context, we may refer to Kristeva's specific sign "woman." "Woman" does not belong to the order of "being." Woman as a sign does not exist. The corollary is then that a feminist practice will always be negative, at odds with what really exists—against metaphysical theories. Thus, avant-garde thinkers/ writers offer a possibility for the sign "woman" by dissolving all identities.

The cultural critic, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak does not accept the necessarily revolutionary potential of the avant-garde, literary or philosophical. She finds that, even if one knows how

to undo identities, one does not necessarily escape the historical determinations of sexism. At the same time, Spivak finds in Kristeva's text an implicit double programme for women which one encounters in the best of French feminism: (i) *against* sexism, where women unite as a biologically oppressed caste; and (ii) *for* feminism, where human beings learn to prepare for a transformation of consciousness.

Within the group of male anti-humanist avant-garde philosophers, Derrida has most overtly investigated the possibilities of "the name of woman" as a corollary to the project of charging "the ends of man." In *Of Grammatology,* he clearly shows that the privileging of the sovereign subject is intricately related with phonocentrism (primacy of voice-consciousness), logocentrism (primacy of the word as law), and phallocentrism, supremacy of "man" as the arbiter of generative and legal identity. The brilliant translator of *Of Grammatology*, Helene Cixous is naturally most directly influenced by Derrida and approves his line of thought and takes it further in her important essay 'the Laugh of the Medusa." Woman does not enter into oppositions, she is not coupled with the father (who is coupled with the son). Cixous believes that woman must put herself into the text from where she has been driven away—made non-existent. The woman discourse project necessarily becomes twofold—first, to break up, to destroy and the second, to foresee the unforeseeable, to project. By comprehending the absent woman, the room for her is created. Deploying the Derridian notion of *restance (*remains) or minimal idealization, she gives to woman a dispersed and differential identity and believes that as such woman does not exist, she may be non-existent but there must be something of her. Cixous uses the theme of socio-political and ideological textuality with such dexterity that brings her within the Derridian Foucauldian problematic. Social structures/symbolic order cannot be dissociated from linguistic structures. History and society are inexplicably linked to language. Its structures define and constitute the subject. In ultimate analysis we find that terms denoting an oppositional shift have come into existence. These include intervention, contestation, resistance, subversion, interrogation, and

heterogeneity, discontinuity, displacement, destabilization. These terms inform us of the contemporary experience and thought systems.

The complex reality that men and women are re-caught in a network of millennial cultural determinations of such intricate nature renders it practically unanalyzable. It is impossible to talk of woman or man without the ideological implications of multiple representations, images, reflections, myths and identifications. It transforms, deforms and alters each person's imaginary order in advance. Therefore, any conceptualization is rendered null and void. The against feminist decision not to search for a woman's identity but to speculate about a woman's discourse by way of the negative relates to the deconstruction of the existing models of discourse. Looking for woman through the absence and negative creates the anti-feminist feminist space for total transformation of the consciousness and symbolic order.

NOTES

1. Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Feminism: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn R Warhol Diane Price Herndle (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 334-47.
2. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," *Of Grammatology*.

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Translation as a Site of Politics: Missionary Discourses in the Late 18th Century and Early 19th Century

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Translation is not a naïve and unproblematic activity involving linguistic transfer from a source language to a target language through the neutral mediation of the translator, for such a view involves simplistic and rather naïve assumptions about reality and representation. An act of translation involves the following factors—structures of the source language and the target language, agency of translator, nature (stable/unstable) of the 'text' to be translated.

By the structure of the language I do not just mean the semantic, syntactic, lexical and phonetic structure of the language. They are of course very important in the act of translation, but there is much more to the structure of the language than these grammatical, lexical and semantic categories. Language structures and is, in turn, structured by a particular universe and it delimits the structure of thoughts as well. It is always underlaid by a particular metaphysical structure. No two languages inhabit identical universes. So the question then is whether a linguistic product grown out of a certain metaphysical structure can be made to inhabit another linguistic universe underlaid by a different metaphysical structure. An act of translation from a source language to a target language implies adaptation, a kind of fitting into of the categories and modes of thought of the source language/culture to those of the target language/culture.

Translation is, therefore, always an act of epistemic violence; it is always a misrepresentation. There is the problem of distance between two linguistic universes/cultures, the source linguistic universe/culture and the target linguistic universe/ cul-

ture. The greater the distance between the two linguistic universes/cultures, the greater the violence in translation; the lesser the distance between the two linguistic universes/cultures, the lesser the violence in translation. In translation, there is always some loss in the original in the act of transfer on the one hand, on the other there is always something extra or supplementary which the target language brings to it.

Translation also sets up a hierarchy between languages. Of the two languages, the source and the target languages, both of them cannot be normative. Either of the two has to be the norm, depending on which one a translator chooses as the norm; the other then becomes deviant or non-normative. Thus a hierarchy between the two languages is set up as norm/deviant. The normative one is always perceived to possess more value than the deviant one does. The binary opposition of self/other constitutes the discourse of translation.

The second important aspect of translation is the agency of the translator. Is the agent neutral and objective; is he/she just a catalyst who brings about the transformation without affecting it? In other words, is she/he capable of possessing what Keats calls negative capability, of effacing his own self and surrendering to the text to be translated? If she/he is capable of doing so, will such a view not amount to the denial or effacement of subjectivity on the part of the translator which he/she brings to bear upon translation.

Then what about the text to be translated? Is the text a transparent, unified and coherent whole which yields itself to the translator who can access it and re-present in translation. Poststructuralists have deconstructed the notion of the text as a transparent and coherent object. Citing Derrida in this regard, Tejaswini Niranjana comments: "Derrida's critique of representation, for example, allows us to question the notion of representation [translation] and therefore the very notion of an origin or an original that needs to be re-presented. Derrida would argue that the 'origin' is itself dispersed, its 'identity' undecidable. A representation thus does not re-present an 'original'; rather, it re-presents that which is always already represented. (9)

So a translation is always translation of a translation. When the text/object in question is unstable in itself, or is not present to itself, then in such a case, re-presentation becomes extremely problematic.

The purpose of the foregoing discussion is to problematize the notion of translation in order to reveal its ideological underpinnings. Translation is always of the world and in the world. It is not just a linguistic activity done in isolation, but it is a cultural activity which is informed by the larger assumptions about life, language, meaning and society. As an ideological product, translation is a tool/means of knowledge/power and it has always been used as such to reinforce the asymmetrical relation between languages and thus sustain and reinforce the hierarchy of power. Thus, the issues of why a text is translated, what gets translated, who does the translation and for whom assume significance.

In the present paper I propose to examine how the translation activities undertaken by the missionaries in the last quarter of the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries contributed to the emergence and construction of the Oriental discourse. The British had used translation as a site of interpellation of the colonized and in this the missionaries had a significant role to play in this enterprise. During the initial years of their rule in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the British undertook the activity of translation on a large scale, translating ancient Sanskrit classics, religious scriptures and commentaries. The volume of translation having taken place from 'subject' languages into 'master' language during this period surprises one. There is also translation from 'master' language into 'subject' (vernacular) languages, though the former far outweighs the latter. This intense activity of translation was not undertaken as a disinterested and scholarly exercise. The whole enterprise was aimed at aiding and perpetuating the subjection of the colonized people by creating and constructing an image of the colonized as the 'other' with all its negative connotations. Commenting on the role of translation in the formation of the Oriental discourse, Tejaswini Niranjana claims that "influential translations (from Sanskrit and Persian into English in the eighteenth century, for example) interpolated

colonial subjects, legitimizing or authorizing certain versions of the Oriental, versions that then came to acquire the status of 'truths' even in the countries in which the 'original' works were produced." (33)

Let us now take a look at the translation activity as it was undertaken by the missionaries in the last quarter of the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries. There have been two main streams of translators—the missionaries and the colonial administrators. Though the motives behind the translations by the two groups were manifestly different which saw their relationship fluctuate between one of confrontation to that of collaboration, their assumptions about Indians bore a remarkable similarity. Both the missionaries and the colonial administrators were convinced about the superiority of their religion and civilization vis-à-vis those of Indians. According to them, Indians were an inferior, uncivilized, immoral, depraved and indolent people; they were people incapable of managing their own affairs and left to their own, they could have never managed to come out of the slothful, slovenly and immoral lives that they had led. Hence the need for intervention by the British. Hence the notion of the civilizing mission. Thus they maintained the illusion that they had come to India not for their own sake, not to satisfy their mercenary greed or to convert people to Christianity, but for the sake of the natives, for their uplift and well being. Thus a profoundly exploitative regime was made to appear benign and benevolent.

Though the missionaries had come to India much before the East India Company did, their activities intensified only in the last quarter of the 18th century with the East India Company assuming control of large parts of India. They had come here with the express intention of spreading the message of the Bible and proselytizing the natives. They considered the natives to be pagan, uncivilized and barbaric. They considered it their bounden duty to save the souls of the heathen and pagan people and to win them over to the fold of Christianity.

In order to convert people to Christianity, the missionaries adopted two-pronged approach. On the one hand, they undertook to translate the Bible into vernacular languages. In order to reach

the maximum number of people and to spread the teachings and message of Christ among them, they felt that it was imperative that the Bible was translated into vernacular languages. On the other hand, they undertook to translate the religious scriptures of the natives into English to know their religions so as to point out the fallacies, superstitions and retrogressive elements inherent in their religions. By this stratagem, they hoped to persuade and convince the natives of the inferiority of their own religions and to make them give up their religions and convert to Christianity.

But here they were faced with peculiar problems of which they found or rather created solutions which were to influence and shape the course of the Indian history to a remarkable extent. First, when faced with the immense plurality, complexity and composite nature of the Indian society, they reacted to it by perceiving Hindus and Muslims as two separate peoples, each having its own culture, tradition and religion. Thus they sought to create a divide on the basis of religion, a divide which did not exist at that time. Having come from a monolithic culture/religion, the missionaries were unable to understand and appreciate the plural and composite nature of the Indian society. They sought to understand and master it by imposing their own 'alien' perception. But this 'misperception' was to prove remarkably precocious as the Indian society was later to be fragmented mainly into two parts on communal basis.

Further, the missionaries perceived these communities—Hindus and Muslims—to possess their own separate languages. So Sanskrit as the language of learning and various vernaculars as spoken languages came to be associated with the Hindus and Persian and Urdu with the Muslims. Since their target of conversion was Hindus who were far more numerous than Muslims and were perceived to be more amenable to conversion, they focussed their attention more on Sanskrit and vernacular languages. But once again they were faced with a peculiar problem here. Most of these vernacular languages existed as spoken dialects and they were marked by wide variety and variation. Even where they existed in written forms, they had wide variety and variation. In almost all cases there were no fixed scripts and rules of

spelling and grammar. They were not yet codified, fixed and standardized. So, in order to translate the Bible into vernacular languages and to translate the religious texts and lore from vernacular languages into English or other European languages, they had to identify, classify, codify and standardize these languages. So together with translations, we witness preparation of grammars and dictionaries by the missionaries. This prompted the missionaries to undertake philological research.

Early in the 19th century, the first attempt at a systematic survey of the languages of India was made by William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward, the famous Serampore missionaries. Carey's main interest was to bring out the Lord's Prayer in different languages, and he made the beginning in 1801 with his translation of the New Testament in Bengali. Like several others who preceded him, he first misled himself by certain assumptions, and imagined that Tamil, Kanarese, Telugu, Gujarati, Oriya, Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi and Hindustani, "comprised nearly all the collateral branches springing from the Sanskrit language, and that all the rest were varieties of the Hindi, and some of them, indeed little better than jargons capable of conveying ideas" (Ram Gopal, 14). In 1816, he corrected himself after laborious inquiries, and gave a fairly comprehensive and correct idea of Indian languages in his report which was signed by Marshman and Ward as well. "We have ascertained that there are more than twenty languages of nearly the same words and all equally related to the common parent, the Sanskrit, but each possessing a distinct set of terminations, and, therefore, having equal claims to the title of distinct cognate languages" (Ram Gopal, 14).

Another important aspect while translating religious texts and lore from vernacular languages was that most of these texts and lore circulated among the people in the oral form and as such there were different versions of the same text marked by wide variety. So, in order to translate them, the missionaries had to first prepare the 'authentic' and standard versions and this collation and editing of the texts was often done using the principle of coherence, consistency and unity.

Together with William Carey, William Ward and Joshua Marshman, another important missionary was John Chamberlain who joined the Serampore Mission in 1803 which gave impetus to the translation, composition and propagation of an extensive missionary literature in Hindi. Within a year of arrival, Chamberlain had picked up enough Hindi to compose the first tracts written in the Nagari script. In a letter to Dr. Ryland, Principal of the Bristol Academy, he set forth his views on language and the policy to be followed by the missionaries: "The language called by Europeans 'Hindoost'hanee' and the language of the Hindus are diverse. The latter is 'Hinduwee.' The Hindoost'hanee which is spoken by the Musalmans is a compound of Hinduwee, Persic and Arabic; it is much spoken as a popular tongue, and is used in all civil and military proceedings; but I suspect that if we would do good to the major part of the Hindoos, we must have the Scriptures in their own vernacular language, and we must preach to them in that language too." (Vedalankar, 94)

The decision to view Hindi as purely Hindu was guided by the missionary perception of the two religions as mutually exclusive. Further, the decision to limit the use of the Nagari script to address the Hindus alone was obviously ideologically determined. The missionaries had henceforth a clear-cut policy. The "Memoirs of the Translations" (1816) addressed to the Baptist Missionary Society was definitive in its opinion: "The Divanagaree is familiar to most of those who can read; and as this alphabet is perfectly complete while some of the local alphabets are greatly deficient, it seems desirable to extend the Devanagaree as widely as possible. It would greatly facilitate the progress of knowledge if it could have that extension given to it in India which the Roman alphabet has obtained in Europe." (Vedalankar, 96)

Chamberlain translated the New Testament into Hindi in April 1818. His translation was considered so successful that the Serampore brethren decided to print his version rather than their own former effort.

Another important activity that the missionaries undertook was tract writing. J.T. Thompson who was stationed in Delhi

from 1817 until his death in 1850 wrote many tracts in Hindi. 25 tracts were listed in the Periodical Accounts of Serampore of 1831. In 1823 the Calcutta Tract and Book Society was set up. Further Hindi tracts were penned by M.T. Adam, who also compiled a Hindi dictionary (1829) and Hindi Grammar (1827) as well as few school textbooks. The Banaras Tract Society was established in 1827. It was merged with the Agra Tract Society which was set up in 1848. In 1858, it was shifted to Allahabad which had become the seat of the government of the North Western Provinces and it was named the North India Tract and Book Society. It alone printed 1,78,350 copies of tracts till 1868. The American Presbyterian Mission printed 3,50,700 copies of Hindi tracts and books. The Bombay and Ludhiana presses as also the one in Tirhut, were also engaged in publishing Hindi tracts. Most of these tracts were translations from English and Sanskrit. Since they are exclusively addressed to Hindus, and it is the Hindu religion which has to be discussed in order to persuade the readership to ultimately discard it, only expressly Hindu terminology is used.

The missionaries also felt that some amount of modern consciousness was needed among the people to make the teachings of Christianity acceptable to them. This spread of modern consciousness could have been best achieved through education. So they focussed on education and on setting up of schools and colleges to achieve this purpose. As Laird points out: "The missionaries emphasized that a sound education must start with teaching the pupils effectively to read and write their mother tongue . . . and with an introduction to ethical values and to modern knowledge, as related to conditions of life and work in contemporary Bengal." (77-78)

The Baptist missionaries who settled in the Danish enclave of Serampore in 1800 were more interested in religious dissemination though they emphasized the role of native language and culture in education. They were very active during 1800-23 to "save the souls" of the natives through Christianity and Western knowledge. They were also clear that this objective would be achieved best through vernacular languages. Since no textbooks

in vernacular languages existed at that time, they undertook to translate textbooks from English. Their interest in vernacular languages and the selection of texts to be translated and taught was governed by the moral imperative of converting people to Christianity. The focus of translation and teaching was always on 'ethical values' associated with Christianity.

The clearly defined task of the Church Missionary Society which commenced in Calcutta immediately after the revision of the Charter of 1813 was the establishment of schools and preparation of textbooks in Hindi and other regional languages. The spread of the missions thus meant the establishment and spread of presses and schools. There were establishments in Agra in 1813, Meerut in 1815, Banaras in 1817, Chunar in 1815, Gorakhpur in 1823, Azamgarh and Jaunpur in 1831. Jay Narayan Ghosal, a native of Calcutta, was so impressed by the work of the missionaries that in 1818 he financed a school at Banaras which, though named after him, was run by the missionaries. Hindi, Sanskrit, English, Chemistry and Arabic were taught here.

In the second quarter of the 19th century, Tract and School Book Societies were busy supplying books and tracts impregnated with religious elements. The Calcutta Book Society was formed on 1 July 1817. It was a voluntary association for promoting education among the common people. Six departments—Bengali, Hindustani (later renamed Hindi), Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and English—were established. The decision was to print the most elementary schoolbooks to start with. Though in the beginning more attention was paid to the production of Bengali textbooks, Hindi gained in importance as well. The texts thus produced were used not only in Bihar, but also in Banaras and the North Western Provinces, prior to the formation of the Banaras and Agra School Book Societies. The Madras School Book Society was formed in 1820, in the same year as the Bombay Book Society under the presidentship of Monstuart Elphinston. Schoolbooks were sent to both these societies from Calcutta for translation in the regional languages. Later a set of schoolbooks in Hindi was sent to the Collector and similar responsible officers in Banaras, Allahabad, Kanpur, Agra and Delhi.

There was an obvious dearth of good schoolbooks. It was at this time that the Ram Saran Das Series of Vernacular texts was published and extensively circulated. As many as 78 books lithographed in 1851 are listed by Vedalankar. The list comprises elementary primers, arithmetical tables, history of India, geography, mathematics, biography, hygiene, letter-writing, painting drawing and moral instruction. They consisted of translations from English school texts. The policy, however, was not simply to translate, but to set the texts in an Indian context. The texts were written by missionaries but their work was corrected by native speakers. The principal translators were Srilal, Superintendent of the Central School in Kanpur, and Bansidhar and M.T. Adams. Srilal and Bansidhar obviously played a prominent role in the correction of the texts produced.

To what extent these translation activities paid off in terms of proselytizing people is debatable. Despite all the efforts on the part of the missionaries, proselytizing never took place on a large scale. On the other, it aroused the hostility of the people and proselytizing was actively resisted. In the last quarter of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, even the Company officials viewed the activities of the missionaries with suspicion. They feared that the hostility and alienation of the natives aroused by their activities would harm their trade and commerce. In fact they sought to curb the activities of the missionaries. On the other, the missionaries sought to defend and justify their activities by putting forth the argument that modern education and conversion of natives to Christianity would inculcate in them a taste for modern things and this would ultimately help the British trade and commerce. William Ward in his preface to his three-volume *A View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos* commented: "But let Hindoost'han receive that higher civilization she needs, that cultivation of which she is so capable; let European literature be transfused into all her languages, and then the ocean, from the ports of Britain to India, will be covered with our merchant vessels; and from the centre of India moral culture and science will be extended all over Asia, to the Burman empire and Siam, to China, with all her millions, to Persia, and even to Arabia. (Niranjana, 21)

Ward's views of India and the state of its civilization are representative of the colonial mindset. It is remarkable to note that this view of Hindus was created and shared not only by the missionaries, but also by the Evangelicals, Anglicists, Colonial Administrators and Orientalists all alike. It was this notion of civilizing mission that provided legitimacy to the British Empire on the one hand and the missionary activities on the other.

The missionaries did not meet with much success in their proselytizing activities, but they succeeded immensely as translators, linguists and educators in the formation of the Oriental discourse. Orientalism is a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate what is manifestly different. The missionaries too undertook the activity of translation with an intention to understand, control and manipulate the natives of India. The missionaries came to own knowledge about the Orient through translation and this knowledge produced power and authority. Edward Said in his *Orientalism* decodes the power relationship between the Occident and the Orient to analyze how the West manipulates knowledge of and for the Orient and to elaborate how the East is influenced and existed in this knowledge. In the case of the missionaries too, we see how they manipulated knowledge of and for India and how India is influenced and existed in this knowledge. The knowledge of the missionaries appropriated "the power to represent the Oriental [Indian] to translate and explain his (and her) thoughts and acts not only to Europeans and Americans but also to Orientals [Indians] themselves" (Niranjana, 11).

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Depiction of Sex and Violence in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya

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Kamala Markandaya, who passed away recently, was a pioneer in the depiction of women's issues. The present essay argues that she was modern in her approach towards love and sex. She holds that sex should not be construed a taboo. It is as old as man. Violence is also a part of creation. Nothing has been created without violence. Creation presupposes the destruction of something. Though Siva is the God of destruction, destruction is regarded as a necessary prelude to generation and construction. Nothing can be made out of nothing, and creation is the process of rebuilding. Thus Siva is also a creator. In his image as a God of creation, Siva is represented by the *linga* or phallus; in a number of *linga* shrines in India the principal idol is a phallus-shaped stone supported on a round base. The base and the phallus combined symbolize the divine sex act believed necessary to sustain the universe.

Sex and violence are part of grim reality of human existence. To deny its existence is the denying of the self. Self-denial is the greatest crime man commits against him. There is another misleading prevailing thought among the intellectuals that sex and violence are imported from the western culture. Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra* is much older than any western classic on sex. Violence does not have any geographical demarcation like sex. This study holds the view that literature should be studied without any prejudice and fear. Sex and violence are no more the monopoly of male writers. Age-old prejudice against women should be lifted up and woman is no more a second sex. She is as vital, as important as her male counterpart in sexual matters. She can be

more violent even than man. Indian scriptures are replete with that. These are the two primary and most primitive instincts which man may overlook but cannot ignore. Literature, in fact any great literature, directly or indirectly rests on these two themes.

Markandaya does not hesitate to depict sex or violence in her novels. She appears to grow progressively bolder and more straightforward in her descriptions of sexual intimacy in almost all her novels so that each episode grows more graphic and more detailed. From the first to the last novel, we find a remarkable increase in emphasis on love, courtship, marriage, sex and violence.

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, violence is not caused due to exertion of force released from the cultural distinction of East and West, but due to the vagaries of nature. Nature in the form of flood, famine and drought causes violence. The farmers not only become paupers but also are forced to change their profession from cultivation to labor. Nathan changed his profession from farming to stone crusher. This is, in fact, the true picture of the community of cultivators who constitute the backbone of India's socio-economic life. Tannery in the name of urbanization causes more violence. It snatches the livelihood of the poor farmers. And sex becomes a means of livelihood for one's existence. Sex becomes more powerful. When violence kills life, sex gives life. In this novel Markandaya emphasizes the three forms of sex: procreation, pleasure and power. Procreation for Rukmani is a kind of religious act. Hence sex becomes a religion for her. It is pleasure for Kunthi. Pleasure is, however, defined primarily from a male rather than from a female point of view. Women are portrayed as voluptuous creatures that are fair game for the more predatory male prey upon another. In the book *Stritantra* women are portrayed as "an instrument for man's passion and a vessel for his seed" (Vatsyayan, 81-84). Kunthi uses her body to get sexual pleasure whereas Ira goes for prostitution for her survival, her existence. So it is a power for Ira. Sex becomes the only means for her existence on this earth.

There is explicit description of sex in *A Handful of Rice*. Sex

is elaborated between married couples. Markandaya describes in delightful subtlety, the customs, traditions that exist in India in matters regarding courtship and romance. A strict watch was kept on the girls. Women had information on girls who came of age and boys looking for brides to get arranged marriages. The effect of Ravi and Nalini's courtship on the reader is richly appealing. *A Handful of Rice* not only deals with marital sex, it also deals with the sex in old age. Jayamma, the mother-in-law of Ravi, does not grudge or throw Ravi out of the house when Ravi has sex with her in the absence of Nalini. Jayamma rather feels contented after having sex with a virile young man after years of being trapped in a dissatisfying marriage with a placid, unexciting husband.

Sex is described in different situation and in different context. Social injustice and exploitation make Ravi to become violent. He sees the sincere hard-working Apu who is treated by his customers with low price whereas the market price is multiplied eight times for the same work when it is sold there. Economic inequalities, unemployment and poverty bring in violence. Ravi rebels against such economic inequalities. He knows that the rich belong to the same class the world over. It is the economic stability that made the rich to use the commanding tone. Frustrated Ravi beats his wife Nalini like Jhabvala's *The Householder* (1960), where Prem married Indu and, with increasing responsibility, he becomes frustrated and expresses his anger at Indu.

In *The Coffer Dams*, Markandaya concentrates on sex between Helen and Bashiam. While Clinton-Helen relationship is characterized by mere form and without the least sustaining warmth, Helen's love for Bashiam originates from her sense of pity, of adventures, and his closeness to nature, but at the same time Helen does not love her husband less. Clinton's attention for the Dam makes him neglect not only the "Dream saga of a hapless peasantry" but also Helen who sympathizes with the tribesman. She likes the tribe because she thinks that the tribes are close to nature so they are more human, their conversation more natural and therefore are more attractive than their urbanized counterparts. There is another reason why Helen inclines

towards Bashiam: there is much age difference between Helen and Clinton and naturally Helen finds in Bashiam a friend, more agile and more understanding than Clinton. He devotes much more time for Helen than her husband.

Sex, Markandaya would like us to believe through her novels, must ensure freedom. It is a freedom to be some thing—it is another rainbow that lifts our hearts. Violence is mostly caused by man-made machine that tries to uproot and wipe out nature and sever all connections between man and nature. Of course, nature retaliates in the form of famine, flood and drought; it ultimately causes untold sufferings to the farmers and peasants. In both *The Coffer Dams* and *Pleasure City,* violence is caused by man-made machines, which uproot the native settlers of the place and leave them refugees in their own land. In *The Coffer Dams*, the Dam is constructed for the advancement of the civilization and benefit of the people; nonetheless it uproots the tribal settlers and turns them into homeless nomads. In *Pleasure City* the holiday resort on the pleasure complex snatches away the age-old occupation of the villagers as fishermen. The young ones, attracted by the new change leave the profession of their forefathers and turn out to be half-paid, ill-paid labourers. The tannery in *Nectar in a Sieve* ultimately ruins Rukmani and her family. Friends become foes, relations become strangers, wife betrays husband and husband betrays wife. The people who lived in amity, trust, are filled with jealousy and mistrust. This violence is much more dangerous than the violence created by war or personal animosity, leading to riot and death.

In *Some Inner Fury, The Nowhere Man* and *The Golden Honeycomb*, Markandaya elaborates the sexual relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Happy sexual relationship very often remains unfulfilled by political, racial and communal violence. *Some Inner Fury* centers on facts and incidents associated with national movements aroused for India's freedom. Although non-violence is the slogan given by Mahatma Gandhi to achieve freedom, violence is envisaged by a group of leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Subash Bose and other extremists at the national level to achieve the

goal. "Give me Blood; I will give you freedom" of Subash Bose exhibits violence. All foreign goods were banned and set on fire publicly. The power politics, racial prejudice and alienation cause violence. Mira-Richard relationship is torn because of the racial conflicts.

E.M. Forster in *A Passage to India* (1924) shows that for years there could be no friendship between the best of Indians and the best of Europeans until the English left India. Markandaya dramatizes the individual crisis in the backdrop of India's freedom movement. Sex does not remain silent during the political turmoil. Tagore has shown it in his novel *Ghare Baire* (*The Home and the World*, 1916), where Sandeep, new satanic nationalist leader, sweeps Bimala into his fold, takes her out of home into the world. This had been her husband Nikhilesh's dearest desire. Only it is fulfilled in contrary ways. Bimala and Sandeep develop weakness for each other, which verges on extra-marital relationship. Kamala Markandaya shows the pre-marital sex between Mira and Richard, the Indian and the European. They become victims of the climate and the violence of the moment. Govind is a helpless lover who feels intensely for his beloved Premala, but could not express it due to the social convention. Kit-Premala relation is not healthy but at the same time Premala would never desert her husband for Govind. Divorce is never an easy alternative and so to say is rare in India in the forties—the period in which the novel is set. Premala feels lonely. In Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* (1968), Sindhi Oberoi suffers from rootlessness and loneliness. He does not belong to any country or culture like Srinivas in *The Nowhere Man*. Srinivas, after long stay in London does not find any strong support in moments of extreme despair. Rather he is victimized there by racial violence.

While *Some Inner Fury* is about political violence *The Nowhere Man* is about communal violence arising out of racial discrimination between 'White' and 'Black'. Kamala Markandaya delineates extra-marital sex of Srinivas. After the death of his wife, Srinivas becomes lonely and isolated, feels helpless due to his suffering from leprosy. His extra-marital sex with Mrs. Pickering gives him a source of life. Sex becomes a power for

his existence; it is a need. But sex becomes pleasure for Bawajirao III in *The Golden Honeycomb*.

The sexual activities were defined in terms of procreation in the ancient Indian literature. However, the new social and spiritual tensions have changed our attitude towards sex. It no more reminds us of the temples of Khajuraho where Gods and Goddesses ravage each other celebrating the indivisibility of being through conjugation. It, rather, establishes their identity only to remind men and women that they are one. *The Golden Honeycomb* speaks of political violence, like *Some Inner Fury*, which also relies on a political context. Rabi desires to face the change instead of submitting like his father. His fulfilment lies in the mission of social upliftment and he begins his irrigation project. He experiences sex with a number of girls like his father but sex is a pleasure for Bawajirao III whereas it works as a power for Rabi. Sex releases his mental tension from the political yoke at that time. Rabi's sexual relations with Jaya inspire him and give him a freedom of mind. It exhilarates him to carry on his mission, which is much different from her father.

Markandaya has not accepted sex as an alienated factor. In her novels, sex does not alienate men and women. It liberates them. Valmiki in *Possession* experiences sex with three women. The novel is based on sexual politics and it shows Valmiki's determination not to be involved in the sexual politics. Valmiki wants freedom, freedom from the bondage, freedom to pursue his own identity. Every man, Lawrence insisted, must be an artist in life, must create his own moral form. The art of living is harder than the art of writing. Valmiki is trying, like the characters of Lawrence, to find out through his sexual experiences to the mysterious darkness and otherness no less than the light of, to quote Aldous Huxley, "Reason of ego . . . we are then together into a satisfactory pattern; his pattern, not somebody else's pattern" (Huxley xviii).

Two Virgins is a novel of education and the main characters are the two sisters Saroja and Lalitha. The novel shows how sex can help in educating the adolescent girls. Male-dominated society rarely allows a woman to live in peace without a share of

pound of flesh of her, by hook or by crook. Sex education can certainly make a teenager girl better equipped to withstand the onslaught of males. As has been shown in this novel Lalitha the elder sister becomes a victim to the lure of Gupta, the film Director. But Saroja the younger one gets maturity by seeing the world—the helpless predicament of her sister. In this hour her guru Manikkam's wife, who teaches her nuances of sex and sexual act, sometimes does it by exhibition, sometimes by experiments with her. She gains experiences, not directly but by listening, learning and observing from her guru and remains a virgin. But the title of the novel is *Two Virgins*, which has confused the critics. Does Lalitha remain a virgin after her bitter experiences? Does Saroja remain a virgin after such knowledge? What Eliot would say, 'What Forgiveness after such knowledge?' Markandaya would not like her readers to accept the concept of virginity as hailed by the common people: A woman must not have sex with a man before marriage; a married woman should have sex with her husband. This male- made notion of virginity or chastity is belied when one goes through the pages of the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*. Five sacred women as hailed by Indians were not virgin or chaste as per this norm. All of them had at least more than one husband; they had sex with more than one man. Nevertheless, they are upheld as sacred and pious virtuous virgins. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* would like us to believe that chastity lies in being sincere to the moment one lives in, and to be honest to oneself is the greatest sign of virginity. Hester Pryne remains a virtuous character in spite of her adultery. She had the courage to go out publicly with the mark 'A'. With all the experiences, Saroja and Lalitha remain virgin. Lalitha fails to comprehend this, as she never learns to live her own self and ultimately gets lost in the wilderness. Saroja returns home, a matured woman, giving a wry smile to Chingleput: "She knew too much." (250) To read *Two Virgins* as a story of two virgins will be a simplistic reading without any understanding.

Pre-Independence Indian novels rarely depict the pre-marital sex. The novels written after Independence try to depict pre-marital sex in small doses, with much trepidation and less thrill

in heart. After the 60s the novelists have come out of their self-deluded world to write about the reality they experience directly or indirectly. Markandaya has tried to establish her identity as a woman writer and depicted in her novels the sexual experiences of her characters that are mostly female characters. It establishes her authenticity and sincerity. Being a woman she has better access to the emotions of another woman than her counterpart male novelists. Markandaya, of course, is not as bold as Erica Jong or Alice Walker. She need not be. Indian context is different from American or European context. Nevertheless, in her novels existing cultural stereotypes are discarded in favour of the woman's desire, instincts and feelings.

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Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*: A Postcolonial Text

A.K. MUKHERJEE

Postcolonial literature is a literature of protest against colonisation in any form. More so, it is a protest against the language used by the coloniser as a tool for their convenience. Indian and African writers writing in English use the language of the erstwhile coloniser, at the same time raise their voices against the colonisers that ruled their country. In this sense Indian and African writers have somewhat different and difficult duty to discharge. They are concerned with multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-racial problems that beset them.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is an interesting postcolonial text. I am aware of the connotation of the word text. Every text as held by the Post-Structuralists, is a pretext of another text. No text is a final say on anything. What is the text of *The God of Small Things*: adultery? exploitation of the untouchable by the upper class? the consequences of the extra-marital relationship? All these, and there may be many more. Every new reading will be a new experience for the readers, and new meanings, new themes will emerge. What is important is the treatment of the theme. It is a postcolonial text in its treatment of the theme—in its use of the language.

What is the ambience of the novel? A Syrian Christian community of Ayemenem, somewhere in Kerala, surrounded by Paravans, the untouchables who are born to serve the upper class people. Although the story takes place after Independence there is colonial hangover in the air: "The trouble with this theory (communism) was that in Kerala the Syrian Christians were, by and large, the wealthy, estate-owning (pickle factory-running) feudal lords, for whom communism represented a faith worse

than death. They had always voted for the Congress party." (66) They were attended by the Paravans like Velutha and his father Vellya Paapan. Papachi's family was another British Empire in its miniature form that ruled over the Paravans in Ayemenem. Papachi had been an Imperial Entomologist at the Pusa Institute. After independence his designation was changed from Imperial Entomologist to Joint Director Entomology. Chacko, the son of Papachi told the two children about the family: "though he hated to admit it, they were all Anglophiles." (52) Chacko, educated in Oxford, married an English girl, divorced, had brought all the cultures of the Empire. While going to receive Margaret Kochamma, the ex-wife of Chacko, married to Joe after Chacko was without any employment in England and his only daughter Sophie Mol, the family was held up by a march by the members of a trade union, led by their leader K.N.M. Pillai, Baby Kochamma had "the fear of being dispossessed." (70)

This fear reached its climax and unsettled the family when Amu, the mother of Rahel and Esthappen, a divorcee developed sexual relationship with Velutha, the God of Small Things. "The Heart of Darkness tiptoed into the Dark of Heartness." (306) They broke all the rules of the Ayemenem house: "they broke the Love Laws that lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much." (328) The same law was broken by Rahel and Esthappen when they were "Not old. Not young. But a viable-diable age." (327) Velutha leaves a 'hole' in the "Universe through which darkness poured like liquid tar." (191) Man-made stratification and classification of society according to economic and political power withers away before an emotional response. Amu and Velutha stood "skin to skin" on that emotional plane which is another leveller like death. The novelist gives a vivid picture of their deepest touch "Her brownness against his blackness. Her softness against his hardness. Her nut-brown breast (that would not support a toothbrush) against his ebony chest. She smelled the river on him. His particular paravan smell that so disgusted Baby Kochamma. Amu put out her tongue and tasted it, in the hollow of his throat, on the lobe of his ear." (335) Monolith of colonization falls down like a house of playing cards

before the colonizer and the colonized are, to quote from D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, "knitted into one fecund nucleus of the fluid darkness." (447)

What really marks out this novel from other novels written in English by her contemporaries is its use of English language. The novel is a complete break, a departure from the Queen's English. In her interview with Alix Wibun Roy says, "For me the language is a skin on my thought as I was thinking of a way of telling it." (*The Week*, 46) And the skin is certainly not white skin, but a coloured one. The language plays a vital role to shape the significance of a story.

Words grow in significance when they are used in the appropriate context. Words are chiselled, chosen and also must come as automatically as leaves to a tree. Let us see how the past is remembered by Rahel and the words used by the novelist: "In those early amorphous years when memory had only just begun, when life was full of Beginnings and no Ends, and Everything was For Ever, Esthappen and Rahel thought themselves together as Me, separately, individually as We or Us." (2)

The above-quoted paragraph from the novel shows Roy's boldness in using the English language as our own language. She follows her own rules of syntax. The word 'amorphous' lends a different significance to the context. The past is not a straight line. The use of capitals within sentences is a break from the traditional as well as modem grammatical rules. But the capitals used are not without significance: Rahel and Esthappen together as 'Me' or 'We' or 'Us'. Absolutely a unique way of registering one's identity as a different nation using the language of the erstwhile ruler or colonizer. This is what a nation writes, the Empire looks back in askance.

Rahel and Esthappen are twins. Roy uses the words 'two egg-twins', "dizygotic." Sometimes Roy omits any punctuation mark in a sentence just to get the effects of the situation or the context. A description of a railway platform brings to the readers the real picture of it: "Scurrying hurrying buying selling luggage trundling porter paying children shitting people spitting coming going lugging bargaining reservation-checking." (300) It is a

very novel way of describing a busy platform that transports the readers to the station straight and they can feel its activity. It is not a passive description, rather an active one. Our verbal descriptions are often without pauses and rarely do we pay attention to the punctuation mark. The novelist is trying to capture that spirit and in this way the people of an independent nation speak a language which is not their own, although it has assimilated itself with their own culture.

A great writer knows how to be the master of his or her own words. This is possible only with one's native tongue. English cannot be our own native tongue. But Indians have belied the hopes of Macaulay and Kent, twisted the English language to their own needs. It is their own language. They can play with it as children play with coloured glass beads. This adroitness is proven by the use of similes and metaphors. Roy's similes and metaphors create a different ambience. The novelist describes the pale face of dead Sophie Mol: "Her face was pale and wrinkled as a dhobi's thumb from being in water for too long." (4) Mammachi's tears, after Sophie's death, "trickled down from behind them and trembled along her jaw like raindrops on the edge of a roof (5). How does Esthappen look at Ayemenem after long 27 years: "He began to look wiser than he really was. Like a fisherman in a city. With sea secrets in him." (13) What an image of a man battered, bitten several times by life's experiences.

Chacko explains the concept of history to Rahel and Esthappen: "the history was like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside . . . to understand history we have to go inside and listen to what they're saying. And look at the books and the pictures on the wall. And smell the smells." (52) And the "History House" is the house of Kari Saipu's house: "The Black Sahib 'gone native' who spoke Malayalam and wore mundus. Ayemenem's own Kurtz." (52)

The English landed on the shore of Kerala for rubber plantation, and in the process established a colony. In their interaction with the natives, some of them who were educated converted themselves to Christianity, or were considered upper class. That upper class was educated, and in their own way they exploited

the lower class people, the Paravans. Independence only brought about a change in the colour of their skin. Two classes remained: exploiter and exploited, more dangerous than the colonizer. It is the worst form of colonization. The twins remember Chacko explaining to them their helplessness to go back to the History House: "But we can't go in, . . . because we've been locked out. And when we look in through the windows all we see are shadows. And when we try and listen, all we hear is a whispering. And so we cannot understand the whispering because our minds have been invaded by a war. A war that we have won and lost. The very worst sort of war. A war that captures dreams, redreams them. A war that has made us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves." (53) Chacko explains to the children the meaning of the word "Despise": "to look down upon; to view with contempt; to scorn or disdain." (53) Man without any history to fall back upon will certainly hate himself. It is a question of inferiority complex when man, without having any faith in him, admires, adores the conqueror. Most of the Indians, even highly educated, follow the West as if they are mere shadows without any substance.

Pappachi-Mammachi house is the last bastion of the Empire. Though the empire has left the country, they have left such bastions who still hold on to the flag of the empire, at least in their thoughts. Arundhati Roy is aware of that and her novel shows the direct confrontation between the people who still cling to the empire in their thoughts, gestures, postures and the native, uneducated, unaware masses. The irony is that "History House" is used as a rendezvous by Amu and Velutha for their love-making. Coloniser and the colonized meet and experience, to quote Lawrence, "bliss." (*The Rainbow*, 447) Once upon a time the same house used the back verandah to negotiate its terms and collect its dues. Defaulters were sure to meet with dire consequences. (199) Another example of her skill is use of simile when Margaret Kochamma found Joe a better person than Chacko to fall in line: "Margaret Kochamma found herself drawn towards him like a plant in a darkroom towards a wedge of light."

Coining new words, breaking up single words into separate parts and joining two or three separate words into one are some of the devices used by the novelist, not only to register, but at the same time assert the voice of a nation and her people against the empire or any form of imperialism. It is not the empire that writes back, it is the nation that writes to the center, and the language is born of authenticity. The words 'what is it' are condensed into 'whatisit', 'what happened' as 'whathappened'; 'thunder darkness' as 'thunderdarkness'. Sometimes one word is separated by two or three words. 'Later' is spelt as 'lay Ter', 'Nevertheless' as 'Never The Less'; 'Locustandi' as 'Locus Stand I'. It is not to be construed that Arundhati Roy wants to debunk or distort or even subvert a language enriched with beautiful literature, rather she seems to be very critical over some of the Indians who go ga ga over the English language and try to be more natives than the native English speakers.

Whether the novel is "a history lesson for the future offenders" (336) or not, that posterity will decide. It is a superb work of the writer who has bent the English language of the empire to her needs—a postcolonial dialect Indian writing in English. The dream of Raja Rao has come true. Rao writes in his Foreword to *Kanthapura*: "we cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression, therefore has to be a dialect—which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or Americans."

Time alone will justify it (*Kanthapura*). It is time for us to look at the Indian literature in English as Indian literature. It has at least freed itself from the colonial hangover and language. *The God of Small Things* is undoubtedly a postcolonial text, both in form and content.

NOTE

1. Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (New Delhi, Indiaink, 1997).

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Yeats's "A Coat": From Romanticism to Romanticism

B.C. TEWARI

The poem "A Coat"[1] may be construed as a crucial poetic statement declaring a departure or shift from Yeats's earlier position as a romantic in form and theme. The last line of the poem 'For there is more enterprise in walking naked' seems to announce that he will henceforth adopt the stance of a modern realist writing in an unadorned direct language. According to Unterecker, "A Coat" brings the earlier section to a close.[2]

The poet created his poetry with great care and love and embroidered it with mythical figures, rich metaphors and expres sions inherited from the Romantic Movement. He was very proud of it till he came to know that mediocre poets were imitating and stealing his poetic technique in broad daylight. The metaphor of coat for poetic creation is very meaningful and symbolises the delicacy of his subtle art, his secret magnetism, his imaginative mysticism rooted in Celtic tradition and also his creative power "to raise with words the spell of a mysterious atmosphere. . . to efface the outlines of material objects in a dreamy mistiness and to draw the most aerial and spare images upon this thin grey background, in the style of a Japanese print."[3]

All these qualities are also the characteristics of the Romantic tradition. But it does not mean that Yeats by refusing to wear the coat and announcing to 'walk naked' has made a definite departure from Romanticism. Yeats's 'walking naked' is also romantic and 'enterprising.' The 'nakedness' here stands for originality, purity, freedom from artificial decoration or ornamentation. The Nakedness also means that the poet will henceforth not adopt artificial external means to write poetry but he will bear heavily upon the innate creative power of his soul.

As Harold Bloom has argued, Blake and Shelley remained potent influences throughout Yeats's career.[4] William Blake exercised great influence on W.B. Yeats, who collaborated with Edwin Ellis in editing the works of Blake. Blake was a poet and painter at the same time. His paintings of naked human bodies such as the painting of Satan with Adam and Eve reveal the power of the naked form. He believed that the secret of creative power was within, in the loosening of one's soul and therefore one must return to one's soul to find out a solution to the process of poetic creation because old poetic techniques become outdated and meaningless through excessive use.

Again reverting to the metaphor of coat, we can clearly see that the 'Coat' is 'embroidered' or decorated and made beautiful from heel to throat and that the stuff that decorates the coat is made up of mythology. This embroidered coat is definitely the coat of the romantic tradition, which has been made artificial and sterile by foolish imitators. The poet now, therefore, decides to throw off the coat and walk naked. 'Nakedness' here also means that the truly beautiful do not stand in need of any decoration or ornament from outside. This also implies that the poet has grown purer in his heart, attained the real excellence of writing poetry and matured in the art of creating beauty out of the harsh realities of the modern world.

Now the poet realises that he has reached a stage where external forms of art do not matter and he can pour out his soul through imagination in spontaneous creations of the beautiful and the sublime. The truly beautiful, like the beautiful objects of nature, do not need any ornamentation or decoration. The truly beautiful women will look beautiful even without wearing ornaments or jewels. Kalidasa, the great Sanskrit poet, describes the beauty of Shakuntala and says that her beauty is beyond comparison even when she is wearing clothes made of bark. The poet concludes that those, who are naturally beautiful, do not need any ornamentation. Dushyant declares in *Abhigyan Shakuntalam*: "This slim girl is more charming than richly dressed court ladies even in her bark covering. Surely what is there that does not become an ornament to naturally beautiful bodies." (I, II.34)

Thus, the "enterprise in walking naked" is as romantic as walking in an embroidered coat. The coat stands for exuberant romanticism the poet prepares meticulously out of mythology for himself. It is a long coat, which stretches from heel to throat. The personality of the poet is steeped in the vast beautiful coat of romanticism and he was very proud of it until he found that others too were wearing a similar coat. Only then the poet realises that the coat or ornamentation has become superfluous.

The poem "A Coat" does not mark a transition from romanticism to neo-classicism or the ironic mode. The poem clearly establishes that Yeats moved from one dimension of Romanticism to a new dimension of Romanticism, which reflects his maturity and greatness as a romantic poet.

Thus we see that Yeats is the legitimate inheritor of the great tradition of the romantic line of poets. Some writers, the followers of Eliot, in their classical enthusiasm misrepresent Yeats by saying that his greatness does not lie in the romantic tradition but in curiously called metaphysical tradition. This is a wrong notion. Yeats began as a romantic and remained one till the end.

> Yeats began as a mock or decadent romantic, and matured into a true one, a genuine inheritor of the fulfilled renown of Blake and of Shelley, the apocalyptic myth-makers among the Romantics. To chronicle the attitudes of Yeats towards Blake and Shelley, and towards Shelley in particular, is to chronicle also the stages by which Yeats found at last his true self as a poet.[5]

R.S. Sharma in his pedagogical exposition of the poem has explained the romantic connotations of the diction of this poem. 'Naked,' he observes, is the keyword: "It does not necessarily mean 'without any kind of clothing whatsoever,' still the word is quite startling. It conveys a deeper meaning here, which can be inferred."[6]

"A Coat" was included in *Responsibilities* published in 1914, which is regarded a turning point in Yeats's poetic career. But that does not mean rejection of his romantic self. It is simply a change of mask. Yeats, throughout his life, remained engaged in his personal exploration of sensuous life, spiritual entities and

immortality of art within a cosmic system of occult forces—in short, his mystical quest and adventure, which relate him to Romanticism.

In "A Coat," Yeats declared his intention to rid himself of the later Victorian embroidery. It must be noted that the coat stands for the style and language of his earlier poetry. It implies rejection of the dress and not the poetic self, which continues to be the same.

Yeats was deeply attached to the idea of heroism touched with adventure, which is an important element of Romanticism. His pursuit remained unchanged although in his later poetry "the quest was for the maskless, naked 'I'.[7] In his excellent article, comparing Eliot and Yeats, A. Alvarez concludes: "Yeats's poetry is the new flowering of a very old tree."[8] This old truth, it may easily be inferred, includes the Romantic spirit as well as folk tradition and age-old native expression. It is worth noticing at the end that in "A Prayer for Old Age" composed towards the end of his life, Yeats asserted his final stance with symbols associated with Romanticism. Commenting on this poem Unterecker observes that here Yeats once again "experiments with poetry of direct speech." (245) Unterecker, however, feels that it is a Mask. On the other hand, Anthony Thwaite thinks that it is a kind of epitaph.[9] The poem ends:

> I pray—for fashions word is out
> And prayer comes round again—
> That I may seem, though I die old,
> A foolish, passionate man. (41)

NOTES

1. W.B. Yeats, *Collected Poems* (Rupa, 1993), p. 142.
2. John Unterecker, *A Reader's Guide to W.B. Yeats* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), p. 129.
3. Legouis and Cazamian, *A History of English Literature* (London. J.M. Dent, 1926), p. 1285.
4. Harold Bloom, "Yeats and the Romantics," *Modern Poetry: Essays in Criticism*, ed. John Hollander (London: QUP, 1968), pp. 501-20.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 502.
6. R.S. Sharma, "Teaching Poetry: A Linguistic Method," in Ashok K. Jha and Rajul Bhargava *New Directions in English Language Teaching* (Jaipur: Pointer, 1988).
7. Michael Schmidt, *An Introduction to 50 Modern British Poets* (London: Pan Books, 1979), p. 56.
8. A. Alvarez, *The Shaping Spirit* (Gray Arrow, 1961), p. 47.
9. Anthony Thwaite, *Contemporary English Poetry: An Introduction* 3rd Ed. London, Heinemann, 1964.

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Jayanta Mahapatra: A Poet of Competent Craft

AMAR NATH PRASAD

The heart of any great poem lies not in its deep thoughts or in the exposure of something in a dry and monotonous way, but it lies in its rich craftsmanship polished and coloured by the brush of the poet's images and symbols, structure and design. However rich and profound the philosophical observation of a poet may be, it plays a very little role in the realm of poetry unless it is tinged with the different colours of the poet's craftsmanship which includes not only the outer pattern, design or structure but also its inner beauty—rhythmic waves of thoughts, sound, metaphoric exuberances, and above all, a very fine correspondence between the major and the minor terms. Judged on the above observation, the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra fulfills almost all the chief characteristics of poetic craftsmanship. Like his other counterparts e.g., R.N. Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu and A.K. Ramanujan, the poetry of Mahapatra is strongly rooted in Indian myths and culture, ethos and native surroundings especially of Orissa. M.K. Naik observes: "His style has an admirable colloquial ease, punctuated by thrusts of striking images. His muted brooding occasionally results in extremes of either excessively cryptic statement or verbal redundancy and in weaker moments he is seen echoing other poets."[1]

What matters most in his poetry is his deep sense of indigenous myths and culture denoted extensively and beautifully by some accurate and sharp phrases, words and expressions. His poem, "Dawn at Purl" is a poem of experience, religion and faith. It deals with a very beautiful picture of the sea shore of Puri, the most sacred place in the myths and history of Orissa.

The poem has the glow and charm of some metaphysical conceits and images. It opens with the image of a 'skull':

> Endless crow noises
> A skull on the holy sands
> tilts its empty country towards hunger[2]

This stanza is rich in both feeling and form. It has modern images and metaphysical conceits. Some of the phrases and images suggest the modern materialistic man who has lost the sense of religion. The various types of pollution and different controversial thoughts of modern men have been beautifully suggested through the image of the 'noises of the crows.' The phrase 'holy sands' stands for the seashore of Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannatha. Generally on the holy sands, there are beautiful objects. But in place of beautiful things, the holy sands are littered with 'skull' and 'endless crow noises.' This stanza has both visual and auditory beauty. The 'skull' also denotes the modern man who lacks love, sympathy, and other healthy values of life. It also shows how today man has become dry and monotonous like a skull. On economic and political plane, it suggests the hunger, drought and poverty. The term 'holy' before 'sands' contains a mild irony on the holiness of the religious places.

In the second stanza, the poet observes that some white clad widowed women are waiting to enter the Great Temple. Here the word 'Great Temple' stands for the temple of Lord Jagannatha. The eyes of three widowed women are austere 'spare like those caught in a net.' They hang "by the dawn's shining strands of faith." The phrases 'austere eyes' and 'shining strands of faith' have holy connotations.

The description of the funeral pyre and its process of cremation at the end of this poem are pictorial and pathetic. The pyre where the mother of the poet (narrator) is being consumed is in accordance with her last wishes. It shows the wish of every pious Hindu to be cremated at Puri:

> And suddenly breaks out of my hide
> into the smoky blaze of a sullen solitary pyre
> that fills my aging mother.

her last wish to be cremated here
twisting uncertainly like light
on the shifting sands.

The poem "Again, One Day, Walking by the River" presents a very philosophical picture of the scenic beauty of the river. One day the poet is walking by the river. He watches the loaded barge floating across the waters of the river. The barge, according to the poet, looks like a leaf trapped in a basin of water:

The same river, the same sun, the same town
out of the corner of my eye
the barge loaded with golden hay
trapped like a leaf in a basin of water.

Here the images of 'loaded barge,' 'trapped like a leaf and 'golden hay' are very suggestive. The word 'same,' used three times, shows the earlier nostalgic connection of the poet with the river and the town. The image of 'barge loaded with golden hay' stands for the modern man who is trapped in the basin of modern world.

In the next stanza, the craftsmanship is more visible and evocative. The poet imagines:

A tar drum smoulders in front of the judge's house
as four women working rule the hot water
on to the pitted face of the road
It is two in the afternoon, and
the heat of yesterday still clings to the old walls
like harsh salt on the skin.

These lines present a very fine visual picture of the working women who are ruling the hot tar on the road in a quite adverse atmosphere. The rays of the sun are very pinching, which corrode the human skin like harsh salt on the skin. On the connotative level, the lines have modern tone and metaphysical tinge. The colour has been contrasted with the smouldering of tar drum which symbolizes here the negative aspects of life. The phrase 'pitted face of the road' has a happy personification. The poem ends with a personal note. He visualizes:

The tar smoke scatters unnoticed over the water
I wonder where the day goes.
Even in the bright sun
This was a world I did not know.

The image of tar smoke with an imagistic variation intensifies the previous image. Now 'water' has taken place of the 'judge's house.' 'The 'tar smoke' floating on water' speaks volumes of things. First it shows the visual description of the river in which the oil of tar is floating. Second it denotes how modern science and inventions, in most cases, has done irreparable damage to water, air and soil. Third it connotatively suggests the clutches of mind over soul. The two concluding lines are highly suggestive. They show how the poet, even in the bright daylight, is unable to know the people of the world.

The poem "The Mountain" deals with landscape as well as a contemporary lifescape simultaneously. Here 'mountain' stands for eternity facing the process of growth and decay, life and death. The mountain may also suggest the natural happenings of the Almighty God, which has both silence and pressure, nectar and poison. The 'dead weight' of the mountain is an unavoidable requirements for the growth and decay of the earth. Through 'silence and pressure' it is 'adding, subtracting and multiplying in the abysmal heart.' The process of growing and decaying of the mountain shows the ups and downs of human mirth and misery:

Each day,
falling to pieces under the straddling sunlight
it gives clear proof that one
might still reconstruct one's life. Rigid,
Yet strangely impotent,
Perhaps it eagerly waits for the world to speak.

The tone of this poem is optimistic. In spite of the growing fanaticism and racial hatred in society, the poet is fully hopeful for 'new kind of society to form from the ruins of hate.'

The third stanza of the poem tells a bitter truth of the time which 'blots out the differences among us, as it sets itself irremediably on the peak.' In spite of its slopes, our duty is to climb

and climb. The poet asks a pertinent question: "Can the wide valley here down below lessen the mountain's weight?"

The last stanza tells us how men will get free from various evils. In this connection, the process of exorcism will open a new vista of mirth and joy. For this process both the wind and a great bulk of conscience are needed. The 'wind' here seems to be very close to Shelley's West Wind. Like Shelley, it is going to 'raze the fields of our rights.' The process of decay and death, though it is natural, may also be bumped for a while by the collective conscience of the people. And this way the 'dead weight' or the 'mountains weight' may be lessened.

The poem, 'Snow in Iowa City' indicts implicitly modern industrialization. The poem begins with the mirth of the students:

> Clean sky, empty of bird wings
> Everyone smiles, from here: the young students
> trying with their bodies to reach one another.

The poem flings a mild satire on the futility of young students of Iowa City in America who 'grow in the dim caves of concern of living rooms.' They have learned magic from the T.V. This shows how in modern time most of the young men are being guided by the T.V. culture. So, the fatal consequences arising out of this T.V. culture and the young men's soulless communication in this American city are unconsciously sowing the seed of anguish:

> Here the anguish of the old is hidden
> under the gentle slopes of bearded corn fields
> But you can hear it in the footsteps.

This poem has both the feeling and the form blended together. Some phrases and expressions of the poet are highly poetic, integrated and suggestive. The phrases, rust behind the bars, bearded corn fields, silent homes of dead man, ghost windmill etc. remind us of modern images mostly found in the poetry of Eliot, Yeats and Auden.

This brief survey of some of the poems of Mahapatra obviously shows his great mastery of words and phrases, his beautiful handling of sounds and rhythm and, above all, his appropriate

use of putting proper words and phrases at proper places. Dilip Chitre observes: "His [Mahapatra's] verse is free and moves slowly and smoothly. It is almost languid in its metaphysical poise until suddenly he transforms elemental visual images of Indian nature and traditional rural life into memorable metaphors. Mahapatra is what the Indian poet writing in English is supposed to be: an interpreter of a unique, complex and exotic culture through its landscape and people."[6]

To sum up, Mahapatra's competent craft coloured and designed by the poetic mind of the poet is very interesting. It has lexical cohesion, epigrammatic expressions, metaphysical conceits and modern flavour. It is often very complex and ambiguous. It calls the reader's exercise of brain to comprehend its inner thoughts and connotations.

NOTES

1. M.K. Naik, *A History of Indian English Literature* (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1999), p. 207.
2. Jayanta Mahapatra, "Dawn at Puri," a poem in the anthology, *Indian Poetry in English*, ed. Hari Mohan Prasad (Sterling, New Delhi, 1992), p. 79.
3. Dilip Chitre, *New Quest*, 14 (1979), pp. 77-82, qtd. *Indian Writing in English* (CIEFL, Hyderabad).

J.P. University, Chapra

Nissim Ezekiel's Quest for Values in *Latter-Day Psalms*

MITHILESH PANDEY

The present essay is intended as a tribute to the eminent poet Nissim Ezekiel who passed away recently.

Editor

Modern poetry preoccupies itself with the search for human values since people are fast losing their identity. The Second World War exhorted the poets like T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats to be conscious of the very existence of humanity and of the world. T.S. Eliot's cry in *The Waste Land* "Datta Dadhadyam, Damyat" from *Brihadaranyak Upanishad* is a cry for the restoration of human values. Being influenced by W.B. Yeats, Auden and Eliot, some significant Indian poets like Kamala Das, A.K. Ramanujan and Ezekiel became very conscious about their roots and values at the national level. Among the Indian poets, it is only Ezekiel who fully realises that he cannot remain aloof from his environment.

Ezekiel's own attitude about man can be seen in his famous book of verse *Latter-Pay Psalms* where the poet sarcastically craves for the upliftment of the human lot in this modern world. He explores in his later poems all the corruption and depravity of human relationships where the spiritual theme persists, resurfacing every now and then. It is obvious that the poet, who has edged himself close enough to Truth so as to have glimpsed its face, always remains attached to it. Though he habitually descends into the mire of desultory urban existence and is magically preserved by this contact with the Absolute, in the beginning of the poem "Counsel" of *Latter-Day Psalms*, the poet observes:

Love is more concerned . . .
About your fate
Than you have ever been.
That is why you have survived.[1] (*CP*, 230)

From the very beginning of his poetic career Ezekiel has celebrated "the ordinariness of most events" with his disillusioned vision. It is more or less free from conventions, exaggerations, and abstract ideas and what strikes one is his persistent sincerity. To him poetry is neither "a bourgeois dream" nor "a bohemian practice."[2] While avoiding competently both the extremes, he has always kept himself within his range. Some of his poems in *Latter-Day Psalms* are generalisations from his own intimately felt experiences. All his felt thoughts give us a shock of recognition for he describes what we too feel.

While expanding his poetic sensibility, Ezekiel's mode of expression used in *Hymns in Darkness* gets refined in the *Latter-Day Psalms*. His subtle social cornment in the "Hangover" can be observed when he criticises the society for its degeneration and loss of social values, for instance:

Half the day hazy with the previous night
The nondrinker-drinking, non-smoker smoking.
Two or three men, two or three girls.
The red coated waiters of Harbour Bar. (*CP*, 232)

Ezekiel is a modern Indian poet and his later poetry does not show "a marked decline,"[3] keeping in view the poet's sustained dedication to the Muse. However, the poet of *Hymns in Darkness* has become rational, witty and religious in the *Latter-Day Psalms*. If his "poverty poem" attempts to expose the stark reality of hunger and nakedness in this vast, sprawling sub-continent but in "The Professor" Ezekiel reiterates the complacency and deliberate vagueness of the retired Professor Seth's ideas and attitudes who prides over his sons. Moreover the selfishness and hypocrisy of the Professor are not being spared by the poet. Professor Seth is elated to have "eleven grandchildren," but at the same time he argues for the "family planning." His idea of pro-

gress is interesting and there can be no better example of topicality than the following lines:

> These are days of family planning. I am not against.
> We have to change with times whole world changing.
> In India also we are keeping up. Our progress is progressing.
> Old values are going, new values are coming. (*CP*, 239)

The professor, at the end of the poem depicts the location of his residence with such a cloud of vagueness that his sense of belonging to a particular place does not exist unless he is vociferous. It is professor's sense of complacency that Ezekiel lashes with dramatic tone:

> If you are coming again this side by chance
> Visit please my humble residence also
> I am living just on opposite house's backside. (*CP*, 239)

Ezekiel is a poet of the masses who realises the feeling and emotions of the common people living in India. Therefore, he employs a strategy in "Songs for Nandu Bhende" where irony, humour and relaxed manner of speech devices are put together to evoke the sense of chaos and poverty through which the persons are allowed to pass. The poet has deliberately presented the vagueness of the crimes and the law in the "Undertrial prisoners." The ambiguous status of law and crime and the poverty of the prisoners get reflected miserably in the following lines of the verse:

> Thousands like him,
> Who did something wrong
> Five years ago or may be ten
> They don't know when
> they were offered bail
> but did not have the money
> so they live in jail. (*CP*, 241)

In the second poem of this sequence, "Song to be shouted out" Ezekiel illustrates the helpless plight of the urbanised husband who faces a volley of questions hurled at him by his educated dominating wife. The wife's treatment is harsh but she treats her

husband as though he were the servant of the house. Ezekiel has nicely captured the tone of the housewife. For instance:

> Did you post that letter?
> Did you make that telephone call?
> Did you pay that bill?
> What do you do all day? (*CP*, 242)

At the end of the poem, the common disputes of husband and wife has been highlighted by the poet. The juxtaposition of the dialogues of the imposing wife and the meek helpless husband gives the poem the desired tension and intensity. The helpless husband has nothing to do but to accept the reality. As when he speaks:

> It's good for my soul
> to be shouted at
> shoot at the woman
> what else are wives for? (*CP*, 242)

In the fourth poem "Family" the poet dramatises the pseudo-sickness of a family. The sickness is psychological or intellectual rather than physical. The poet exposes the fatuity of the 'isms' and religious gurus who institutionalise falsehood. This sickness is a modern mask without which perhaps the meaning of modernity, sophistication and vanity gets deflated:

> Let father go to Rajneesh Ashram
> Let mother go to Gita classes,
> What we need is meditation
> Need to find our roots, sir,
> All of us are sick, sir. (*CP*, 243)

What Ezekiel tries to attack is the rootlessness of man in modern set up in which family has disrupted its ties from the community, one can mark here the poet's dig at the nuclear family, which is governed today by falsehood, and vanity, and hence the sickness. The conversational ease with which these poems grow has something to do with Ezekiel's understanding of India and the plight of English at large.

But Ezekiel has depicted the women in their traditional Indian context where in his world, a female is a mother, a lover a wife and a symbol of aesthetic standards. In "Night of the Scorpion," she is an Indian mother ready to sacrifice her life to save her children. But in love she may be unscrupulously sensual and debased. In the long poem "Nudes 1978," she is uninhibited "I love undressing."

However, in the last part of *Latter-Day Psalms*, Ezekiel is continually trying to restructure his relationship with the spiritual and the phenomenal world. He is conscious both of the problem of knowing the self and of the "hundred veils" and more that cover creation, but it is "death" to seek release from the acts of finding out. His 'action' or 'commitment' is not a release or a desire for escape from the world of actuality into a spiritual transcendence, it is an endeavour to embody the two in a World-view which pushes one's being to the limits of consciousness. Whatever else Ezekiel might have done in his "psalms," he has retained the communion with God. God's perfections, of course, are not taken as true and vivid as they are supposed to be, because one's experience amidst the present-day circumstances intimate otherwise. Such experiences corrode the sort of faith by which the psalmist lived in God rather than in himself. Without challenging God's glowing power and providence Ezekiel has his say—sly, sure, sensible—in accordance with the spirit within him moved by his experience of life as it is in his day.

However, in the concluding lines of the psalms, Ezekiel seems to be more a prophet than a poet who by way of his commentary on the psalms, informs us that all the old "fuss about faith" is highly "boring and pathetic" in the present-day context. Therefore, it is better to watch and participate in the human folly of committing sins than to talk of the dead past boisterously. It is this attitude of Ezekiel which makes him anti-religious when he speaks as a prophet:

> God is presence here
> and his people are real
> I see their sins. I hear
> his anger. (*CP*, 261)

The poet has humanised here the Almighty and the long cherished motto that "Service to man is service to God" is eventually realised. In an interview, Ezekiel observes: "If I write a religious poem, the next poem is likely to be very secular, skeptical I attach a great deal of importance to the worldliness of the world, its independence."[4] The metaphorical lines disclose the fact that Ezekiel's Psalms are not fully the part of his flesh as it appears to be. The sanctionious psalms are, thus, powerless and inefficacious in curbing the turbulent desires of man in controlling his lust.

Apart from this, Ezekiel has tried his best to sustain the Indian glory and culture by his composition of *Latter-Day Psalms* which have become a manifesto of his own philosophy. The poet of the *Latter-Day Psalms* is more rational, realistic and conscious of the metaphoric weakness of the liturgical piece. As a prophet, Ezekiel has revealed a new way of understanding the meaning of his life and poetry seems to be the means to this goal. It is the process of his quest that he is acutely conscious of his own failings and self-deceptions but finds himself preserved again and again. Sometimes, he stumbles upon his Truth in its pristine form; the secret principles that govern the universe are divulged to him and he finds the answer to the mystery of his life.

NOTES

1. *Collected Poems 1952-1988* (New Delhi; O.U.P., 1989; rpt. 1992).
2. Chetan Karnani, *Nissiin Ezekiel* (New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1974), p. 11.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
4. John B. Boston, "Interview with Nissim Ezekiel," *World Literature Written in English*, 16/1 (April 1977), p. 89.

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Norman Mailer at Fourscore and More

A.A. MUTALIK-DESAI

Norman Mailer (1923-) is one of the most exciting figures in American literature who at the Biblical age of fourscore, and more, continues to be as productive as he is controversial. Age has not withered him, nor custom stale the infinite variety of his writing.

In his novels like *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), *An American Dream* (1965) and *Harlot's Ghost* (1991) and in his non-fictional works like *Advertisements for Myself* (1959), *The Presidential Papers* (1963), *The Armies of the Night* (1968), *Of a Fire on the Moon* (1970), *The Prisoner of Sex* (1971), *The Executioner's Song* (1979) and *Oswald's Tale* (1995) his prose has moved effortlessly from the naturalistic and the documentary to the symbolic and the surrealist as needed. All through he has never stopped changing, experimenting, growing and evolving.

Born in an orthodox Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York City, he graduated in aeronautical engineering at Harvard, fought in the Second World War with distinction. He is a significant presence among the literati on the eastern seaboard from Boston to Washington. In his married life he has run through the gamut of six wives, five divorces and eight children. It is suffused with entirely avoidable violence, e.g., his stabbing of a wife in one of his frequent maniacal rages which episode ended with his being sent to the psychiatrist's couch. To go along with his well-publicized private life is his equally noisy and cantankerous public life running foul of law on account of drugs, seeking the office of the Mayor of New York City, making numerous doughty public appearances, brawling with celebrities on national television. He has clashed with conservatives like William F. Buckely, Jr., and with libertarians like Gore Vidal, with a Truman Capote

caught in the crossfire. Even his entirely selfless and humanitarian concerns have turned disastrously sour on him such as his efforts to free a dangerous convict, Jack Henry Abbott, because the latter had potential for creative writing. A compassionate and magnanimous gesture! However, it caused much gratuitous heartache to Mailer. He has depicted sex with candour and alacrity—in ways not always defensible. These events have created the image of an irresponsible rebel, an incurable exhibitionist, an *enfant terrible* of the American letters.

Mailer the precocious novelist who at the age of twenty-four wrote the sensational and critically acclaimed war novel, *The Naked and the Dead*, he who at the age of thirty-six made a characteristically flamboyant claim that he would settle for nothing less than a revolution in the consciousness of his time, he whose life is not a tale of "Fortune and to fame unknown," he who has twice received both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for his *The Armies of the Night* and *The Executioner's Song*, he who has been President of the American Chapter of the P.E.N., he who is a serious contender for the Nobel Prize, the same Mailer turned eighty on 31 January, 2003. It is hard to imagine this immensely talented but rabble-rousing, hell-bent, ill-tempered and tempestuous author metamorphosing into a Grand Old Man of American Letters, if not a member of the Establishment. So, at such a moment, a tribute is deserved.

Mailer's output is enviable: from 1948 to date he has written ten novels, volumes of short-stories, fictional recreations ("factions") of historic, contemporary events, numerous accounts of the political scene, essays as a socio-political and cultural critic with an autobiographical leaning, interviews and reflections on subjects ranging from presidential elections, grandees in the Department of State, the Pentagon, the CIA, the FBI, the judiciary, the often-conflicting claims of crime and punishment, the fate of the outlaw, behemoths of corporate America, meditations on god and the cosmic order, claims of art, literature, science and religion, the role of the writer, a riposte to feminism, etc., to fill many more volumes. Lest we forget, he is still a going concern.

Let me now take up the first of his three novels I wish to introduce, *The Naked and the Dead*, 1948, a war novel *par excellence*. Before his contribution to this sub-genre, there had been outstanding war novels by Ernest Hemingway, James Jones, John Marquand, James A. Michener and Nathaniel West. But *The Naked and the Dead* was phenomenal. Critical acclaim and popular success converged on it. In the Second World War he had gained a taste of life in the raw, an experience he had desperately sought, a brutal, coarse, callous, ugly, sickening, dehumanizing, perverse and obscene experience with the soldiers reduced to insignificance. The ensuing novel is thus the result of planned, hard work. Its thematic basis is an ideological contest between General Cummings and his determined, unrelenting and expedient fascism and Lieutenant Robert Hearns and his well-meaning but ineffective liberalism. The plot rests on an elaborate set of parallels and contrasts such as a nation at peace and at war, strategies for leading domestic lives at home and strategies for surviving a war, the claims of the individual and of the collective entity called society. If Emile Zola's *La Debacle* had succeeded in telling the French what the Franco-Prussian war had meant to their soldiers, Mailer succeeds in telling the Americans what the Second World War meant to *their* soldiers. Philip Bufithis has commented that in *The Naked and the Dead* the novelist has avoided Irwin Shaw's slickness (as in *The Young Lions*, 1948) and the sentimentality of James Jones (as in *From Here to Eternity*, 1951).

Critics have complimented him on for his realistic socio-political portrait of society, on his use of English always befitting the speaker (e.g., native, first generation immigrants, Irish-, Mexican- and Polish-Americans, Jews, Gentiles, typical Anglo-Saxons, power-hungry officers or wide-eyed privates, sophisticated elites, unsuspecting, gullible commoners), on his humour (wry and sardonic, down-right and rough-hewn, human and sensitive), on the novel's symbolism like an undercurrent which surfaces now and then, on his consummate ability, for one so young, in crystallizing the face of war into an aesthetically satisfying whole. *The Naked and the Dead* is different things to dif-

ferent readers: a long and complex narrative, an assortment of characters which is a microcosm of contemporary USA, an authentic and comprehensive documentary, a journalistic expose, an artistic canvas conveying a tragic sense of life and all through there is a Zolaesque credibility. There is no celebration here of the Holy Fife and Drum of Righteous Conflict, says Stanley Cooperman.

From the late 1940s to the early 1960s, Mailer's private life and his literary career went careening downward. Critics seemed content to speak only about what was sensational. They seemed to have vowed vengeance on him. He had become an outcast, an undesirable and ostracized memory from yesterday.

In 1965, however, he re-emerged from this cul-de-sac with his novel *An American Dream*. This novel concerns itself earnestly, humanistically and philosophically with whatever ails contemporary America. It too at first received the disparaging critical space reserved for him since the mid-1950s. There was no dearth of vitriol. The latest novel, it was said, was repelling, nauseating, dyspeptic, ugly, a hoax, a disaster, a sybaritic funeral, a saturnalian cathartic. But this time he was not to be denied what was really his due, namely, *An American Dream* is aesthetically and morally satisfying; unconventional and outrageous, but original, creative, phantasmagoric and realistic.

First a look at *An American Dream*'s plot and substance. The protagonist Stephen Rojack is rushed through a hurricane of events in the fashionable East Side, its police stations and its cheap nightclubs in New York City. Rojack is, like his creator, a Harvardian, a war hero, a television personality and an author. He is also, we are told, a former member of the U.S. Congress, a professor of existential psychology, he practises voodoo and he can hold his own as a boxer! When first introduced he is much like the ancient Ulysses or the modern James Bond, larger than life, a superman, and, above all, he is married to the daughter of the eighth richest man in the U.S., Deborah. Obviously, he has everything: success, fame and fortune are his. To him the fabled American dream stands realized. Or, does it? Scarcely a few pages into the narrative, evil individualized and institutionalized

manifests itself through the many limbs and pores of New York City. His wife humiliates him with her latest infidelity, he strangles her and throws her body several floors down. To the police he pleads that she jumped. In the midst of all this he has time to debauch his German maid, to fall in love with a nightclub singer, to trip her lover with finesse. Then, promptly he undertakes a pilgrimage from the east coast, through the parched desert lands of the southwest (a symbolic act of penance, an expiation of sin, a cleansing of the soul, a baptism by fire or a purgatorial passage). He witnesses life's depravity once more in the garish trading in money and flesh in Las Vegas (which is tantamount to his last encounter with evil) and, then, finally heads for Yucatan in Mexico (the seat of an ancient civilization, the mythic reservoir of peace, serenity and transcendent spirituality).

Once we sidestep these trappings of the story, we discern that in *An American Dream*, Mailer is not defending or vindicating the American dream, a legacy from the seventeenth-century Founding Fathers of the new world. Instead *An American Dream* is a parody of the officially sanctioned, corporate version. It is an indictment of its vacuousness, a rejection of the age-old idealism implied in the words, "From the log cabin to the White House." He questions the efficacy of yesterday's testament in the radically changed social and cultural milieu in the 1960s. Rojack had realized the American dream. Yet he is easily pushed into murder and fornication. He must flee to alien shores in search of what he could not realize at home. That is, in the words of the critic Robert Merrill, only material and not spiritual attainment could be had in his own land of sea to shining sea. It is Mailer's contention that the American dream is an outmoded myth; worse yet, even the search for it results in moral and spiritual alienation.

After this tour de force, another critical yawning developed, not because he had remained unproductive for over twenty-five years. But in 1991, his third outstanding novel, *Harlot's Ghost*, appeared. As before, this one too had to make its way through numerous catcalls and only a modest amount of applause. But, as we will see, yet again the novelist breaks new ground.

A paperback edition of *Harlot's Ghost* runs to nearly eleven hundred closely printed pages, with ominous words at the end, "TO BE CONTINUED." How merciless can a novelist get! But, as usual, through rambunctious and even grating prose, through violence and obscenities, through perplexing yet prophetic observations, you make your way through, and you are rewarded. So, let me begin by asking what is the novelist up to this time?

Is *Harlot's Ghost* a history of the CIA? Is it a history of the USA (in a disjointed manner), since it overflows with real-life characters like Presidents Kennedy, Reagan and Bush, a former director of the CIA, Allen Dulles, William King Harvey who actually worked for the U.S. government, E. Howard Hunt of the Watergate notoriety, the reclusive and eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes, Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe, Fidel Castro, etc.? Is it a spy story about a high-ranking CIA official (the "Harlot" of the novel's name) who either defects to the then USSR or is assassinated by the intelligence operatives whose activities he had been secretly investigating? Is it a bildungsroman about a young agent by name Harry Hubard, a product of Yale who is Harlot's godson and protégé, who comes of age in a series of adventures during the cold war? Is it a fictionalised, philosophic enquiry on the nature of good and evil? Is it an account of the WASP society's manners and morals with a tale or two of love and romance thrown in? Mysterious happenings are piled one upon another. In this meandering tale the reader is taken from the U. S. to Germany, USSR, Cuba, Paraguay and Uruguay. Events are reprised (e. g., the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy's assassination, the various plots against Castro), scandals from the days of the New Frontier are remembered (e. g., who had clandestine sexual relations with whom). A useful backdrop is created by numerous quotations from official reports. In this novel every known mode is exploited: the picaresque, the epistolary, the bildungsroman, the roman a clef, the historical, the gothic, the pornographic, the thriller, the frontier-western and so on.

Ultimately, through all this maze, *Harlot's Ghost* makes sense and does so effectively. Disparate pieces coalesce. It is part

history (past and present from the 1930s to 1990s), part political, social and cultural speculation, part philosophic speculation too (which includes Mailer's continuing faith in Manichaeism, his interest in dualities like yin and yang or animus and anima), part unashamed gossip uncovering the underbelly of America, part facts and myths of several institutions cleverly and amusingly mixed. (It may be noted in passing that on a few occasions *Harlot's Ghost* is a playful mix, in the postmodern style, of sheer quirks and affectations, which, true to its kind, is not enough to hold the reader's attention for long. It might even be the novelist's attempted, sneering parody of this latest obsession in the world of "Theory Wars").

How successful is *Harlot's Ghost*? One may refer to the assessments by critics like Anthony Burgess and Wilfrid Sheed who have concurred that the world of *Harlot's Ghost* is no fairy land; it brings to the fore the harsh actualities of everyday living made plausible only by the an intense and inventive imagination. Salman Rushdie too has added his nodding approval in similar words.

To conclude, out of over thirty-five literary works, both fiction and non-fiction, I have introduced just three as indicating Mailer's talent, acumen, craftsmanship, his undying faith in and championship of liberal, humanistic values, his perception of what America stands for and what it has become (which assessments are hard to disagree with), his genuine concern for the sanity of men and women. Such is Norman Mailer: a novelist and an essayist, a voice of these troubled times, a believer in a sanguine future, sometimes too anxious and frustrated over what we are doing to ourselves, but always enough of an inspiring and guiding lodestar—if only we care to look.

Dharwad

A Conversation with Angelyn Mitchell

NIBIR K. GHOSH

Angelyn Mitchell is the author of The Freedom to Remember: Narrative, Slavery, and Gender in Contemporary Black Women's Fiction *(Rutgers UP, 2002) and the editor of* Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present *(Duke UP, 1994). She has also published articles on Toni Morrison, Octavia Butler, William Wells Brown, Harriet Wilson, and Kate Chopin. She is an associate professor of English and African American Studies at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, where she is also the founding director of the African American Studies Program. In this conversation with Nibir K. Ghosh at Washington D.C., Angelyn Mitchell shares her ideas and concerns related to life, politics and art.*

Ghosh: The opening sentence of your *The Freedom to Remember*—"I was born free, but race has colored my life from the beginning"—seems to resonate Rousseau's classic statement, "Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains." Do you see race as an entrapment in USA?

Mitchell: Yes, I think the construct of race in the USA is an entrapment, as it has created artificial boundaries and borders that serve to alienate and to separate. I have to clarify that I see race in terms of the binary of Black and White, as so often race is thought to be synonymous with Black only. With that said, I believe race entraps in very different ways for those on either side of this binary of White/Black. The category of White traps those who are identified as White in a system of white supremacy, privilege, and oppression. The category of Black traps those identified as Black in a system of economic, social, and political disenfranchisement. Are

there exceptions to this? Absolutely. But for me, exceptions don't negate the systemic issues imbedded in the construction of race in American society.

Ghosh: At the beginning of the 21st century, how significant are terms like "the color line" and "double consciousness" from the American perspective?

Mitchell: I believe these terms continue to have currency in the 21st century. As long as race informs, even determines, one's future, and it does, these terms have significance. And I think the color line will continue to be one of the problems of the 21st century. I believe we must also add "the economic line" to any discussion of the color line because the two are so complexly interwoven.

Ghosh: As a professor of literature you have been preoccupied with examining how the cultural construct of race operates in American society. How would you react to your own question, "What does it mean to be raced and American in a country where racial identity supercedes national identity"?

Mitchell: It means there is a tension between the two that arises in the most unpredictable ways. It is very complicated. I am constantly aware of my racial identity; I am not constantly aware of my national identity. Yet I am an American. The events of 9/11 and the war in Iraq have, interestingly so, made me more aware of my national identity than ever before. There is "always already" something in my everyday life that reminds me of my racial identity. It might be simply a meeting at my current institution, Georgetown University, in which I am the only African American present. It might be when we meet in the Philodemic Room, a conference room in historic Healy Hall and the portraits and names of White men on its walls remind me of a different time in American history where my racial identity would have precluded me from sitting at the table. I have never been in that room without thinking of this. Even the date of Georgetown's founding—1789—causes me to consider the contradictory histories of the USA. This is my country, my home, but each July, I read Frederick Douglass's "What to the

Slave Is the Fourth of July?" My double consciousness in this regard is best revealed by the tears brought to my eyes by both the National Anthem and the Negro National Anthem. James Baldwin's still useful essay, "Stranger in the Village," comes to mind as I think about this issue.

Ghosh: In your own career as a writer and academic, have you ever faced the challenges that stem from prejudice on color lines?

Mitchell: Absolutely. Most often in these post-integration times, these challenges are not overt; they are of the type where colleagues speak in "Black English" or tell me about their family's Black maid in a feeble attempt to relate. Or where one's scholarly endeavors and productions are viewed as less valid, less scholarly, less rigorous. Or when research and fellowship proposals are not funded, one sometimes wonders, particularly when one reads that the NEH flags proposals that advance particular scholarship. The most insidious are the assumptions of identity that have little to do with the individual, what Cornel West has called knowing the Negro, *a priori*.

Ghosh: Four decades after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, how far do you think is the African American community from the dream that Martin Luther King, Jr. had envisaged in his famous speech?

Mitchell: There is still a great deal of work to be done. Much has improved, but I read recently that the same percentage of Black children live in poverty today as in 1968. That is appalling. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 sought to ameliorate the effects of institutionalized racism. But what has happened to access to affordable and fair housing, education, economic mobility, health care? If Black folk are systematically denied even the opportunity to participate in the democratic process—look, for example, at our lack of representation in the US Senate or look at the race and the voting irregularities in Florida in the presidential election of 2000—how can America ever live up to its stated ideals and principles?

Ghosh: There are numerous instances of great individual success stories of both men and women from the African American community: Clarence Thomas, Oprah Winfrey, Colin Powell et al. Do such stories provide the impetus for "healing the wounds, the shame, and the pain of the past?"

Mitchell: First, I don't think Clarence Thomas is an example of African American success. He would be a success if, in his position as a Supreme Court Justice, he remembered the politics of race in the United States, or if he remembered consistently that he is African American. He seems to think that national identity trumps racial identity. There are, to my mind, too many reasons why affirmative action policies are still needed in all walks of American life, particularly in higher education.

The concept of individual success, I think, is antithetical to tribal people. There have been studies that show that there is more charity and volunteerism in less affluent communities. I don't define success in terms of public visibility or material wealth. And no, I wouldn't say that the stories of the above provide the impetus to heal what slavery wrought, or as I wrote, "the wounds, the shame, and the pain of the past." Certainly, Oprah's story of rags to riches is inspirational, but how meaningful is her story to the everyday lives and troubles of economically disadvantaged African Americans? Certainly, Colin Powell as the first and only Black Secretary of State is historic, but does this affect positive change in African America? Role models can only go so far. Collective memories and collective consciousnesses—repositories of the wounds, the shame, the pain of the past—cannot be overwritten by individual narratives of success. It goes much deeper. I suppose, to some minds, these narratives represent progress. I prefer Toni Morrison's apt phrase: these represent "alteration without improvement."

Ghosh: Within the African American community there has always been a strong undercurrent of conflict along gender lines. How do you respond to such conflicts?

Mitchell: I am frankly baffled and embarrassed by some of these conflicts. I think here of the vituperative comments concerning Toni Morrison's novels and her Nobel prize. I am also thinking of the "battle royal" between scholars Henry Louis Gates, Houston Baker, and Joyce Joyce. Certainly, such conflicts might be born of pettiness. They might also reflect the influence of patriarchy. But I also wonder if and why these moments are staged. Why did *New Literary History* host the occasion for Gates, Baker, and Joyce to debate? *New Literary History* hadn't before or since foreground African American literary studies in such a prominent way. In interviews, are interviewers asking questions to provoke particular responses? There must be more productive and generative ways for engagement, discussion, and even disagreement.

Ghosh: Who would you recall as major influences on your growth and development as writer and critic?

Mitchell: Books have always been a part of my life; I cannot imagine life without books. My parents and grandparents were all readers. I think they provided me with models for taking intellectual work seriously. I have been, as I like to joke, a lifelong equal opportunity reader. One of my favorite short stories is Chekhov's "The Bet." My greatest pastime has always been reading, which explains why I majored in English. And let me remind you, it wasn't until I was in graduate school that the formal study of African American literature was available to me. The culture wars existed for a reason. Because I came from a family of readers, I was exposed to African American writers. James Baldwin's work was frequently featured in *Life.* As a graduate student, one of my professors, the late Dr. Ernest Mason, helped me find my critical voice, particularly in the context of African American literary studies. I am also the grateful beneficiary of the generation of Black feminist critics and theorists before me who have both influenced and inspired me—Mary Helen Washington, the late Barbara Christian, the late Claudia Tate, Valerie Smith, Karla Holloway, Hortense Spillers, Mi-

chael Awkward, Deborah McDowell, Trudier Harris, Thadious Davis, and Cheryl Wall, Frances Smith Foster, to name a few.

Ghosh: Who are your favorite women writers?

Mitchell: I particularly enjoy reading and teaching Toni Morrison and Gloria Naylor as I find their novels evocative in compelling ways. What they have in common, I believe, is that they both are reclaiming and reifying Black identity and experience in a holistic way. They both present and represent Black identity and experience as the center, not as marginal. Morrison seems particularly interested in history and memory in her engagement of Black life, and I am too. We still need to contest the master narrative of American history. Perspective is important. Naylor seems to write cautionary tales—what happens when we forget our history, our humanity. Students respond quite favorably to Morrison and Naylor's novels. Students learn a great deal about themselves when they read their novels. These novelists raise their readers' critical consciousness.

Ghosh: As a child of the Civil Rights era, how did you react to works like Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and James Baldwin's *Fire Next Time*?

Mitchell: These writers were the first to reveal to me the complexities inherent in Black life and experience.

Ghosh: In your editorial introduction to *Within the Circle* you have stated "Ellison saw Bigger as the product of the so-called scientific perceptions of the sociologist; Baldwin saw Bigger as the product of white liberal thought. For both, Bigger Thomas was the white man's attempt to understand the African American from a vantage point outside of him—the result is a superficial and dehumanized picture, an abstraction." Could you please elaborate?

Mitchell: Both Ellison and Baldwin in writing about *Native Son*, it seems to me, found Wright's protagonist, Bigger Thomas, dangerously lacking in humanity, and such a construction gave credence to the existing flat and static characterizations

and stereotypes surrounding Black humanity, in general, and Black masculinity, specifically.

Ghosh: How would you evaluate the contribution of writers like Alice Walker and Toni Morrison to the African American aesthetic in relation to the writings of what Henry Louis Gates, Jr. refers to as the "male triangle of influence"—Wright, Ellison and Baldwin?

Mitchell: I do not believe there is an analogous "anxiety of influence" for Black women. It seems that Black women writers are communal. I think Black women writers have opened a space for explorations of the self in ways that Black men writers had not done before they did. I'm thinking here of David Bradley's *The Chaneysville Incident* in which the protagonist takes both physical and psychological journeys in self-reflexive ways. I think Black women writers helped open that door.

Ghosh: After the assassinations of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. the African American community appears to have been in a desperate crisis of leadership? Do you personally visualize any rainbow of hope that may appear to dispel such a crisis?

Mitchell: I don't think that the primary problems in the Black community are caused by a crisis of leadership. I do not subscribe to the single leader theory. I think the media has always done what it does now—advance the one or two. I do not mean to suggest that they are advanced without reason. Dr. King's contributions to the Civil Rights Movement were immeasurable and invaluable. But we know that Dr. Martin Luther King was not THE Civil Rights Movement. In the academy, one would think that there are only three Black scholars, if you take seriously media representations. There are many Black scholars who are doing essential and exciting work. I think this same phenomenon exists concerning the Black community. I think there are many leaders—unsung heroes—who are making extraordinary contributions to their local communities and beyond. As an educator, I

think there are always rainbows of hope. I think it is the job of the academy to help create those rainbows.

Ghosh: At the turn of the century, what would you identify as dominant trends in contemporary African American writings?

Mitchell: I don't know if this is a trend, but I am seeing more diversity in audiences, and in the writing, and this is exciting.

Ghosh: What is the implication of your observation that "Economic wealth for the individual does not necessarily translate into economic empowerment for the race"?

Mitchell: I think it speaks to the current state of African America. The theme song of the 1970s show "The Jeffersons" hailed, "moving on up" as a goal in post-integration America, particularly in terms of economic upward mobility. But read *The Future of the Race* by Gates and West for a sobering picture of African Americans in terms of present and future economics. Perhaps enough individuals with wealth might translate into economic empowerment for the race, but we haven't had the opportunity to witness such. As it is, the few overshadow the reality of the masses.

Ghosh: According to you, what should be the role of African American writers and intellectuals in addressing concerns relevant to their community?

Mitchell: I believe, as did W.E.B. DuBois, that "all art is propaganda and ever must be." I know for some that has a pejorative connotation, but I do not think that it must. Why can't art, and the criticism of it, be, as Morrison suggests, both beautiful and political?

Ghosh: Many contemporary African American writers still argue that the African American experience is the sole prerogative of those who belong to the community and that the white writer should refrain from encroaching upon this area. What is your view? How do you look at the significance of a novel like *To Kill a Mocking Bird*?

Mitchell: I don't subscribe to the idea that any literature is the sole prerogative of those who write it or of the community it reflects. What could that possibly mean? As a young girl, I

absolutely adored E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* because I loved the dignity of Charlotte and Wilbur. And I am not a spider nor am I a pig. Harper Lee's Scout is not unlike me; I once was a young southern girl like Scout, trying to understand my immediate world. I have a wonderful mother, but I was able through this novel to empathize with the Finch children who were motherless children. I had a wonderful father, and I saw aspects of my father in Atticus. I also know what it's like to be judged on the basis of how I look, so I felt Tom's dilemma. Lee's novel speaks to my own humanity. I hope that Morrison's novels speak to the humanity of all of her readers.

Ghosh: Do you think it is possible for writers to transcend the anxiety of influence brought about by their primary commitment to their community?

Mitchell: This question seems to ask if Black writers can transcend the anxiety of race and its influence, not the anxiety of literary influence. I don't think that all Black writers perceive race in terms of anxiety.

Ghosh: Do you really believe in the transformative potential of art?

Mitchell: I do. I think that art is probably our last hope. The notion of art for art's sake seems exceedingly bankrupt to me. Perhaps sometimes we ask too much: if all is not solved, fixed, or healed, then all is for naught. I believe that if we are inspired, we are transformed.

Ghosh: Thank you. It's been a pleasure to talk to you.

Agra College, Agra.

The Philosophy of Aesthetic Pleasure in Bharata's Rasa Sidhanta and Aristotle's Theory of Catharsis

RAMESH CHANDRA TUNGARIA

The present paper represents an attempt to trace out certain uniquenesses of and major similarities, obscure identities and subtle and salient differences between the philosophies of aesthetic pleasure enunciated in Bharata's Rasa Sidhanta and Aristotle's theory of Catharsis in their *Natyasastra* and the *Poetics* respectively.

The term aesthetics had its origin from the Greek word 'Aistheta' which means things perceptible by the senses. But it was only after the first half of the eighteenth century that the aesthetics was taken to mean the philosophy of beauty. Today the popular meaning which now the word has is the knowledge of beautiful in nature and art. In 1750, Baumgarten published *Aesthetica* on the criticism of taste consideration as a philosophic theory. Gradually the term has come to characterize something which pertains to the criticism of the beautiful or to the theory of taste.[1] The systematic study of beauty, hence, goes by the name of aesthetics.

The history of the theory of Rasa in the Vedic period gives an explanation and prepares the ground for its use by writers on literary criticism from Bharata downward—in the works of Bhamaha, Dandin, Vãmana, Udbhatta, Rudrat, in Agnipurana, Anandvardhana, and Abhinavagupta—to signify the aesthetic pleasure.

In *Poetics* Aristotle makes special mention of Catharsis only once (Ch. VI); whereas he uses "the pleasure of poetry" or "the special pleasure of tragedy" about ten to twelve times at different places. Catharsis of emotions—the process through which self

regarding human emotions are transformed into altruistic emotions—is the immediate and sole cause of the pleasure proper to tragedy in that audience, in Plato's phrase, "rejoice in their grieving" and in Jowett's translation of the phrase of Plato the spectators "smile through their tears"[2] which is neither different nor other than the aesthetic pleasure characterized by the realization of Rasa.

Bharata's Theory of Rasa

In Indology and Indian literature Rasa—as has been discovered and enumerated by Ramavtar Sharma[3]—has been used in many senses, as: affection, poison, semen, six different flavours or tastes of food, mercury, liquid, sperm, both process and realization of taste, gold, nectar, word, essence, a particular ingredient of the body which results from secretion in the body. The first outcome from the digestion of food, erotic etc., eight poetic Rasas, fruit, astringent, water, food, grain, iron, vermilion, a kind of vine, garlic, stem of a specific vegetable, a specific kind of sugarcane called devamarisa, flesh, vinegar, a masculine deity, and impotent.[4]

To discuss the theory of Rasa, in the present context, the meaning and history of Rasa is considered here briefly from the period of *Rg Veda*, the oldest literary document of India and the oldest book of the world library. In the earlier Mandalas of *Rg Veda* Rasa occasionally signifies water or milk;

Rasam dadhita vrsabham (VIII: 72, 13).[5]

But in this *Veda* Rasa is generally used to signify the juice of soma plant.

dadhanah kalase rasam (IX: 63, 13)
yasya te madyam rasam (IX: 65, 15)

In *Atharva Veda*, Rasa is used in the sense of juice of plant, "udosadhinam rasena" (iii: 31, 10) and also in the sap of herb which extends its usage to the sap of grain, "aharsan dhanyam rasam." (iii: 26, 5)

During the Upanisadic[6] period, the sense of Rasa as the essential ingredient of plants and grain disappears, and it began to

characterize only the essential element or essence alone; for instance Rasa emerges to mean as life breath or the vital air in the essence of the limbs of body; "*prano hi va anganam rasah.*" (*Brihaddaranyakopanisad*, i:3,4)

If we dive deeper in the Upanisads, we come to know that in two different Upanisads the two different meanings of Rasa—essence in the sense of par excellence and the highest taste or experience accompanied by a sense of joy or aesthetic pleasure—are combined. In that "Rasa there stands for the one Supreme Reality of the Universe, viz., the Self-luminous Consciousness . . . which, when realized, results into Perennial Bliss." (Sankaran, 3). In *Taittriyopanisad*, "*Rasa vaisah, rasam hyavayam labdhvanandi bhavati*" (ii: 7, 1) And in *Maitriyopanisad* "*etdvai sattvasya rüpam tatsatvameveritam rasah.*" (v: 2)

At the very outset in Chapter One of his *Rasagangãdhara*, Panditarãja Jaganãthan holds that from the two Upnisadic excerpts, just quoted above, it emerged that the germs of the theory of Rasa conceived by Valmiki and developed by Bharata and later writers on poetics.

The word, Rasa, in Sanskrit language, is as much commonplace and simple as it is lofty and bewildering that it is instantly comprehended and used by all, right from the level of an illiterate common man, on the one hand, in the sense of relishing taste of some food or certain unspecified aesthetic pleasure of some events in his daily life; and on the other, by a Yogi and a *sumanasah* or *sahrdaya* reader or spectator of art for whom Rasa is the all content surpassing bliss which the former in his transcendental meditation finds and the delight which is offered to the latter by art making him asleep in body and a living soul. In Chapter VI of the *Natyashastra* the sages ask Bharata, "What is that ingredient called Rasa?" (vi: 2). Bharata's reply is cryptic, "That which a *sahrdaya* relishes by mind is Rasa." (vi: 31, 2) Hence Rasa characterizes the pleasure which all classes of people receive from their experience and relish it.

Valmiki, the father of classical Sanskrit literature, stands "At the threshold of the theory of Rasa." (Sankaran, 7) Anandavardhana regards the incident of a pair of *krauncha* birds twitter-

ing with joy on the branch of a tree, and the male partner's having been shot dead by a hunter, *nishada* (as delineated in the *Ramayana Balkanda* II) in Vālmīki's life as revealing of the critic in him, in his sudden and spontaneous utterance (*Balkanda*, ii, 15)[7] and, also in that, having in embryo the theory of Rasa which was developed fully by Bharata, its first exponent. Therefore critics read in Anandvardhana's *Dhvanyaloka*, karika 1, 5 that in his view Valmiki is the father of the theory of Rasa.

The theory of Rasa characterizes the emotional effect of drama or poetry in general. In that it successfully illustrates the meaning, nature, and the rise of aesthetic pleasure that a refined and responsive or *sahrdaya* audience experiences, while witnessing a successful enactment of a drama by talented actors, or reading poetry. This theory is briefly stated in the oft-quoted aphorism by Bharata in Chapter VI of his *Natyashastra*:

vibhavanubhava vyabhicarisanyogad rasanispattih

Its meaning can be rendered in simple English that the realization of Rasa results from the appropriate union of *vibhava*, *anubhava*, and *vyabhicharibhava*. But this aphoristic definition in itself does not make any sense for us without associating the union of *vibhava*, *anubhava*, *vyabhicharibhavas* with the permanent emotion.[8] Bharata delineates eight *sthayibhavas*, which when transformed into eight different moods of impersonal joyous emotional exaltation, give the experience of eight different Rasas in accordance with their respective *sthayibhavas* which can be represented in tabular form as under:

	STHAYIBHAVA	**RASA**
1.	Love or *Rati*	erotic or *Sringara*
2.	Mirth or *Hasya*	humour or *Hasa*
3.	Sorrow or *Soka*	pathos or *Karuna*
4.	Anger or *Krodha*	wrath or *Raudra*
5.	Fortitude or *Utsaha*	heroism or *Vira*
6.	Fear or *Bhaya*	terror or *bhayanaka*
7.	Disgust or *jugupsa*	disgust or *vibhatsa*
8.	Wonder or *vismaya*	marvellous or *adbhut*

Before we come to the consideration of the realization of Rasa, it is imperative to acquaint ourselves, at least in brief, with *vibhavas*, *anubhavas*, and *vyabhicaribhavas*. *Vibhavas* are the stimuli which activate a permanent emotion. These are of two kinds—human and environmental, and in the language of *Natyashastra* they are known as *alambana* and *uddipana* respectively. *Alambana vibhava* refers to the object which is responsible for stimulating or exciting the dormant emotion. As in the case of the *rati sthayibhava* the beloved Shakuntala stimulates the emotion of love in Dusayanta, and the lover Orlando activates the passion of love in Rosalind in Kalidasa's *Abhijnanasakuntalam* and Shakespeare's *As You Like It* respectively. The lively season of spring, the moonlit night in *saradritu*, the cool, soft, slow, and sweet smelling breeze, and the fragrance of flowers are the *uddipana vibhavas*, since they help enhance the emotive effect as how environmental *vibhavas* add to the excitement of love in Shelley's *Love's Philosophy*:

> The fountain mingles with the river
> And the river with the ocean,
> The winds of heaven mix forever
> With a sweet emotion;
> Nothing in the world is single,
> All things by a law divine
> In one another's being mingle
> Why not I with thine?
> See the mountains kiss high heaven,
> And the waves clasp one another;
> No sister-flower would be forgiven
> If it disdained its brother:
> And the sunlight clasps the earth,
> And the moonbeams kiss the sea—
> What are all these kissing worth,
> If thou kiss not me?

Anubhavas are external manifestations of the emotions evoked or excited by vibhavas, as words, gestures, and satva (N.S. vii: prose following the verse 4). "They suggest and indicate the ef-

fect wrought upon the characters after the emotions have been evoked."[9]

Besides the eight permanent emotions Bharata mentions *vyabhicaribhavas* in the main aphoristic *sutra* itself, these are subsidiary and evanescent emotions which accompany *sthayibhavas*. All the transient emotions are essentially and substantially related to the permanent emotion. Basically they emerge from it, and ultimately merge into it like the waves in the ocean. Bharata enumerates them as thirty three (N.S.,VI, 18-21). But his list of these evanescent emotions is not exhaustive, rather it is only representative. "There may be many more transient emotions accompanying the principal emotion depending on the situation that develops." (Singhal, 42)

Bharata expounds, "just as well cultured persons, while eating food, prepared with various spices, relish its taste and get satisfaction, so do the audience with refined and responsive mind (*sumanasah*) relish permanent emotion when they witness them represented by an expression of various emotions through words, gestures, and involuntary responses, and get pleasure and satisfaction (N.S., VI, 31, 1-2).

This is, thus, the basic outline of theory of Rasa as enunciated by Bharata. We may broadly arrive at a conclusion that *sthayibhava* is the basic raw material for Rasa the essence of which consists in "*Asvadayanti manasah*," i.e., tasting by mind. The poetic technique through which the appropriate union of *vibhavas*, *anubhavas*, and *vyabhicaribhavas*, as awakens the *sthayibhava* and transform it into a depersonalized and idealized form, it emerges into Rasa. A. Sankaran rightly makes the point that "When a drama is represented, aided by poetry, music, and other histrionic devices—which Bharata calls *Natyadharmita*—the deep seated instinctive impression of love (*Sthayibhava*) is kindled in the mind of the audience and developed to that climax, when through complete imaginative sympathy with the situation, the audience forgets all differences of person, time and place, and this climax of emotion reveals itself in a sort of blissful consciousness. This bliss is Rasa." (18)

Aristotle's Theory of Catharsis

The word catharsis had its origin from the Greek root "Kathairo" which means "to cleanse." In Aristotle's time it was used in the medical sense of purgation and also in the religious sense of purification. Aristotle uses Catharsis in his Poetics only once in the technical sense of the word in the definition of tragedy in Chapter Six, and once in the general sense of the word in Chapter Seventeen for the purification of a dramatic personage. In both, medical and religious, senses catharsis meant purification to all intents and purposes. Hence there is no basic difference between the two chief meanings of the word; but for the last three hundred years there has been much debate—which still continues to be inconclusive—among scholars and critics on exactly what Aristotle meant by catharsis in his following definition of tragedy: "language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narration; through pity and fear affecting the proper purgation (Catharsis) of these emotions.[10]

Aristotle agrees with Plato on a number of points regarding the effect of poetry and its connection with the emotions. Humphrey House (100) enumerates these points as under:

(1) That poetry is an "imitative" art.

(2) That poetry rouses the emotions.

(3) That poetry gives pleasure, both as an imitation and as arousing the emotions through imitative means.

(4) That the rousing of emotions by poetry has an effect upon the whole personality of the spectator or reader and on his emotional behaviour in real life.

But Aristotle had no agreement in all spheres of his practical philosophy, with Plato's theory that the emotions in themselves are bad. And therefore, Aristotle specifically rejected his view that poetry produces a perilous excess of emotions in real life by rousing them. On the contrary Aristotle holds that emotions are like different capacities which we inherit from Nature. In themselves emotions are neither good nor bad, and they are as essential as reason and other faculties for human existence and upward

progress of man. In human life their goodness and propriety consists in being controlled by reason. In Aristotle's thought, emotions and passions in themselves are not bad, but the excess of emotions caused by overcharged feelings is bad. In his theory of catharsis tragedy first rouses the emotions like pity and fear, and then reduces them to a "just measure" with a view to attain an equilibrium of reason and emotion in the sense of evacuating something undesirable from the body by the use of an aperient. Tragedy, having aroused powerful feelings in the spectators, has also a therapeutic effect, after a storm and climax of these emotions a sense of release from tension, of calm—in Milton's phrase "Calm of mind, all passion spent." Catharsis not only leads to the complete emotional relief and relaxation of tension but also to the sublimation, depersonalization, universalization, and transformation of one's emotions from being self regarding into the altruistic ones. According to Aristotle himself the outcome of catharsis is a state of emotional health. After their brief sketch of the meaning and nature of Catharsis, the issues relating to catharsis will be discussed in the ensuing pages in their relevant contexts while attempting a comparison and contrast of the theories of Rasa and catharsis.

The Comparison of Bharata's Theory of Rasa with Aristotle's Theory of Catharsis

During the nineteenth century frequent attempts were made to show certain inter-relation "between the Greek (Attic) theatre and the Sanskrit drama" with a view to propagate, by certain unproven theories that Indian theatre adopted or borrowed every thing from the Greeks. But no scholar in the western world is reported to have undertaken the arduous task to study in depth the canons and principles of the two great theoreticians, Bharata and Aristotle, besides Max Lindenau, Leipzig, and Windisch who surveyed only the surface of the problem.

In this paper the present writer attempts to bring out certain similarities and differences in Bharata's theory of Rasa and Aristotle's theory of Catharsis, however, without attempting to point out the influence of one upon the other, or the impact of a spe-

cific world-view on both. The similarities in the works of two great theoreticians should be used only to demonstrate that the human eternal expresses itself in the same form and projection in the writing of different writers who lived in different times, different milieus, different countries, and different climate. These similarities and differences are just enumerated in the tabular form as under:

Major Similarities:

1) There is a common debate about both the terms, Rasa and Catharsis, whether they were borrowed from medicine or religion.
2) Both Bharata and Aristotle have propounded the theory of imitation. In that both are of the view that poetry imitates human emotions signifying certain flavours based on man's dominant emotions which form the foundation of poetic composition.
3) In both the treatises, *Natyashastra* and *Poetics*, the theories of Rasa and Catharsis were propounded for drama; but with the course of time they came to encompass the whole of poetry.
4) The universalization and depersonalization of emotions in Catharsis, and the Sadharanikarana in the realization of Rasa are alike both in process and effect.
5) Both the theories—Rasa and Catharsis—deal with the aesthetic pleasure which art affords to the audience.
6) Both Bharata and Aristotle prescribe certain mental and intellectual qualifications for the 'fit audience', the appreciator of Art.

Major Differences:

1) In the Rasa theory the metamorphosis of different emotions cause 8 to11 different Rasas, whereas Catharsis confines itself mainly to the emotions of pity and fear.
2) Bharata's Karuna and Bhaya are not only diagonally opposed to Aristotle's pity and fear but also have much wider meaning and implication.

NOTES

1. J.A. Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London, Penguin, 1977). T.P. Ramachandran [The Indian Philosophy of Beauty, Part One: Perspective (Madras: University of Madras, 1979); Part Two: Special Concept (Madras: University of Madras, 1980)] argues, "The term 'aesthetics' is applied in a loose way to the criticism of art. But aesthetics should not be equated with art criticism" (1979, ix).
2. Humphrey House, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Indian ed., Ludhiana: Kalyani, 1970), p. 113.
3. Ramavatar Sharma, *Vangamayarnvam* (4657-4661) (Varanasi: Jnanmandala, 2024—Vikram Era).
4. See A. Sankaran (*The Theory of Rasa and Dhvani* (Madras: University of Madras, 1973, pp. 1-6) for different stages of the development of the meaning of Rasa in Vedic period.
5. In this context it also should be remembered that the entire content of all the four Vedas has been classified into four divisions 1. Mantra, 2. Brahmana, 3. Aranyaka, and 4. Upanisad. Hence in the broader sense Upanisads are nothing separate from the Vedas.
6. *Asvadayanti manasah tasmannatyarasah smrtih.* (N.S., VI: 31, 2)
7. *Ma nisada pratisthan tvamagamah sasvatih samah,*
   Yat kroncamithunadekamabadhih kamamohitam. (*Balkanda*, ii,15). *Srimad Valmiki Ramayana*, Sanskrit Text and English Trans. (Gorakhpur: Geeta Press, 1992).
8. Siegfried A. Shulz, "Foreword," R.L. Singal, *Aristotle and Bharata: A Comparative Study of their Treatises of Drama* (Hosiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, 1977), p. VII.
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"Craving for intensity beyond intelligent survival": Women in the Novels of Ruchira Mukerjee and Manju Kapur

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The present paper is an attempt to raise questions related to women's quest for identity and self-fulfilment. As we look at the entire corpus of Indian women's writing in English we notice that it is primarily "a literature of the elite, for the elite and by the elite." Their characters are basically middle class and upper middle class women and the novels are continuously looking for freedom from social and moral constraints. There is little that is being said about other oppressed groups. How many Dalit women emerge as central protagonists in the present literary scenario? Do we have a space and courage to represent alternate modes of sexuality? Is there any challenge to masculine hegemony? What exactly is the position of a working class woman in literature? As for the teaching of literature with a woman-centred approach, courses on women's studies and focus on papers like language and gender have not been incorporated in the mainstream literature. If introduced they remain options and fail to serve as catalysts for change. The archetypal masculine gaze continues to haunt the women in fiction.

As we examine the contrasting images of women in Ruchira Mukerjee's first novel *Toad in my Garden* and Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters* we notice that their women are tugged to conformity. *Toad in my Garden* has two parallel stories of Damyanti and Megha. The novel traces the trajectory of romantic love in the life of a young college girl. There are striking contrasts between the two college girls Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* and Megha in *Toad in my Garden*. While Virmati is a pre-Independence woman who strives to go to college, Megha

does not have to fight for higher education. Her class and times have put her in a privileged position. While for Megha need for love becomes an essential corollary for growing up, love becomes a permanent trap from which there is no respite for Virmati. Megha's childhood infatuation for Nilu uncle continues until adolescence. The rich and arrogant wife Monica takes her to task for having developed an illicit relationship with her husband. Unlike Monica, Ganga in *Difficult Daughters* can do nothing to control or challenge her authority as a married woman. She is dependent, has children, is bound by tradition and conformity and resigns herself to her fate. She sulks in private and her anger and ire is directed not at her husband but towards Virmati. Even for Virmati this fairy tale romance has no happy ending. It brings with it indignity, anger, frustration and suffering. It is a suffering to which she can give no name. Unlike her, Megha has a chance to recover—hopefully her new love will cure her.

In literature we have several examples of romantic love as an "unattainable ideal." In modern times romance has "moved from being about a male subject to becoming a commodity about women, for women." (Mitchell 108). It is the voice of *Jane Eyre* haunting through the passages of *Difficult Daughters*: "I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit; which might reach the busy world, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen: that then I desired more of practical experience than I possessed; more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character, than was here within my reach." (Bronte, 110)

Compare it with the desire of Virmati: "It was useless looking for answers inside home. One had to look outside. To education, freedom and the bright lights of Lahore Colleges." (22) Like some of the nineteenth century women in literature, take the example of Jane Eyre who falls in love with Rochester and comes to know much later that he has a mad wife in the cellar, or a twentieth century love story Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* who too falls in love with a married man, or Maggie O'Tulliver of *The Mill on the Floss* who falls in love with a man engaged to be married to her cousin. We see that women writers are rewrit-

ing the romance by shifting focus and creating a hiatus by making the woman the "object of the romantic tale itself." (Mitchell 108)

In all the novels cited earlier we notice that a woman's first encounter with her body becomes a significant point of departure for her. The female body is always at a disadvantage. The woman is either silent about her sexuality or defiant. For a woman sexuality is a "domain of restriction, repression and danger" and for a man it is a "domain of exploration, pleasure and agency." (Vance, 1). It can also be argued that sexuality becomes a site of women's oppression. Grounded in cultural, religious and social traditions a woman's body is pure as long as it is untouched by man. Having once experienced sex—trespassed—the flesh is now violated, offered and hence bound for good. Loss of virginity has multiple implications in their lives. This happens in marriage, outside marriage. A sense of shame is inflicted and the woman gives in. What is gratification for one is sin for the other. What is desire for one is a disgrace to the other. What is amusement for one is a scandal for the other. As suggested by de Beauvoir: "the young girl has hardly more than her body which she can call her own: it is her greatest treasure; the man who enters her takes it from her; . . . she is overpowered, forced to compliance, conquered." (de Beauvoir 405) Virmati too moves into the "forbidden territory" and she is compelled to think: "Wasn't her future partner decided by the first touch of a man on her body?"

A year later, one abortion and one miscarriage leave her cold and uninterested but eventually she does nothing but submit to his caresses (228). In this case the woman becomes an object, a body that is conquered and a consciousness that is violated. "Passionate love [has] irreducible ambiguity and potential tragedy." (Kakar 211) As for Ganga: Her bindi and her bangles, her toe rings and her mangalsutra, all managed to suggest that he was still her God. (257) The above signifiers of her marital status reinforce male supremacy. An explicit connection is visible between femininity and objectification. Ganga's appropriation by the patriarchal culture and her "abject gratitude" is linked with

conventional morality. She deludes herself with the thought that by serving him she will be able to re-gain his affection and love.

Education is no catalyst. For Virmati, education and freedom both come with a price.

Harish seems to be enjoying the services of Ganga as a servant and that of Virmati as a companion. In the entire novel the man has nothing to lose and everything to gain whilst the two women vying for the same man have everything to lose starting from love, respect and worst of all happiness.

Harish had given her the "gloss and patina" which consisted of "education, work, marriage and suffering." Illicit love draws her away from her old loyalties and attachments. Torn between duty and desire, loving and knowing, responsibility and restraint her intrinsic vitality and enthusiasm can do little to make her happy. In the words of Manju Kapur her's is a story of denial: "She denies herself from the moment she's born. That is not freedom. Whatever she takes, she is so guilty, that is not freedom—if you take things and are made to feel guilty, that is not freedom—she may take things and rebel against her parents but she's made to feel guilty—"it's your fault," "you have made us suffer," "you made your father die," "you did this and you did that." (Aneja).

It is ironical that Virmati has to face rejection first at the hands of her mother and later from her own daughter. Both deny her their trust and affection. Both feel betrayed. Both live with a deep resentment towards her. Both treat her as an outlaw. In Virmati Ida finds a woman she would never like to be. Harish replaces his longing for beauty and perfection by shifting his gaze on "the model daughter." Conscious of her history Virmati "tightens her reins" on Ida. As we examine the "socially produced" nature of "subjectivity" (of the conflicting women) it becomes apparent that it is a "constant site of struggle over power" (Weedon 21).

Trapped within the bond of a lustreless marriage Damyanti has lived an uninteresting, insipid life. Patriarchy has devised specific rules and a specific code of conduct for her "Women who stood at front doors, said Beni Madho (her husband), were

women on the look out. For fresh pasture, men he meant." He firmly resisted her attempts to sing bits of thumri as she did the chores for "singing and those coloured magazines spelt evil for women . . . they made their minds languid and intemperate." (23) Childless and greying at forty-six she has little to hold him back. In her youth she was prohibited from going out alone to the market but now that she is "small mouthed, hag ridden woman who never laughs and in the presence of people turns as silent as cattle" (25) he finds it safe to rent a room upstairs to a bachelor. Drawing parallels from Karnad's *Hayavadana*, Ashwin points out to Damyanti: "You are the capable one who threw it all away. You had a mind but decided to put it in camphor and seal it away so Beni Madho could do your thinking for you. You could sing a decent thumri, but had the tongue cut out of your head." (51)

It is interesting to note that Damyanti in Ruchira Mukerjee's novel goes through a transformation. With the help and initiation from Ashwin she is able to think of a life beyond marriage, think in terms of her abilities as an individual and begins to see "a commitment of her own to society with which her commitments as a wife . . . can be integrated." (Friedan 299). She is able to see through the feminine mystique. The fear of "being nothing, a cipher."

"Nobody can keep you from unhappiness if you are determined to make it your fate." (53) We see in her refusal to be intimidated by the loud and unfaithful husband a resilience and courage which comes with assertion, proud acceptance of her own capabilities:

"Determined she curses him: you have taken everything, my speech, my laughter, my singing. You have locked me up and turned me into an animal." (196) She calls him a freak, a *rakshas*. While he is left wondering, "Where was the woman he had subdued, who knew him incontrovertibly as master?" (198) Having reversed the master-slave dichotomy, she emerges as a "newly born woman." Speech and laughter are synonymous with life. Speech and laughter are the individual's basic rights. It is interesting to note that speech belongs to the symbolic order; it is a

prerogative of the master and his culture, laughter on the other hand is a weapon of the hysteric. The woman has to break open the seal, let her self be heard, explode and move into the world of challenge, opportunity, and self-realization. In the words of Helene Cixous, "she has answered the harassment, the familial conjugal venture of domestication, the repeated attempts to castrate her." (Cixous 95) She is now "ready to blow the law . . . in language." "Woman has always functioned "within" man's discourse, a signifier referring always to the opposing signifier that annihilates its particular energy . . . now it is time for her to displace this "within," explode it, overturn it, grab it, make it hers, take it in . . . not taking possession to internalise or manipulate but to shoot through and smash the walls." (Cixous 95-96) Any attempt to move out of the enclosure is looked at as a significant departure from duty and domesticity. If on one hand it entails suffering and loneliness, on the other it is a liberation of sorts.

In her book, Betty Friedan talks of a need for a "life plan," "open to change, as new possibilities open in society and in oneself. (330) In the two novels teaching music, literature or heading, a school becomes their *raison d'etre*. Seemingly teaching is the safest profession for women.

According to Chris Weedon, "The nature of femininity and masculinity is one of the key sites of discursive struggle for the individual. . . . It is a struggle which begins at birth and which is central to upbringing and education." (Weedon 98) It is important to note that education plays a dominant role in the lives of women. If in certain cases it fails to free them from the shackles of male dominance, social tradition and popular prejudices it also gives them the authority to doubt and question, to assert and reshape their lives. As suggested by Woolf: "But it is not education only that is needed. It is that women should have liberty of experience; that they should differ from men without fear and express those differences openly . . . be . . . encouraged to think, invent, imagine and create as freely as men do" (Woolf 32-33). And it is this "difference" that alone would bring in a difference to women's lives.

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Comic Imagination in the Works of Khushwant Singh

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Once Khushwant Singh wrote: "There are many things that make different people laugh. But trying to analyze laughter is like dissecting a frog. You may see its entrails and whatever else it has inside, but you kill the frog in the process. You should just accept laughter as a phenomenon that releases tension and makes you feel lighter and happier" (1990, 5). Mark Twain gave a similar forewarning against the analysis of *Huckleberry Finn*. Most writers and critics have usually warned against analyzing humour in their imaginative creation. The analysis of a creative work is meant to enhance the reader's pleasure, not to kill it in the process.

Khushwant Singh has liberally fused wit and humour in his novels, short stories, and in his journalistic writings. Humour is a god-given gift, which comes to those who have simplicity and generosity of heart untwisted or de-shaped by psychic complexities and feelings of ill will. Besides being temperamentally jovial, which makes him provoke, create and enjoy humour, Khushwant Singh is aware of the human weakness for humour—for his desire to laugh and to get rid of tension. He writes: "There is a fund of humour in all of us. The more it is sought to be suppressed, the more it manifests itself. You forbid a person to laugh and he will laugh all the louder" (1990, 6).

Singh's sense of humour is rooted in the Punjabi soil, is of homegrown variety, and as such is full-blooded, vigorous, masculine and suited to the people of all ages. Besides, he too believes in healthy, virile and realistic tradition of literature. It is not bookish, laboured and sophisticated, but spontaneous and natural which irrepressibly forces an instant expression irrespec-

tive of the occasion—opportune or otherwise. Once a comic writer Danny Kaye interviewed Khushwant Singh and humorously asked about his sense of humour: "Mr. Khushwant Singh, my dear, you are so sweet . . . what should I call you?" "Anyway you like," smiled Khushwant Singh. "I will call you Khushy! Oh, no! no! I will call you Bushy. Bushy! How are you?" (Qtd. Shahane, 31). As a newspaper reporter, a columnist and a creative writer, Khushwant Singh observed life critically and is well aware of its tensions and ailments. In order to remove the pervading gloominess, he scatters the sunshine, while he tactfully uses irony, humour and satire to expose vices and follies in order to make the world a better place. The chief trait of Singh's art is comic, but closely allied with social, psychological and moral aspects of life. In some respects, he has traits of Joseph Addison, Jonathan Swift, Mark Twain and R.K. Narayan.

Though Khushwant Singh has written many novels and short stories in English, his novel *Train to Pakistan* (1956) remains the best known. It is a story of political hatred and violence which had spread to both India and Pakistan. In the summer of 1947, when the partition of India was already announced, even the otherwise peaceful village Mano Majra also erupts with violence after a local moneylender is murdered. Juggut Singh, a Sikh lawbreaker, loves Nooran, a Muslim girl, for whose sake he sacrifices his own life. Though the main interest of the novel comes from the love-affair between Juggat Singh and Nooran, the violence in view of the partition also grips the readers. Thus love, sex and violence become fused with Khushwant Singh's irony, wit, and humour.

In *Train to Pakistan*, Khushwant Singh portrays the psyche of the Punjabi-speaking middle class people, largely illiterate, whose sense of humour naturally is raw, earthy and soaked in simplicity of heart. Singh characterizes their ignorance of men and manners which make them trip, fumble, stumble and fall down. Juggut Singh, a law-breaker, terms English as "git-mit" and narrates what his uncle's son had taught him—half English, half Hindustani:

"Pigeon—*kabootur, oodan*—fly,
Look—*dekho, usman*—sky" (96)

In Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Khushwant Singh, literal translations of Hindi or Punjabi dialogues into English have been employed to lend the flavour of native language to the readers of novels in English. While to a large extent, such translations served the authors' purpose well, on many occasions, they appear odd, strange, peculiar and become a source of fun and of humour. In *Train to Pakistan,* Singh literally translates "*Apka shubh naam kya hai*" as "What honorable noun does your honour bear?" and "*Apka daulatkhana kidhar hai,*" as "Where does your wealth reside." An old woman, who had brought Haseena Begum—the dancing girl—to Magistrate Hukum Chand, blesses him in words which appear somewhat odd and funny in English: "May your government go on forever. May your pen inscribe figures of thousands—nay, hundreds of thousands," (78) even though they are literal translation of two typical Hindi expressions: "*Tumhari hukumat barson kayam rahe. Tum hazaron aur lakhon main khelo,*" which are commonly used in daily life. The implication is that the person may become rich and richer so that his income increases to hundreds and thousands of rupees. An irritated constable tells Bhai Meet Singh, "Sentry Sahib, Sentry Sahib, Sentry Sahib. You have been *eating my ears* with your Sentry Sahib. What do you want?" (italics mine, 105). The expression "eating my ears" is quite common in Hindi and Punjabi, but to a non-provincial or foreign reader, its literal translation makes the auditory organ look like an edible item! Haseena Begum—a dancing girl—sings a song which provides a mild sense of humour:

In the breeze is flying
My veil of red muslin
Ho Sir, Ho Sir (75)

It is a crude, literal rendering of an old popular movie song with lines, "*Hawa Men Udata Jaye, Mera lal dupatta malmal ka, Ho ji, Ho ji.*" Another line of a popular song that Singh literally translates into English is "Sunday after Sunday, O my life" (25)

which is a similar rendering of "*Ana Meri Jaan, Meri Jaan,* Sunday *ke* Sunday." In Khushwant Singh's *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), Magistrate Wazir Chand tells Buta Singh, "Sardar Sahib, you are a big man and we are but small radishes from an unknown garden" (27) which is literal translation of *kis khet ki mooli* denoting his utter insignificance.

Indians have the habit of using one noun together with a similar-sounding meaningless word to suggest somewhat identical items. Though this is quite a common practice among Indians, on recounting such things logically one begins to realize the absurdity of it, which creates a mild humour. With a fine ear for such dialogues, Khushwant Singh reproduces in his novel *Delhi* the narrator's encounter with a Customs Officer on the former's return to India:

> "Any whisky-shisky?"
> "No."
> "No tape recorder?"
> "No."
> "Transistor-shranzistor?"
> "No."
> "Camera-shamera?"
> "No."
> "Watch-shotch?"
> "No." (3-4)

Such expressions are the symptoms, in my opinion, of a general sense of vagueness and lack of precision in expression, which characterize Indians. Though the speaker here is the Customs Officer, who must be well-educated, the attitude of skirting clarity is often found among the uneducated people. Now modern Indian politicians have cultivated this drawback of expression into a fine art to wriggle out of any commitment. As a matter of fact, the Customs Officer too is being diplomatic by fishing out information so that he could demand some bribe but when the uneducated people use such expressions, it is mostly out of ignorance or innocence. Haseena Begum in *Train to Pakistan* is an illiterate dancing girl. When Magistrate Hukum Chand asks her age, she says, "I don't know. Sixteen or seventeen. May be

eighteen. I was not born literate" (88).

Regional and ethnic characteristics, even prejudices, provide a good deal of comic material for novels, short stories, newspaper columns, plays and movies. They provide tempting topics for gossips in educational institutions, theatres, and coffee houses. Such is the case not only in India but in all parts of the world. Living in a cosmopolitan city and being in touch with people from various countries and diverse ethnic groups, Khushwant Singh gives abundance of interesting dialogues based on ethnicity which are quite witty, humorous but occasionally bawdy, even vulgar. In *Delhi*, one Englishman wonders on a particular day what makes the Sikh so inactive and depressed:

> The *goras* asked the natives what had happened to us. The Pathans shook their heads and smiled. The Dogras sniggered "Sahib, these Sikhs have long hair. The heat gets them, and they go crazy." We yelled back at them, "Oi, your mothers and sisters also have long hair. They must feel the heat. Send them to us, we will cool the heat between their thighs." (280)

When a woman prisoner is brought among the Sikh fighters, the latter plan to have sex with her, but they talk about it in *double entendres*—words or phrases with two meanings, one of them being usually obscene. The words "oven," "heat" and "weapon" are fairly common in Punjabi and are often used to denote sexual activities. When one of the Sikh fighters tells that she is an old woman, the other person says:

> "I bet her oven is still warm. We can bake our loaves before putting it out."
>
> "Oi, she is a whore. She must have run an army kitchen on her oven. . . . I bet many regiments have passed between her thighs."
>
> "Nihalia," says one of the youngsters, "you scrub your weapon in her first, then we can also get rid of our surplus of semen." (286)

One of the best sources of humour in literature has been the activities and dialogues of children. Their mischief, their playful activities, their innocent or idiotic prattle become a source of recreation both in real life and in the world of fiction. Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, R.K. Narayan and Arundhati Roy, among oth-

ers, have used children and their funny activities, their idiotic but occasionally intelligent conversation as a powerful source of humour. Their playful activities transform the sombre atmosphere into comic. Of course, not many children exist in Khushwant Singh's works. In *Delhi*, a Muslim tongawallah nearly knocks down a Sikh who had on his bicycle his wife and four children. When the Sikh cyclist abuses the Muslim tongawallah, a boy from the tonga speaks out:

> Out of the huddle of *burqas* rises a six-year-old David. He loosens his red jock strap, sticks out his pelvis and flourishes his tiny circumcised penis. He hurls back abuses like pellets from a sling. '*Abey Sikhrey*! *Harami* (bastard), you want to sit on my Qutub Minar?"
>
> Daood *Mian's* Qutub is a mighty two-and-a-half inches long. The other Kutub only 283 feet! (48)

Khushwant Singh's forte is the exaggeration of a trait, an idiosyncrasy, a peculiarity, a habit which would be somewhat in departure from the rest. With the technique of a cartoonist, Singh would magnify and exaggerate the oddity so much that by making it disproportionately striking against the rest, he would convert it into fun, jollity and even ridicule. While describing the short duration of a devastating dust storm, Singh writes: "All this happens in a few seconds. Before you can say *Chakravartiyarajgopalachari*, the gale is gone" (1956, 80). In *Delhi*, Khushwant Singh finds the name of a Muslim king "as long as the road from Rikabganj to Paharganj—His Majesty Abul Muzaffar Shahabuddin Mohammed Sahib-i-Qiran Sani, Shadow of God on earth, King of Kings, Monarch of the Universe, Emperor of Hindustan" (124). Or life in Mano Majra was so much regulated by the morning, noon, evening and night trains that when the partition riots started, the trains became irregular and "children did not know when to be hungry and clamoured for food all the time" (1956, 67). A dark brunette is described as wearing "a short waistcoat with a glittering row of buttons and tight-fitting trousers displaying a figure which would melt an iceberg if she sat on one" (1989, 178).

The device of exaggeration has also been used to depict ob-

scenity, dirt and filth which are in abundance in the country. These things should normally not find a place in a paper on humour as the depiction of ugly reality is not quite pleasing and does not cheer up one's spirits. Nevertheless, it can be taken as an example of black humour in which one laughs with some discomfort at the ludicrous scene that India presents to the tourists. When the narrator in *Delhi* takes a foreign tourist in and around Delhi, he comes across scores of defecating bottoms early in the morning. Singh describes the scene:

> The fields are littered with defecators; some face us with their penises dangling between their haunches; others display their buttocks—barely an inch above pyramids of shit. The Indian peasant is the world's champion shitter. (14)

Characterization in the hands of a novelist can become an important source of humour undertaken usually through an odd or humorous image, frequently hyperbolic, soaked in irony, and bordering on caricature. In his short story, "A Bride for the Sahib," Singh portrays a semi-comic figure of the Director whose "mouth was full of betel saliva. He raised his face to hold it from dribbling out and bawled out to the chaprasi: 'Hey spittoon lau.'" (13) Mrs. Sen who was given a sandwich "scooped up a mixture of rice, curry and cheddar and put it in her mouth. She took one bite and stopped munching. Through her thick glasses she stared at her husband as if he had given her poison."

Since humour is associated with brighter side of life, those who indulge in fun and humour are often accused of being insensitive to the feelings of others. As a matter of fact if a person hurts the feelings of others through derision and laughter, it is not so much by his wit and humour as by his use of irony and satire. On the contrary, the people who laugh or make others laugh do not necessarily happen to be happy; they often cry in silence. In order to drown their sorrows, and to save themselves from ending up in lunatic asylum, they take the support of humour as an antidote or a safety valve. Charles Lamb, Oliver Goldsmith and Charles Dickens had had a fair share of their miseries but in their writings they had good humour, occasionally

with a streak of pathos, because as they spread the sunshine of wit and humour, they also were conscious of the pathetic side of their own and their fictional characters. In Khushwant Singh, one finds a very few occasions in which humour is accompanied by pathos. In the short story "Karma," he portrays the character of Sir Mohan Lal—a Western Oriental Gentleman—with his Oxonian accent, his fondness for the English newspaper and his poor Hindustani. His typical Indian wife sits in an interclass-zenana compartment while he sits in the upper class craving for striking a conversation with the English if they happen to travel with him in the same compartment. Raising his expectations, two Englishmen come, but instead of sitting with him, they throw Sir Mohan Lal's luggage out, piece by piece, and later on he himself is thrown out. He lands on the platform, helplessly asking the guard to stop the train while his wife from her inter-class zenana compartment spits out a mouthful of betel leaf saliva not knowing that it was to land over her husband having been thrown out on the platform. The entire humorous picture in the story turns to pathos on realization how Indians were ill-treated in India by the Englishmen during the colonial period.

However, it would be far from truth to suggest that Khushwant Singh carelessly throws stones at others without realizing whom and where it hits. He is a shrewd columnist and knows very well what reactions to anticipate from the readers. As a matter of fact, many people are of the opinion that Khushwant Singh intentionally embraces controversies and periodically itches for them, because they give him the much-needed publicity by making him an item of news, planning well the escape routes through which he would wriggle out unscathed. Periodically, Singh springs a surprise by writing or saying something, which could be offending, but when a controversy has been kicked up, he appears to enjoy the accompanying publicity. As a member of Rajya Sabha, Khushwant Singh reportedly shocked the house by telling that "Half of the Members of Parliament are corrupt." It was a bombshell which triggered a violent protest from all the members of Rajya Sabha who insisted that he withdraw his statement. Khushwant Singh apparently retracted his statement

by saying, "Half of the Members of Parliament are not corrupt." The satisfied Members of Rajya Sabha failed to notice that Khushwant Singh had said the very same thing again, but at the same time had indirectly called them fools as well. He can create an incident, modify a fact, dig up a buried scandal or change a well-established myth to suit his purpose. In order to hit out at the present day rulers of India, he in *Delhi* interpolates extraneous material in the Rama myth, as is given below:

> The Sikh journalist is a joker. He tells me an old joke as if it were the latest one. "When Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were leaving Ayodhya for their fourteen year exile, the citizens came to see them off. At the city gate Sri Ramchandraji begged them to return to their homes: 'Ladies and gentlemen, thus far no further.' The citizens obeyed his orders and went back. Fourteen years later when the exiles returned to Ayodhya they met a party sitting outside the city gates. 'You did not give us permission to return to our homes,' they said. 'You only allowed the men and women to go back. We are neither because we are *hijras*.' Sri Ramchandraji was so overcome by their devotion that he blessed them: 'In the year 1947 I grant you *hijras* the empire of Hindustan.'" (376)

In portraying the inhuman cruelties perpetrated by the Pakistanis in *Train to Pakistan*, Singh made the Bhai of Gurudwara narrate a story of a Pakistani truck-driver driving from Amritsar to Lahore. The truck-driver and two Pakistani soldiers were trigger happy and killed many Sikhs on the way. Then they came across a pariah dog. The same truck driver who had killed so many people, in order to avoid hitting the dog, swerved sharply to the right and crashed into a tree, causing his own death and that of the soldiers. Then the Bhai asked the question as to who had caused the crash—the dog or God—and the Indians policeman answered: "God—of course" (60). Here the incident is a tell-tale commentary on Singh's inventiveness and at the same time his ironical portrayal of things by comparing the highest with the lowest which becomes a source of humour.

Khushwant Singh's brand of humour may not quite fit into the traditional mould of decency but it is a mixture of laughing material having buffoonery, political jibes, communication

gaffes, and social blunders, among others. Some of his jokes may be naughty, outrageous, even absurd, but they provoke laughter and lighten our tense moments. It has been said that each generation produces its own humorists and Khushwant Singh can be said to be one. He writes: "I may be the one for the present generation. To be named as a reincarnation of Birbal, Tenali Raman and Gopal Bhor is indeed a great honour, though an undeserved one. To be able to make people laugh once a while when they have little to laugh about, entitles me to be recognized as the number one jester of the Republic of Hindustan" (1996, 6). Since Indian writing in English cannot claim to have many creative writers gifted with comic imagination, Khushwant Singh certainly has a place of eminence among the galaxy of writers who have made their writings delightful and enjoyable by fusing wit and humour in them.

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Alienation versus Affirmation: The Novels of Anita Desai

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Most of the protagonists of Anita Desai's novels are seen as neurotic, psychotic, crazy, abnormal or eccentric bordering on insanity both by the majority of critics and other characters within the novels. But the question that has not been explored in depth is whether the madness and psychosis are inherent in their nature or they developed this state of mind as part of their quest for a secure, happy life. More importantly, the forces of insanity which obviously drive these protagonists to either self-destruction, inflicting violence on others or a re-birth and reappraisal of their 'selves'—are they elusive, non-existent or concrete? The effort to seek suitable answers to these questions will not only provide the appropriate perspective for proper understanding of their dilemmas but will also reveal if there is a positive growth in their characters with new insights emerging in the process of self-realization with the help of some life-affirming forces finally having their sway. When viewed in this context, Jasbir Jain's observation sounds very apt and significant: "Somehow when her work is approached, it is the closely woven warp and woof which absorbs one's attention, and not the autobiographical element; when the themes are analyzed, the social and political elements are subtly camouflaged and subdued by dwelling on emotions and responses which are far more engrossing than the hard facts of reality."[1] Anita Desai's protagonists are questers and their joy and glory lies not in completely triumphing over their confounding situations, but in the struggles they make against the prophets of doom and despair.

Cry the Peacock, Anita Desai's first novel, has been described as a trendsetter in the field of psychological realism.

Meena Beliappa finds in it a remarkable attempt to fuse fantasy with perceptual experience. Though the ending of the novel, with the death of Gautama after being pushed off the parapet, is very tragic in its tone and import, it needs to be explored what actually leads to this desperate action on the part of an Indian wife who is often the worshipper of her husband. Is Maya challenging the patriarchal code or does she feel too stifled and suffocated in the dull and dreary environment to cope with the situation? When she feels instinctively that she is perhaps going insane, she indulges in meaningful introspection: "This is not natural, I told myself, this cannot be natural. There is something weird about me now, wherever I go, whatever I see, whatever I listen to has this unnaturalness to it. This is insanity. But who, what is insane? I myself? Or the world around me?"[2] In fact, the whole narrative is the exploration of Maya's mind through subtle images at the conscious and subconscious level. The decision to eliminate Gautama is not taken abruptly and without introspection. She weighs the pros and cons of the situation objectively. The decision gets concretized only when she is quite sure of Gautama's imperviousness to feelings, emotions and of all that means life at least to her. In her self-introspective mood, after having been disturbed in her sleep by the frenzied mating calls of the peacocks, with Gautama lying unruffled by her side, she remarks: "The man who had no contact with the world, or with me. What would it matter to him if he died and lost even the possibility of contact? What would it matter to him? It was I who screamed with the peacocks, screamed at the sight of the rain clouds, screamed at their disappearance, screamed in mute horror." (175) This progression in Maya's consciousness is because of her total disenchantment with all that is domineering, all that is based on pure reason, and all that is purely masculine. Finally, the image of the dust storm in the novel, denotes not only the fierce turmoil raging in her subconscious, but it also reflects her desire for release from bondage, from fate, from death, from dreariness. So, she welcomes the storm with the pleasure of a dancer and notices in it the source of both the agony and the ecstasy. After this type of reckoning of the reality by Maya, it can be easily inferred that all

her actions, daydreaming, hallucinations, etc. which pronounce her 'madness,' are, in fact her struggles with her 'self' to come to terms with it, with the mystery of life as such. In Gautama's inflicted death and in her own screaming and subsequent leaping to death from the balcony of her father's house, there is a sort of 're-birth' for both of them both having freed each other.

Anita Desai has herself said that her second novel *Voices in the City* exemplifies "the terror of facing single-handed, the ferocious assaults of existence."[3] Apparently, the novel is a very realistic depiction of the plight of Nirode, Monisha and Amla in the metropolis of Calcutta. But at the symbolic level, the novel deals meticulously with the existential problem of coming to terms with various facets of life as the infertile and dreary atmosphere of the 'monster' city of Calcutta impinges harshly on their sensibilities. In spite of the fact that the main characters in *Voices in the City* are deeply tortured by their meaningless and hollow existence, they confront their realities boldly. It is, however, a different matter that Monisha finds the struggle too forbidding to continue the journey of life. Though it is Nirode who says: "Better to leap out of the window and end it all instead of smearing this endless sticky glue of senselessness over the world. Better not to live,"[4] it is Monisha who puts an end to her life. But Monisha's death illuminates Nirode's mind and he makes progress towards acceptance from negation of life.

In *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*, Anita Desai explores the existential problems of adjustment, belongingness, rootedness, exile, etc. Dev, Adit and Sarah, the three important characters of the novel come to reckon their reality in three different ways; but none of these is able to do it completely. The question of being an exile in one's own land is raised through Sarah who has chosen to marry Adit in order to fill certain gaps and chasms in her life. Her life-affirming attitude and faith in making sincere efforts for assimilation into an alien culture are clearly perceptible in her decision to come to India with Adit in spite of advice to the contrary by her parents. Marriage of Adit and Sarah also emblematizes the effort of reducing tensions due to racial discrimination. Dev's decision to stay in and Adit's decision to leave London

symbolize the dialectical character of the synthesizing of alien cultures. In its core meaning, the novel does admit of the possibility of healthy coming together of different cultures which can be beneficial for both. Anita Desai, referring to this novel, has observed: "I don't think anybody's exile from society can solve any problem. I think basically the problem is how to exist in society and yet maintain one's individuality rather than suffering from a lack of society and a lack of belonging, that is why exile has never been my theme."[5]

Sita and Raman of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* face the problem of inadjustability and incompatibility due to their different perceptions of life as also due to their temperamental polarities. Sita finds it too demanding to live upto the ideal of her prototype in history. In order to overcome the boredom of her life and to save her fifth child, yet to be born, from the violence that she finds all around herself in the barren and dirty city of Bombay, she goes to the Manori island. This decision had been arrived at after a lot of deliberation and after she becomes painfully distressed at the 'tedium and ugliness of a meaningless life.' She muses: "Only connect, they say. So, she had spent twenty years connecting, link by link, this chain. And what is one to do with a chain? It can only throttle, choke and enslave."[6]

Though towards the end of the novel which in other words is the end of Sita's 'pilgrimage,' we find her tired, dishevelled and vacant, like a player at the end of a performance, clearing the stage, packing the costumes, in equal parts saddened and relieved, the novel does not end on a sad note. She returns from the Manori island a saddened person, yet certainly she is now wiser about the ways of life. She understands that life and all its business must be continued.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, the novel for which Anita Desai was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award of 1978, the protagonist Nanda Kaul has been depicted as a recluse by choice, though there is a partial element of compulsion of circumstances also. Two other important characters Raka, Nanda's great-granddaughter; and Ila Das, her friend since childhood days, help us in understanding and appreciating the theme of alienation in its en-

tirety. Some critics have pointed out that after the death of her Vice-Chancellor husband, Nanda was forced to seek a life of seclusion and solitude at Carignano in the Kasauli hills. She had fulfilled all her duties as a wife and as a mother as all her children were now well-settled and she wanted to lead a life of peace, quietness and privacy, away from the life of clubs and parties in the dry and dreary urban environment. Therefore, the desire to guard her privacy with the stubbornness of a fanatic is to be viewed as a positive and life-affirming stance of her psyche: "She had been so glad when it was over. She had been glad to leave it all behind, in the plains, like a great, heavy, difficult book that she had read through and was not required to read again."[7] She also understands and appreciates the compulsions of her children who did not and could not invite her to live with them as they had their own families and jobs to tend to. At her own individual level, Nanda Kaul does want to confront her 'self' to metaphysical reckoning of the meaning of life and existence. Therefore, when she receives the news about the arrival of her great-granddaughter Raka, she does get disturbed at the psychological level. But she is also well aware that she cannot help the situation. When Raka actually arrives, all her apprehensions prove false as like her, Raka too is a recluse; and being a recluse by nature rather than by choice, she not only shows utmost indifference towards her great-grandmother, she even resents any interference in her own privacy. She wants to be completely involved in the joys and raptures and peace that the world of nature can give her. Raka's situation, in reality, opens before Nanda Kaul, a new dimension of 'alienation' which in the context of the modern theories of eco-feminism, empowers women to the process of self-actualization and self-realization in a much more meaningful manner than otherwise.

Ila Das is the only character in the novel who does not have a negative streak in her temperament. She works as a welfare officer with a complete sense of dedication. She enlightens the villagers about the benefits of family planning, about various diseases, and tries her best to prevent them from practising social evils and superstitions. It is ironical that the very person whom

Ila had tried to educate about the foolishness and undesirability of child-marriage, assaults her, rapes her and finally kills her. Ila's death and Raka's setting the forest on fire bring the violence in life and society to the centre-stage. Anita Desai, with the help of these images of loneliness, death and violence, is pointing towards the imbalance between illusion and reality, the eternal existential problem of the human condition. In a very subtle manner, she seems to convey that if we want to make our existence meaningful, we must try to maintain a discreet balance between reality as it exists and the illusions that surround it. This is a positive and affirmative echo that emerges from a close analysis of *Fire on the Mountain*.

Clear Light of Day is unique in presenting before the readers a fundamental fact and truth of 'being' that is 'Time the destroyer is time the preserver.' Bim, the protagonist of this novel, feels poignantly alienated owing to the desertion of all household responsibilities and retiring to a life of comparative peace, comfort and prosperity at Hyderabad by her brother Raja. After the death of her parents, marriage of Tara and the death of aunt Mira, she is left alone with her mentally retarded brother Baba. Her conversation with Baba reveals the agony that subsumes her outwardly calm and dignified life: "Does the house seem empty to you? Everyone's gone except you and I. They won't come back. We'll be alone now. But we don't have to worry about anyone now—Tara or Raja or Mira-*Masi*."[8] But she feels cut loose when Raja, the brother with whom she had close emotional attachment in her childhood, adopts a condescending attitude when he gets married to Benazir, the daughter of their former landlord Hyder Ali Sahib. He becomes, he writes to Bim, the new landlord after the death of his father-in-law, but he will let Bim and Baba continue as tenants in the house in Delhi. The letter of Raja leaves Bim seriously humiliated and bruised at heart. So when Tara insists that she should also go to Hyderabad to attend the wedding of Raja's daughter, her wounded sensibility and deep-seated anger force her to reveal the reality to her younger sister: "How can I enter his house—my landlord's house? I, such a poor tenant? Because of me, he can't raise the

rent or sell the house and make a profit—imagine that. The sacrifice." (28) The irony that undercuts her words is too obvious to be missed.

Tara who was initially unable to recognize the significance of the passage of time, now comes to realize full well as to how a relationship, even a very intimate one between Bim and Raja, can undergo a drastic change over the years. But Bim, due to her changed dispensation in relation to her happy childhood and her superior intellectual abilities to those of Tara when they were at school, fails to see the significance of time and remains stubbornly entangled in the misty web of her memories of the past mixed with serious misapprehensions about her 'being' and the true meaning of life. A change for the better is, however, perceptible in her psyche towards the end of the novel when in a fit of anger she hits her handicapped brother Baba. The expression on his face brings about a dramatic transformation in Bim. She realizes the folly and sheer stupidity of her wrong attitude towards Baba who is otherwise incapacitated and helpless. She feels repentant. In her hour of reckoning of the reality, her rancour and deep-rooted anger towards Raja and Tara also melt away. She undertakes her *rites de passage* to self-realization and self-actualization. A new self-knowledge dawns upon her, making her realize how old memories had obliterated the vital truth for many years. The novelist reveals her state of mind, which is now positive and affirmative: "Although it was shadowy and dark, Bim could see as well as by the clear light of day, that she felt only love and yearning for them, and if there were hurts, these gashes and wounds in her side that bled, then it was only because her love was imperfect and did not encompass them thoroughly enough, and because it had flaws and inadequacies and did not extend to all equally." (165) Thus there is a progression from disharmony to harmony, from alienation to affirmation, in the case of the protagonist and along with her in the thematic perceptions of Anita Desai, in a newer manner bringing in 'the time' as a dominant character.

In Anita Desai's next novel *In Custody*, we witness the near stage to that of Bim who acquires a unique psychic balance and

wholeness as a true understanding of the 'business of living' dawns upon her. In the character of Deven, the protagonist of this novel, Anita Desai studies at once a timid and ineffectual but growth-oriented person who shows self-confidence, clarity of vision and equilibrium as the process of self-actualization moves gradually from one step to another. Though throughout the novel, he faces one dilemma after another and is tossed by self-effacing drives, all his weaknesses are submerged at the crucial moment of self-scrutiny. His awakening into self-knowledge typifies coherence and fulfilment, if not complete at least partial that makes his 'being' meaningful and valuable to him.

The chief characteristics of Deven that attract our attention are his modesty, helplessness, nobility of mind, his agony and suffering. He is also a person in conflict with himself. Socio-economic factors also colour his personality and mould his psyche. As a child, he had watched closely the bitter disappointments of his mother and the apologetic smile of his father as a consequence of his failure to measure up to her expectations. The pattern is repeated in his own case with reference to his friend Murad and his wife Sarla. He often becomes nervous and conscious of his inferior self while talking to Murad: "He tried to wriggle out of Murad's grasp unobtrusively so as not to offend him. 'Just one class more,' he pleaded, 'then I'm free to go home."[9] He feels embarrassed by the staring of his students also as he wants to guard his image of a sober and serious teacher. On the family front, he finds himself an angry and alienated person who finds the harsh realities of everyday life too much to be faced boldly. These produce in him intense feelings of frustration and resentment. The real crisis, however, is due to his inadequacy to make a distinction in his life, in his career. He feels frustrated and humiliated in his own eyes. Being disillusioned, he finds Nur's personal life too unpalatable and rather repulsive for him, though he has high regard for his poetry in particular and Urdu poetry in general. Contrary to the hallowed image, he meets a senile and debilitated old man presiding over a court of louts and lechers. Therefore, after his first visit to Nur, Deven decides to abandon the project of interviewing him for Murad's

journal, but he cannot help visiting Nur from time to time. Gradually he starts realizing that along with the ideal and the sublime, the dismal and the ordinary, the crass and the sordid aspects of life cannot be evaded. He oscillates between moods of despondency and hope. His hour of reckoning comes from inner strength and his transformation is effected through an aesthetic experience, transcending the mundane aspects of routine-existence. And this experience enables him to view the two personalities of Nur in different perspectives: Nur, the poet, is not to be confused with Nur, the man. He realizes that an artist is the child, is the product and also the producer of his age; but even under the corrupting influence of his times, the 'art' of a genuine artist can and does remain untainted. This re-visioning of the harsh realities of life and the role of art (here Nur's poetry) in helping the individuals to transmute the mundane experiences into aesthetic ones, rejuvenate Deven's consciousness with the cognizance that his friendship with Nur is not a trap but liberation from the victim's role. He realizes and recognizes the fact that he has received the gift of Nur's poetry and therefore, now to Deven it meant that "he was custodian of Nur's very soul and spirit. It was a great distinction. He could not deny or abandon that under any pressure." (204) Thus the new Deven at the end of the novel is not an illusion but a reality. This is also epitomized through the symbolic action of Deven "stopping only to pull a branch of thorns under his foot," (204) which clearly means that with his new vision, he feels empowered, physically and psychologically, to march towards a higher goal though the path may be beset with 'thorns.'

In *Baumgartner's Bombay*, the authorial vision and thematic concerns of Anita Desai widen their horizon to attain new heights in the narrative art of fiction-writing. The narrative world of this novel deals with two continents and the protagonist is confronted with fundamentals of human existence; and the picture that finally emerges is not that of disillusionment but the sense of satisfaction at having fought one's battle in the best spirit of the rules of the game, with integrity and dignity without compromising one's self-respect and with a clear conscience.

The protagonist Hugo Baumgartner has to contend with the question of his identity, his past and his having been rendered rootless and homeless as a consequence of circumstances much beyond his control. The genesis of the novel, in Desai's own view, lies in her urge to confront her German past that she had inherited from her mother and to appreciate its significance. She says that she could not write about her mother directly: "that was just too personal."[10] Her mixed parentage, she feels, gave her an unusual advantage. They "created for me a synthesis which is the base of work and (for which) I did not have to strive for. . . . I am sure this is what makes my writing whatever it is; I see India through the eyes of my mother, as an outsider, but my feelings are my father's, of someone born here."[11] Baumgartner and a few other characters in the novel such as Lotte, Lily, Julius and the German youngman Kurt are also outsiders. Even the insiders like Habibullah and Jagu, though born in India, have to face 'an outsider's situation.'

The psyche of the protagonist Hugo is shaped by his past—his experience of violence and terror in Nazi Germany—and the narrative discourse becomes an attempt to escape that past for a meaningful present. But the irony of the situation, which has existential undertones too, is that he is not able to come to terms with the new dispensation so easily. He has to undergo some traumatic experiences in order to arrive at a comprehensive, wholesome and meaningful understanding of life and the difficulty of healthy human relationships and mutual communication. Hugo had come to India as a young man to start a new chapter in his life. But it is ironic that the attempt leaves him quite bitter and disillusioned. If in Germany he belonged to the 'subhuman race,' in India, he was termed as 'hostile alien.' Through the sketching of multi-cultural and multi-focal relationships between Hugo and Habibullah in Calcutta, Hugo and Chaman Lal in Bombay as also between Hugo and the former cabaret dancer Lotte, Anita Desai effectively unfolds the socio-cultural sterility of these two metropolises and their inhabitants. In these two cruel and infertile cities, Hugo, like Sisyphus, appears to lead an existence shrouded in hollow gestures: "Accepting—but not ac-

cepted; that was the story of his life, the one thread that ran through it all. In Germany, he had been dark—his darkness had marked him the Jew—der *jude*. In India, he was fair—and that marked him the *firangi*. In both lands, the unacceptable."[12]

In spite of not being assimilated, Hugo does make constant attempts to establish bonds of relationship with a number of people in Venice, Bombay and Calcutta and even during his confinement in the internment camp for six years. The narrative reveals that his concern for Habibullah's fate during the communal riots in Calcutta during the partition borders on panic. He responds with sensitivity to the screams of a dying Sushil. His relationship with Lotte, Farrokh and Chaman Lal is warm, genuine and enriching for all of them. But at a deeper level of consciousness, he and other German characters remain somewhat segregated and uninvolved. Hugo always lives on the periphery, and so does Lotte. Baumgartner's thoughts that "nothing made sense. Germany there, India here—India there, Germany here, it is all impossible to capture," (216-17) and Lotte's efforts to find "a meaning to the meaninglessness" (230) precipitate the sad predicament of the outsiders and show the author's awareness of man's struggle and his inadequacy and inability to evolve a more accommodating and comprehensive attitude to reality.

It is, however, to be remembered that both Hugo and Lotte, even in their moments of utmost desperation and sorrow, at no point of time, contemplate committing suicide. Bonds of human relationships, though quite fragile in their experience, are valuable and sacred to them. Throughout the narrative, Anita Desai reveals how other characters too show similar inclinations and value similar opportunities for establishing bonds of mutual understanding. It is, however, symptomatic of the irony of life that Hugo's last attempt at reaching out to another German Kurt, results in his gruesome murder at the hands of the latter. This act symbolizes the presence of violence and cruelty in all nations and all climes, making it a distinct reality of the psychotic modern world—its sterility and apathy at the wider socio-cultural level. But the fact that most of the characters in *Baumgartner's Bombay*, more notably Hugo and Lotte, remain heroic fighters,

questers in search of the real meaning of life, till the very end, relates this novel to the category of writings that have universal significance. Here, Desai reveals with boldness and courage, not only the situation as to how humanity suffers and inflicts untold damage upon itself, but also how it eventually repairs itself and thus sustains and survives even through the darkest times. Desai arrives at the conclusion that a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of life means the genuine attempts and struggles of the individual to establish interpersonal relationships with other individuals and through them with their community and ultimately with humanity at large. This is certainly a life-affirming faith that emerges from the commitment with which they undertake their work as creative writers, as storytellers, fulfilling a much-felt need of the human mind since time immemorial.

NOTES

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The Realistic Novel and the Lost Dimension

C.J. O'BRIEN

The novel has become the most dominant form in modern literature and, like other forms, has taken a course of its own—singular and striking. As modern poetry broke away largely from tradition for new semantic and emotional values, and the modern drama from the naturalistic to the poetic play and then to the play of ideas, so the novel has passed from tried forms to a new one in which crime, sex, violence, and breaking of all moral and social codes predominate. Our age is obsessed with the unnatural and with protest against society and morality. There was a time when people were interested in the social milieu and the surface of life and in a story well told. Then came a revolution in which novelists were interested in inward life and cycles being. This last was the kind of novel, which appealed to Bloomsbury, and the highbrows of literary circles preoccupied with findings in psychoanalysis. The latest and sharpest change in public taste is for the novel of shock, the novel of protest—the Blood and Guts school of writing.

To people of intense awareness and even to dull and bored ones, these novels indicate, in the best way possible, the consciousness of our age and the predicament of our civilization and our century. Two World Wars have played havoc with the unconscious minds of the younger generations of the decades immediately following them. In World War I the young intellectuals marched out from the fields of Oxford and Cambridge and Yale and Harvard to the Western Front with a song on their lips—burning with patriotism and an idealism to "Keep the World Safe for Democracy." At the end of the War those who returned had left behind in the mud of Flanders, their ideals and accepted values. Amidst this debacle of moral confusion and dis-

illusion, the younger generation came into its own. It brought with it an uncompromising revolt against all moral tradition; an undeceiving veneer of pseudo-sophistication; and a pathetic cry of barren and bleak frustration. This was the lost generation described so vividly by Hemingway in that despairing book *The Sun also Rises*.

And while the angry young men of the Thirties screamed and brandished their fists in protest the world drifted into the greatest conflagration ever—World War II.

The Second World War presented a mirror to the human condition, which blinded anyone who looked into it. For if tens of millions were killed in concentration camps out of the inexorable agonies and contractions of injustice of totalitarian states, one was then obliged also to see that no matter how crippled and perverted an image of man was the society he had created, it was nonetheless his creation, and if society was so murderous who could then ignore asking the same hideous question about his own nature.

And the questions were asked by reactionaries of the post-war period who survived the nightmares of the war to awaken to a post-war world that had no place for them. In America was born the new Bohemian—the hipster and the beatnik—the one who refuses to conform—the philosophical psychopath. They questioned and they dared not to conform. They wanted to touch at the blood-roots of man's self and experience, and celebrated the physical and the sexual. Their effort is to produce an expression that is absolutely disinfected from Art and Ideas, an expression that is freed from all tradition and from anything remembered as literature. Then only Art acceptable to these New Romantic savages is the Art of unconsciousness of Accident, of no meaning. And hence they constantly write about those parts of experience, which are beneath the level of the critical mind or the culture-consciousness: sexuality, narcotic vision, or the bare sequences in a stream of images. It is not possible here to examine all the writers of this school. I shall, therefore, restrict myself briefly to two.

The one-time leader, philosopher, and pace-setter of the best Generation is Norman Mailer whose two best known works are *The Naked and the Dead* written shortly after the war and *The Deer Park* written in the mid-fifties. "Please do not understand me too quickly" warns Mailer. There is not much to understand in either of these works where the prose and the sex and the violence flow thick.

This then is the trend of the present times. How does the Catholic writer fit into this scheme of things? Here we touch upon a problem which has exercised, and still exercises, not only the critic but also the novelist—the problem of the flesh and sin in the Catholic novel. Certainly the animal side of man's activities and effects on human life constitute an element of reality. Man's sexual life is a fact that must be reckoned with, as all but universal fact. Sin and evil is the reality around us. How can the Catholic novelist be of this age and yet something more?

To find the answer I would like to turn to a more detailed examination of the works of Graham Greene. Greene believed that religion was a precious factor in the modern novel. He traced that in his essay on Francois Mauriac (another great Catholic novelist in the Greene tradition) where he refers to Henry James: "With the death of James the religious sense was lost in the English novel, and with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act. It was as if the world of fiction had lost a *dimension.*"

Greene's novels restore that lost dimension. He began with experiments of the divided personality and the theme of betrayal in books like *The Man Within, The Name of Action* and *Rumour at Nightfall.* He went to the study of the crime acts in what he called *Entertainments—Stamboul Train* and *Confidential Agent.* But he soon emerged as a major Catholic novelist in his great works, *Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, The End of the Affair* and *The Burnt Out Case.* These novels show Greene as a major author, who, to use the words of Francois Mauriac, "broke like a burglar into the kingdom of nature and Grace." Greene as a religious writer has met with some disapproval from strict theologians; his novels nevertheless have

about them a religious validity, for they are not totally unfounded on doctrine.

Greene concerned himself with the horror of life. He writes a murder, suicide, and every form of violence. But he has raised the despairing and shady side of life to a supreme work of art possessing the greatest of philosophical disquisitions and truths. To dark acts he adds the illumination derived from the institutional philosophy of Catholicism. In this he is in contrast to most of his contemporaries who are concerned with 'The disintegration of culture and the degradation of man . . . not theological evil.'

In *The Power and the Glory*, set in Mexico during the religious persecution, a bad priest flees from the law into the jungle. He is an alcoholic who has abjured religion. Yet when the need arises he absolves other sinner and turns the wafer into the mystical body and blood of Christ. He is finally captured and condemned to death. Before his execution he crouches on the floor; his drained brandy flask in his hand, and prays brokenly: "O God, I am sorry for all my sins . . . worthy of thy dreadful punishment." The whisky priest becomes the martyr of the Church. In the sanctity of his irrevocable office as a priest and in his death are visible the power and the glory of God.

The same mystical processes are seen in *The Heart of the Matter*. Scobbie commits suicide, but Father Rank tells his widow: "The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart. . . . It may seem an odd thing to say—when a man's as wrong as he [Scobbie] was—but I think, from what I saw of him, that he really loved God." Scobbie is saved by God's mercy.

Greene appeals by his art, not just "realism and spirituality but institutional Catholicism and a personal philosophy of God, mercy and sanctifying grace. This is the new variant he gives to religion and within it recovers, in a traditional and yet individual way, the mission of the lost dimension in the form of the modern novel."

The human race is involved in some terrible calamity and lives in an atmosphere of hatred and fear, but it is not without the

hope of salvation. The modern realistic novel can be a means to the presentation of an idealism arising out of the lives who mussed it all their life. The modern realistic novel has a great future if it will only hold onto positive, definite and definitive truths (the lost dimension) as Graham Greene does, and refrain from spending itself in negations and only portraying to the exclusion of everything else, the dreadful urgencies, the shames and the crimes of mankind.

Cuttack

The Impact of the East and the West on W.S. Maugham

V.K. SINGHAL

Maugham was an international traveller. Most of the Eastern and Western countries he visited with a view to exploring new realms and collecting material. These vast travels gave him new and suitable settings for his stories, novels and dramas. They also widened his approach to life. Maugham was keenly interested in the Orient and the world of the South Sea Islands. Actually, his first interest in the East was aroused by the works of Melville and Pierreloti. The East became a symbol of joy, liberation, natural beauty and spiritual solace. It could provide a relief to the modern man who is lost in the mirage of life. Maugham himself intended "to escape to far-away countries, where life and its struggle with primitive nature still requires courage and a sense of adventure.

The East provided him with passion, inspiration and fascination. It also taught him a lot about human nature. A large portion of Maugham's work has its unique setting in the Far East. Four novels—*The Moon and the Six Pence*, *The Painted Veil*, *The Narrow Corner* and *The Razor's Edge*, two travel books, *A Chinese Screen* and *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, two plays—*East of Swez* and *The Letter* and many of his stories have the Eastern setting in a special way. Eastern references directly or indirectly are found in almost all his works. He was concerned with the presentation of the European in strange, exotic environment and native and tropical setting. His long travels to the Orient provided him not only with a deep study of human nature but also with new, charming and radiant settings. Maugham studied the life and work of the French Impressionists like Paul Gauguin

who fascinated him. He was also motivated for his trip to the South Sea during the World War I and a visit to Tahiti.

Maugham travelled not only to the Eastern countries but also the Western countries like France, America, Russia, Germany, Sweden and Rome with great enthusiasm and fascination. He was a master of English, French, German, Italian and Spanish languages. Only the languages of the East could sometimes deceive him: "His six popular anthologies reveal an almost unparalleled knowledge of the literature of England, America, France, Germany and Russia."

When the First World War began, Maugham was a member of a Red Cross ambulance unit in France and worked for sometime as a dresser, then as an ambulance driver. But soon he was picked up by the Intelligence Department to serve his Government first as a Secret Agent in Geneva, Switzerland, then in Russia for checking Bolshevic Revolution. Maugham could never approve of communism: "Consequently, his plays are banned in Soviet Russia where he is now a forbidden author just as he was in Nazi Germany, where his name was among the first on Dr. Goebbel's black list."

Maugham again joined the Intelligence Department in France during the Second World War. He travelled into Italy and Spain and then in 1954 he went to London to be bestowed the Order of Companion of Honour by Queen Elizabeth. A leading British magazine offered huge sums to him for his three essays on Britain, France and United States. But Maugham gracefully refused. He also had a chance of playing bridge with President Eisenhower and Charles Goren. He enjoyed the company of such celebrated actresses like Ethel Barry More, Billie Burke and Katharine Cornell. He also enjoyed the company of Ruth Gordon and her husband Garson Kanin and was very fond of the late Lee Sherbert, Broadway producer and Theatre owner.

Maugham's prolific writings are imbued with Western civilization. They are the pictures of Edwardian-Georgian England. They depict modern times, the Western civilization is the background of most of his works: "The coils of Western Civilization also tightened round him as never before; he introduces a minor

character, Abraham, who forsakes a brilliant medical future in London to become a poor in the Islands; his friends deplore his lamentable instability, failing to realise that in his own way and on his own terms; he has, like Strickland, found success."

Strickland in *The Moon and Six Pence*, being fed up with western civilization, gave up trade and went to Tahiti in order to become a painter. He could discover himself and at last, he satisfied his creative urge. In showing the conflict between Eastern culture and Western civilization, Maugham is peerless. In many of his stories, novels and dramas, this conflict has been vividly and psychologically shown with a dramatic intensity,

Maugham was also aware of the sense of isolation—the typical gift of modern times and specially of Western civilization. T.S. Eliot and other writers have dealt with it. Sometimes, Maugham's characters suffer from nostalgia, having a sense of isolation and solitariness. This is his peculiar talent: "*The Moon and Six Pence* contains a deepening note of melancholy."

The irony of situation is that "We go lonely side by side but not together, unable to know our fellows and unknown by them." Maugham's contemporaries followed this theme: "This theme has occupied a host of Maugham's contemporaries from Schintzler, who made it the basis of a play translated as *The Lonely Way* and Chekhov to T.S. Eliot, whose heroine of *The Cocktail Party* reflects that people make noise and think they are talking to each other. They make faces and think they understand each other. They do not believe with Conrad that "no human being could bear a steady view of moral solitude without going mad!—true children of the twentieth century, they accept their isolation with a sigh."

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Language: A Weapon of Tyranny in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

ARUN KUMAR MISHRA

Language is a great gift to man. It sustains humanity by revealing true nature of things. But the fact that language is open to manipulation because of its ever-evolving nature poses a grave danger that it may be perverted and misused against man. The twentieth century has witnessed a large-scale perversion of language for such purposes particularly in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia.

There is constant threat that language might come to reflect reality too accurately by imitating it. Politicians and totalitarian rulers use language to hide reality and manipulate human mind to serve ideological ends. The resources of language—vocabulary, rules of grammar and syntax are systematically perverted in order to force the victims into thinking, feeling and acting as they, the mind manipulators, wish. Thought was power till the 1970s but the situation took a U-turn in the 1980s.

Such a manipulation of language is one of the most horrible aspects of George Orwell's future world projected in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948). The celebration of Orwell's birth centenary which coincided with the US invasion of Iraq has renewed our interest in Orwell's prophetic vision of the future world because of its growing relevance as the world is gradually moving to a catastrophe.

II

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* visualizes the incorporation of the world into three totalitarian super powers—Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia—always at war with one another depending on the state of alliance. The chief centre of activity is, however,

London, the third most populous province of Oceania ruled by an all powerful Party headed by Big Brother who is the source of all wisdom and virtue. The Party has come to power following a revolution: Ingsoc (English Socialism). The administration here is run by the four ministries of Love, Truth, Peace and Plenty. English is the common language but the government is developing a special official language—Newspeak—to replace the existing English language i.e. Oldspeak. In Newspeak the words mean the very opposite of what is said e.g. the Ministry of Truth, known as *Ministrue* in Newspeak, works for the falsification of past record and propagation of reverse logic like 'War is Peace,' 'Freedom is slavery' and 'Ignorance is strength.'

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a total conformity is being imposed by perverting the existing language. Newspeak aims at bringing thought, feeling, and memory fully under control in line with Orwell's assertion made earlier in "Politics and English language: "If thought corrupts language, language can, also corrupt thought."[1] It seeks to reduce human beings to mere cells in an organism and keep them under total control without any wasteful expenditure of force.

As the Party has planned to complete the perversion of language by 2050 A.D., Newspeak, in its perfect form, is free from not only the rules of grammar and syntax but also the words which describe beauty and love and stand for the values which no longer exist in Oceania. Newspeak has lesser vocabulary as Syme, a friend of Winston Smith, says: "We're destroying words—scores of them, hundreds of them everyday. We're cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050." (46) It would bind the people of Oceania with a common language, as it would be easier even for the *proles* to master it. Besides, it will effectively control thoughts and inclinations that inspire disorder. Syme tells Winston Smith: "Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thought -crime impossible because there will be no words in which to express it." (72)

The perversion of language is the very basis of ingsoc revolution. With the Eleventh Edition of Newspeak Dictionary, the process of perfecting Newspeak will be over and the revolution will be completed. Syme tells Winston Smith: "The revolution will be complete when language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak." (46)

The literature of the past surviving in their Newspeak version will become "something contradictory of what they used to be." (46) To use the metaphor from the communist directions they will become the 'cog and wheel' in a machine, the state, and their writers will become 'the engineers of human souls.' Pointing out Orwell's concern with the corruption of language, Fredrick R. Karl writes: "Orwell recognizes that language whether used by the poet, the journalist, or dictator suggests the quality of society. And a manipulation of language, particularly at present, affords a manipulation of society itself. The ramifications of this idea can, of course, be horrible as the novel indicates. Newspeak, the language of 1984 Utopia, eliminates all nuances of meaning, the language of scientifically controlled future, it attempts to avoid all poetry of expression, all imagination."[2] To Matthew Hodgart, "Newspeak is the finest invention, the result of many years of thinking about the connection between politics and abuses of language."[3]

Newspeak aims at isolation of man from the social set up, a sort of human degradation which deprives man of sanity and sense of decency and his desire to protest and escape. It will eliminate all possibility of rebellion by isolating man from remembrance of the past and dreaming of the future. The end of time in this totalitarian society will mark the end of humanity as with the disappearance of the concept of time and the acceptance of timelessness as routine human tendencies like love, affection, enmity, hatred, memory, desire, etc. will disappear. By 2050, the timeless society of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will be devoid of human concepts and human tendencies. Slogans like 'Time is supreme,' 'Time is powerful' will give way to 'Party is supreme,' 'Party is powerful."

III

Though the year in which Orwell's prophetic vision was set has come to pass and many of his prophecies have come true, the world has been moving still closer to his imaginary future world for twenty years. Today in the twenty-first century, language is under tremendous pressure to serve the power-hungry establishments. Democratic set up now-a-days does not stand for freedom of thought and liberty of movement. Even the great democracies of the world are waging war in the name of peace, dubbing the dissenters as 'traitors,' stripping the dignitaries in the name of security check and manipulating UN resolutions and claiming to unearth still elusive weapons of mass destruction to justify their disguised totalitarian acts. Records are frequently revised, past is distorted and falsehood is presented as truth to crush a free nation, suppress individual freedom and pollute society. With the slogan 'Everything is fair in the name of war against terrorism,' the line of demarcation between democracy and totalitarianism is erased. Thus Orwell's dark vision of future is getting darker in the twenty-first century with the planned falsification and debasement of language being carried out every day in political and diplomatic speeches round the world and Orwell's horrible vision of perfect reality control seems an inevitable possibility.

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Treatment of Faith and Survival in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*

AROONIMA SINHA

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* which won the Man Booker's Prize of 2002 is the Canadian author's third book and second novel. The novel is essentially about faith and survival of an Indian teenage boy, Picene Moliter Patel, or Pi, as he likes to be called, who faces immeasurable hardships when he is stranded in the middle of the Pacific ocean on a lifeboat along with a carnivorous hyena, an orangutan, a wounded zebra, a few rats and cockroaches, and a 450 pound Royal Bengal tiger called Richard Parker. The Japanese freighter, *Tsimtsum*, by which Pi and his family is emigrating to Canada, along with quite a number of animals, to be sold to zoos overseas, sinks with a "monstrous metallic burp"[1] and Pi finds that he is the only human survivor. His 227 days of journey across the ocean make a powerful story of faith and survival when Pi is left alone with only the tiger for company, as the other animals perish one by one. Besides Pi's struggle to keep body and soul together with the meagre supplies in the lifeboat and what he can procure from the ocean, his chief preoccupation is to save himself from becoming the tiger's next meal. It is his past experience with animals in his father's zoo, his obvious intelligence and his nonreligious kind of faith that enable him to survive the ordeal.

Martel, in an interview has said that, "everyone's the same but they express their sameness in different ways."[2] This applies to the treatment of the issues of survival and faith in the novel which is alike yet different from other similar novels, e.g. Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*. This paper seeks to analyze this very aspect. Pi's predicament on the lifeboat along with so many zoo animals puts him in the position of a zoo owner with

the lifeboat resembling a mini zoo. But the danger that he faces from these animals, especially from the tiger, and the disaster of the sea combine to make Pi's story a story with a double edge. The tiger which symbolizes definite death for Pi gradually becomes a key to his spiritual survival in the sea of isolation and it becomes imperative for Pi to save the tiger as well as himself. He says, "A part of me did not want Richard Parker to die at all, because if he died I would be alone with despair, a foe even more formidable than a tiger. If I still had the will to live, it was thanks to Richard Parker. He kept me from thinking too much about my family and my tragic circumstances." (164)

The whole novel is replete with disquisitions on faith, specially the first part which begins with the reflections of the adult Pi whom the writer manages to trace in Canada. He is married and a father of two children but the aftermath of the "suffering" is evident in his strange choice of subjects for his double- major Bachelor's degree and the "strange religious practices" (69) that have become a part of his life. Pi chooses religious studies and zoology as his subjects which represent two diametrically opposed perspectives of the world, one relating to faith and the other to science, a fine and delicate balance of which exists throughout the novel. Pi also speaks of his comfortable childhood in the lush environs of his father's zoo in Pondicherry and the embarrassment he has to face on account of his French name. Piscine Molitor. He has been named after a famous swimming pool in France by a fond family friend but the name is deliberately mispronounced as "Pissing" by his classmates. He, therefore, on his own initiative changes his name to" Pi," which is more neutral sounding and easy on the tongue. Pi also talks of his attraction to religion, or religions, much to the embarrassment of his secular minded parents of neo India. Apart from his native Hindu faith, Pi follows religious practices of Islam and Christianity and converts to all of them. This leads to a hilarious situation when the three religious heads confront Pi and his family and come to know about his *faux pas*. But Pi in his embarrassment blurts out that he "just wants to love God" (74) and that all religions are the same. It, however, invites the sceptical re-

mark by his father that Pi seemed "to be attracting religions the way a dog attracts fleas." (71)

But Pi's attraction to religion is an essential prelude to his spiritual journey. It helps him to evolve a unique non-religious kind of faith which helps him to tide over difficulties in his later life. It also makes him a true seeker of God. He realizes quite early in life that the "main battlefield for good is not the open ground of the public arena but the small clearing of each heart." (61) To Pi, religion is about our dignity not our depravity and this is how he manages to synthesize the various elements of all religions into a personal belief system and devotional life that is beautiful as well as breathtaking. We get a clue of the culmination to Pi's faith in the following paragraph:

> One such time I left town and on my way back, at a point where the land was high and I could see the sea to my left and down the road a long ways, I suddenly felt I was in heaven. The spot was in fact no different from when I had passed it not long before, but my way of seeing it had changed. The feeling, a paradoxical mix of pulsing energy and profound peace, was intense and beautiful. Whereas before the road, the sea, the trees the air, the sun all spoke differently to me, now they spoke one language of unity. . . . Every element lived in harmonious relation with its neighbor, and all was kith and kin. I knelt a mortal; I rose an immortal. I felt like a the centre of a small circle coinciding with the centre of a much larger one. Atmah met Allah." (111)

Pi does not forget God when he makes an inventory of the things that he has on the boat to tide him through his desperate days nor does he forget to include prayers in his daily routine on the lifeboat. Pi's survival story is marred by the loss of his family but his presence of mind and his substantial knowledge of animal psychology serve him well. Pi witnesses on the lifeboat which he never would in normal times. He sees the wounded zebra being eaten alive by the hyena. The orangutan called Orange Juice, who comes to the lifeboat "floating on an island of bananas in a halo of light," (206) and who is the source of some cheer to Pi because of her peculiar human behavior, is also killed by the hyena. The hyena which in Pi's own words "is ugly beyond re-

demption" is finally killed by Richard Parker and Pi is now more than sure that he is going to be the next target. He very soon realizes that in order to survive he must tame the tiger and provide regular supplies of food for the ever hungry predator. He overcomes his initial panic and with the help of a whistle, which he uses as a whip, sets out to intimidate Richard Parker. Besides marking territories with urine, Pi also builds himself a raft which separates him from the lifeboat, and the tiger by about forty feet. But life on the raft is risky and Pi tries and succeeds in gaining a foothold on the lifeboat. Pi on one occasion also handles the tiger's excreta just to demoralize the latter and gain an upper hand in their peculiar predator-prey relationship. But as Pi says, he survived because Richard Parker "did not really want to attack" (212-13) him. The tiger realized that Pi was a source of food for him and so the weird symbiosis between the two lasts till their final rescue.

Pi, who had been a strict vegetarian some time back, learns to devour anything which is even remotely edible from fish heads and guts to turtle flippers: "No cardamom payasam was as sweet or as rich as creamy turtle eggs or cured turtle fat. A chopped-up mixture of heart, lungs liver, flesh and cleaned out intestines sprinkled fish parts, the whole soaked in yolk-and-serum gravy, made an unsurpassable, finger licking thali." (217)

Pi even tries to eat the tiger's feces but finds that it is "truly waste matter with no nutrients in it." (23) Plagued by constant hunger and bruises and sores all over his body, Pi finds that almost worse than constant fear and hunger is boredom and wishes he had a book with a never-ending story. Once, he closely misses rescue when he fails to draw the attention of a passing ship. His despair is profound and it is at this moment that Pi acknowledges his love for Richard Parker: "I love you?" The words burst out unfettered and infinite. The 'feeling flooded my chest. Truly I do. I love you Richard Parker. If I didn't have you now, I don't know what I would do. I don't think I would make it. I would die of hopelessness."

Pi's encounter with another survivor, a Frenchman, occurs when he is almost dying of hunger and virtually blind due to an

eye infection. Lost in food fantasies, Pi feels it is Richard Parker talking to him when he hears another human voice. The conversation between the two adrift humans is an example of insanity brought about by hopelessness and hunger. Pi, with his typical oriental effusiveness, welcomes the other as his brother, but the Frenchman has other intentions. He tries to kill Pi for his flesh, but before Pi can warn him about the tiger on board, he is killed by Richard Parker. Thus, it is the tiger that saves Pi from his own kind.

There are numerous incidents in the novel that add a bit of spice to the survival saga of Pi, e.g., the first killing of the dorado and the death knell iridescence of its rainbow colours, the experience with the school of flying fish, the joy of gathering the booty of fresh water from the solar stills, and many such more. But the strangest of all is Pi's discovery of the floating, carnivorous island made up entirely of algae and inhabited by numerous meerkats. Though Pi has touched solid ground after a long time and the algae and the meerkats provide a bountiful supply of food to both him and Richard Parker, he decides to leave the island as soon as he discovers the truth about the murderous island. The island that had seemed like a Utopia to Pi, transforms into a dystopia for him as soon as he discovers an exact set of thirty-two human teeth encased in the leafy fruit of a tree. But to leave the tiger behind is unthinkable to him. He moves on and they wander aimlessly till they reach Mexico.

The parting between the tiger and Pi is the most unceremonious part of the book and it haunts him for a long time. As soon as their boat touches land, Richard Parker leaps ashore and heads for the surrounding jungle without even a parting look or a growl at Pi, who had been his sole companion for nearly seven months.

The allegorical representation of the whole story, told to the investigating officers of *Tsimtsum* when they refuse to believe the real story, makes interesting reading. However, it comes nowhere near the real story as far as excellence is concerned. Martel has been accused of plagiarism; the plot of the story is akin to *Max and the Cat*, a novel by the Brazilian author Moacyr Sclair. But Martel in his author's note has acknowledged his gratitude to

the author for the 'spark of life' in the novel. The reader knows right from the beginning that Pi has been saved, yet the novel turns out to be a nail-biting adventure story. This is undoubtedly due to the elegant writing of Martel, his ability to charm and shock at the same time, and his vivid descriptions of the sea. *Life of Pi*, as one of the characters in the author's note says will make us believe in God but more than that it convinces us that life is full of mystery and existence is more important than anything else.

NOTES

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Seamus Heaney and His Irish Poetic Delight

ANITA GHOSH

According to fellow Irish poet Paul Muldoon, "Seamus Heaney is the best poet now writing in the English language, if not in *any* language." Many critics feel that Heaney is one of the three greatest living poets. Robert Lowell, for one, has deemed Heaney "the most important Irish poet since Yeats." His life and his works certainly reflect this evolution.

Seamus Heaney was born in April 1939, the eldest child of a family of nine, on a small farm in Northern Ireland. Heaney drew from his experiences, growing up to find inspiration for many of his works, as in "Digging," a poem comparing his father's farming to his own passion for writing.

Growing up in Northern Ireland as a Catholic, Heaney experienced first hand the religious conflicts that saturate life in the British Isles. A subtle commentary on the politics and violence of Ireland are frequently found in Heaney's writing, along with themes on nature and the simplicity of life.

1965 was a great year for Heaney. In addition to beginning his lifelong teaching and writing career, he also married Marrie Delvin, an Irish poet of her own right. In this year he became a lecturer in Modern English Literature at Queen's College in Belfast. Also, his first volume of poetry, *Death of a Naturalist*, was published. This volume won the E.C. Gregory Award, the Cholmondley Award in 1967, the Somerset Maugham Award in 1968, and the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize also in 1968.

A few short years later, his second volume, *Door into the Dark*, published in 1969, became the Poetry Book Society Choice for the Year. From the start of his career to the present, Heaney has won nearly every major award given to poets, including the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995.

For being a world-renowned poet, Heaney is quite humble. Bartender Muiris O'Beachain, from the Plough and Stars Pub in Cambridge, Massachusetts, said of Heaney, "He has a drink every now and then. Comes in with his wife sometimes. He might be sitting next to a plumber or a high-powered lawyer. No airs or graces."

Seamus Heaney has written eleven volumes of poetry, one play and three collections of criticism. He is acclaimed as one of the best poets alive and will undoubtedly continue to produce excellent poetry that will be enjoyed for generations to come.

Readers will welcome the latest study of his work, entitled *Seamus Heaney*, by America's most distinguished poetry critic, Helen Vendler. It serves as a wonderfully succinct road map to the poet's verse, illuminating the effect that both private and public events have had on the development of his work, while explicating the continual evolution of his style. She shows us how Heaney has pushed the boundaries of the traditional lyric poem in his efforts to articulate his changing vision of the world, even as she helps us to understand his masterly use of sound, symbol, imagery and parable. A thoughtful lyric poet with the power to re-think and re-feel his earlier positions, Vendler's Heaney emerges as not only a better craftsman, with profound linguistic resources, but also as a conscientious citizen of letters, and a restless re-maker of himself.

It is perhaps the subject of Northern Ireland that has primarily been responsible for attracting a large audience to Heaney's work. In her comprehensive and passionate new book, *Seamus Heaney*, the critic Helen Vendler reminds us, however, that 'thematic elements do not by themselves make for memorable poetry.' Instead, Vendler deals chiefly with Heaney's craft, including his poetic inventiveness and ongoing experimentation with form and expression. Vendler has asserted that while a poet is inextricably connected to certain struggles, it is the ability to find new approaches to language to convey those struggles that determines his or her genius. And Vendler's survey of 11 books of poetry clearly makes the case that Heaney has sustained such attention to language, often brilliantly bringing to light his the-

matic, aesthetic and moral concerns. As Vendler shows, symbol-making is only part of Heaney's excellence. She stresses the masterful formal designs that convey these symbols throughout the decades of Heaney's lyrics. One finishes her book with a remarkably clear understanding of Heaney's outstanding adventures in form and expression, and of poetry itself. If it's true that only a few poets each century actually change the way we understand the possibilities of our language, then Heaney has earned his place as one of those. Most important, however, one finishes Vendler's critical study more inspired to return to Heaney's masterful, rigorous and deeply moving poems, which are in love with listening, life and the life of language. Vendler comments with the energy of one who has learned great sensitivity for both the work and the workers described in Heaney's poems of dockers, eel-fishers, ploughmen, cattle dealers, threshers and thatchers. Vendler allows the reader to witness her enthusiasm for the poem's craft as well as the crafts contained and celebrated in the stanzas. She eloquently expresses the poet's confrontation with contradictions of political violence, as well as sexuality, death and alienation. Both Seamus Heaney and Helen Vendler, it becomes evident, have lived and written to strengthen in people a refined sense for keen details and for courageous statements. As a critic, Vendler not only has identified the poet's phases of life and moments of creative growth and change, she has demonstrated with zeal how creative and provocative changes have characterized both the personal and the public life of the poet.

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Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer: A Comparative Study of their Novels

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Nadine Gordimer and Doris Lessing both grew up in Southern Africa, exposed to contradictions. One response was that of politics and radicalism. But unlike the young Martha Quest, with her sense of oppression by the illogicalities, in and around her, they are creative writers; and this brings in further contradictions. They are English writers, but not naturally at home in any English tradition. Both have remarked on the cultural deprivation of their background. Their isolation, however, has exposed them to a wider range of influences than English literature supplies: and above all has given them their freedom to experiment with the novel. But there the resemblance between them ends. Experiment in Nadine Gordimer takes the form of concentration. Her work concentrates on a single subject, Africa; and is most powerful in single, exemplary scenes—*anagnorisis* scenes, revealing and destroying false assumptions. And the words on the page, from being somewhat loose and casual in the early novels become ever more intense and rigorous. As her vision of Africa, indeed, of life, gets bleaker, her art gets more meticulous and dominant, even oppressively so. One can talk of the art of Nadine Gordimer, as distinct from her subjects; and the two aren't always quite happily matched.

In A *World of Strangers* (1958), a picaresque novel about a young Englishman's first experience of South Africa, and in many short stories, the joys as well as the contretemps of life are still in evidence. By *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966) the contradictions of society have given place as her subject to images of exhaustion and defeat—the suicide of a white activist, the disillusion of his former wife, the narrator. There is a vitality in this

novel, however, that comes from the narrator, from her self-possession and her sexual freedom, and her ability to respond to a black African: "He is immediately there—one of those people whose clothes move audibly, cloth on cloth, with the movement of muscle, whose breathing is something one is as comfortably aware of as a cat's purr in the room, and whose body warmth leaves fingerprints, on his glass."

Yet any human response is in Nadine Gordimer only an aspect of a situation, and she sees all human beings as trapped in their situations. This applies no less to *A Guest of Honour* (1972), the novel set in a new independent African state, than to those about South Africa

The menacing sense of history in her novels, and their cast of young revolutionaries and father figures of the old order, recall the scene reflected in political novels of the Thirties.

Nadine Gordimer often seems to be living through now, in South Africa, the European experience of Fascism, and to be experiencing the same loss not just of illusions but of hope. What once went with anti-Fascist attitudes, in Malraux or Auden for instance, a fascination with "power, a recognition of the sinister attraction of the will to dominate," is found in the portrait of the capitalist Mehring in *The Conservationist* (1974). And the only counter-attraction to power that is offered in this story is not that of life but of art, the conscious art with which it is told, an art that therefore itself comes to seem willed and assertive: authorial intervention in the guise of interior monologues, or in the symbolism of a black African body that refuses to stay buried.

The magnificent and wide-ranging *Burger's Daughter* (1979) is a work of far more subtle and, supple art, echoing the impulses of its heroine towards life and freedom. This is an art that doesn't connive with the inevitable but allows, for the unpredictability of life. Rosemarie (or Rosa) Burger is a much-divided, named after Rosa Luxemburg and an Afrikaner grandmother. The narration is in both first and third persons, and in the first person Rosa addresses three different imaginary interlocutors.

A tremendous dialectic of attitudes is brought into play: liberal and Communist of the dominant whites; the mass movement of black consciousness; Afrikaner tradition and the sanctions of family, church, law; the claims of the private life, 'the closed circuit of self'; and those of delight in nature and art (as in paintings of mimosa by Bonnard, done during the Occupation, 'as if nothing had happened'). Nadine Gordimer's handling of political and philosophical argument among her characters, European and African, is something unique in the modem English novel; not only in particular scenes but in her fundamental interests she has brought the novel of ideas back into

English literature, filling a place that had been vacant in living memory, and was never exactly crowded. At the centre of the dialectic is Rosa, who is as disturbed by the death of a white meths drinker on a park bench by political injustice, and who looks for a meaning outside herself and her destiny as the daughter of a famous Communist. There are areas of numbness and obscurity in Rosa a love affair with a professor in France, an under-examined affair that somehow just happened, offering an opportunity of escape; in fact, anything at all not directly concerned with South Africa—but that numbness too merges into the meaning of the novel.

July's People (1981) is her most unsparing novel, a wholly pessimistic account of the near future. With 'nothing else to do but the impossible', when revolution breaks out in South Africa, Barn and Maureen Smales accept their house servant's offer of refuge in his tribal village 600 kilo metres from Johannesburg. They are all decent people—the two white liberals, their young children, the trusted servant, the peaceable villagers. All human instinct argues that this is not, after all, an impossible situation. Nadine Gordimer suggests otherwise. Set in a round mud hut in a village of round huts, 'its circles encircled by the landscape' as in the conventional view of 'the single community of man-and-nature-in-Africa'. July's *People* reaches conclusions that are not just bleak but hopeless. Community of man and nature is only an irony in a book about the absolute failure of community between men.

There are few incidents: an awkwardness over the keys to the Smales's truck; the evidence of white practicality when Barn kills two young wart-hogs for food or builds a water tower for the village; the theft of Barn's shotgun. These merge with the routine of village life: the women foraging for plants or cutting grass for thatch; and with the evidence both of poverty and of indigenous culture as in the black children's manners. But the situation is exceptional, and the Smales see it in all its social and political complexity, and discuss it with a fine conscience. What Nadine Gordimer can do, which is still finer, is to let the book itself enact their situation at a deeper level, putting itself alongside the black Africans—July the servant who is now the host, his wife and family—with a freedom and acceptance the Smales could never hope to match. To be able to do this is enough to justify her art in its intervention in politics. At this unspoken, undoctrinaire level, in its uncompromised attitudes to all its characters, the book establishes its right to be trusted.

It's a novel without warmth or sympathy for anyone person or for any side. The subject is a situation in which all the characters are trapped. The traps are those of colour and class, the family, the relations of master and servant, and simply the human condition. Not that any of these terms has a simple meaning; for what Nadine Gordimer has specially set up for study are the anomalies and reversals the situation contains. It is anomalous for the role of dependent to pass from the servant to the master, as happens here: but this is further complicated by the fact that the Smales aren't typical whites—they left Johannesburg because they didn't accept 'the necessity to defend their lives in the name of ideals they didn't share'. For his part, July is by no means anxious to abandon the position of servant; and other black Africans show an equal reluctance to act out an appropriate historic role and assert their independence. And not only what the Smales don't believe in, but what they do—'the absolute nature of intimate relationships between human beings'—is seen to disappear in their new situation. Doris Lessing was adolescent, and therefore bound to be unhappy; British, and therefore uneasy and defensive; in the fourth decade of the twentieth century, and

therefore inescapably beset with problems of race and class; female, and obliged to repudiate the shackled women of the past.

Doris Lessing had given the disintegration of the self, still closer attention in her most famous novel *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and in a range of shorter stories. The first inset in the novel is a narrative called 'Free Women', which shows us Anna and Molly in a London flat in 1957, and offers a provisional definition: they lead 'what is known as free lives, that is, lives like men'. This intermittent narrative frames four huge sections devoted to Anna's notebooks of the 1950s: a black notebook dealing with the African experience, out of which she has written her only novel; the red for politics—the decline and fall of the communist myth; blue a record of relations with men, and of dreams and sessions with her analyst; yellow in which she 'takes up stories', mostly drafts of a novel in which 'Ella' re-enacts a large part of Anna's experience. In all this what it means to be a 'free woman' is thoroughly worked over. Not only the question of 'lives like men"—an illusion, for if Anna enters a sexual relationship as freely as a man, she nevertheless ends it in humiliating dependence—but also the freedom of choice that paralyses her as a writer, the freedom allowed by the irresponsible state of the world, and the ironical freedom of a woman haunted by the idea of integrity who is condemned to act at random to find out what her actions mean. Structure and scene are more complex than this suggests; but the book's striking quality, is not that it is difficult in a profound or original way, but rather the reverse—the conviction it carries of being a close transcription of actual experience, in which most of the expected preoccupations of a writer in the mid-twentieth century naturally find their place. Simply as a record of how it is to be free and responsible, a woman in relation to men and to other women, and to struggle to come to terms with one's self about these things and about writing and politics, it is unique in its truthfulness and range. Its interest has been widely felt; it is the sort of book that determines the way people think about themselves..

Doris Lessing has one theme that puts a few of the stories collected in *A Man and Two Women* (1963) on a different level

of intensity from the others, and is also the centre of interest of the novel. This is the theme of the couple or the 'affair.' What she deals with here is of course complex by nature; indeed an, unusual directness on this topic is what we come to expect from her. The picture isn't encouraging: none of her women seems capable of a stable relationship, and none of her men worthy of one. They come together with little more than foreboding, and most of the time they struggle to get apart. She casts several glances of contempt at women who depend on men in the way that once was thought wholesome and now seems impossibly naive. But one comes to recognize a woman in several of these stories and in the characters of *The Golden Notebook* (themselves evidently the projections of a single woman, Anna) who is certainly disturbing. This woman is frank about her, sexual needs and satisfactions, yet clearly unhappy with them. She gives herself a role; it is to be thoroughly female, to turn herself into a love-object as naked and opaque as a stone; and she both wants this role and resents it; and still more resents the male who takes advantage of it. In the long run, though, Lessing doesn't let anyone off lightly. Her girls, sooner or later, this is the story of *The Golden Notebook* collapse. And then they're at their most interesting. Not on account of anything that can be read into the collapse, in the light of the big ideas with which her novel is concerned, but rather the opposite, for Lessing seems admirable in being able to realize in her characters a despair devoid of any particular meaning. It is the shallowness of breakdown she conveys, a thing like, but worse than, the exhausted mental processes of someone who hasn't slept for nights. And having abstracted all else from them, she is now very honest about her characters. Nothing *deepens* them; they are truest at their most shallow; and like this they can be as frightening as *Medea*. The most explicit study of self-destruction is 'To Room Nineteen,' in which Susan drifts away from her family into indifference, almost into non-being, practised like a religious discipline in hotel rooms, and then kills herself. Such hopelessness in a practically pure state has interested other modern writers, but most of them find it extraordinary. She sees it steadily as a kind of experience.

The novels of Nadine Gordimer have given imaginative and moral shape to the recent history of South Africa. Since the publication of her first book *The Lying Days* (1953), she has charted the changing patterns of response and resistance to apartheid with her exploration of the place of the European in Africa, her selection of representative themes and governing motifs for novels and short stories, and her accompanying shifts in ideological focus from a liberal to a more radical position. It was in recognition of this achievement of having borne untiring and lucid narrative witness that Gordimer was awarded the 1991 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Born in 1923 to Jewish immigrant parents in the South African mining town of Springs, Gordimer began writing early, from the beginning taking the pathologies and everyday realities of a radically divided society as her subject. She lives in South Africa, in Johannesburg. Her decision to remain in the country through the years of political repression has reflected her commitment to her subject, to the society to which she feels she belongs, and to her vision of a post-apartheid future.

As Gordimer has said, "politics is character in South Africa." Yet, throughout the long years of political polarization in that country and the banning of three of her books, Gordimer has distanced herself from the polemics and retained a firm humanist belief in the objectivity and inwardness of the writer. Although she has referred to an engagement with political reality as imperative and explores permutations of the question of engagement in novels like *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People* (1981), she at the same time asserts the autonomy of the writer's perspective, "the last true judgment." Narrative for Gordimer helps to define and clarify historical experience. Her keen sense of history as formation, and as demanding a continual rewriting, has ensured that her novels can be read as at once contemporary in their reference and symbolic of broader social and historical patterns, as in the paranoia surrounding the case of the buried black body on a white farm in *The Conservationist*, or in the psychosocial portrait of Rosa Burger in *Burger's Daughter*.

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The Valorized World of Vishnu: Manil Suri's *The Death of Vishnu*

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> Only in fiction can we share another person's specific experiences.[1]
>
> John Berger

Economic disparities persist all over the world. Class continues to permeate mainstream political debate and to persist as a determining feature of cultural life. The trinity of caste, class and gender is seen as the standard division of identity politics by critical practices. In areas of race and gender sophisticated conceptions of discursivity are deployed to interrogate ideological constructions. Stereotypes, clichés and discursive boundaries characterize all these categories, but whereas gender and race are spuriously demarcated by such irreducible markers as sex and skin colour, class is indicated by only such mutable but tenacious markers as education, accent, dress, manner and speech patterns.[2] The subtlety of class construction makes it all the more insidious in its implication and all the more urgently in need of sophisticated critique.

Despite the ongoing importance of class as a cultural category its continued under representation in Indian Writing is disappointing. Although there are some works where class is kept on the agenda. We are all familiar with the immortal creations of Munshi Premchand—Gobar, Hori, Ghisu, Madhav and many more—the landless people living at the dregs. Premchand chose his themes from the peasantry and humble people of Uttar Pradesh. Manjul Bhagat's *Anaro* (1977), Bhisham Sahni's *Basanti* (1994) are good examples of the fictionalized plight of the marginalised. Basanti and Anaro are working class girls living in

the slums of metropolitan cities. They are subjected to economic, social and patriarchal oppression.

It was Mulk Raj Anand's aim to stay lower still than even Sarat Chandra or Premchand. He described a waif like Munoo in *Coolie* (1936), or an indentured labourer like Gangu in *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) and set them right at the center of the scheme of cruelty and exploitation. In his fictional practice Bhabani Bhattacharya shows affinity with Anand. His *So Many Hungers* (1947) is the story of Kajoli a destitute rustic girl who ultimately decides to earn her living not by bartering her body but by selling newspapers. *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1952) is a tale of Kalo a poor blacksmith. Kamala Markandya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) has Rukmani, a rustic woman with her hard peasant life. Mahasweta Devi, the best-selling author in Bengali, of short fiction and novels is a deeply political, social activist. She has been working with and for tribals and marginalised communities like the landless labourer of eastern India for years. Her works are engaged in contemporary questions of politics, gender and class. *The Death of Vishnu*[3] is also a literary foray in this largely neglected area of relocating the centrality of the working class experience and sensibility.

Manil Suri teaches mathematics at the University of Maryland in the U.S. *The Death of Vishnu* is his debut novel and is the winner of Barnes and Noble 2001. The text borders on the fantastic and the realistic. It can be seen as paradigmatic text of the subterranean desire. This central idea was given to him as he mentions in *The Author's Note*: "it started with the idea of an actual man Vishnu, who lived on the steps of the building in which I grew up. He died in August 1994, on the same landing he had occupied for many years." Suri wraps his class-conscious tale somewhat ironically in the trappings of comedy and romance. The novel is suffused with Hindu mythology while his goal was not to write treatise on Hinduism, but to create narrative and characters that pulsate with life.

One could read this work as an expression of Plato's dictum that "any city however small is in fact divided into the city of the poor, the other, of the rich."[4] In the working class category we

have—Vishnu, the cigretwallah, Panwallah, Radiowallah, so named as he possesses a radio and always carries it with him and Padmini, the girl from the brothel. Vishnu, the central character, is an odd jobs man in Bombay apartment block. This story of one apartment building becomes a metaphor for the social and religious divisions of contemporary India. Mrs. Asrani, one of the two warring Hindu housewives cries, "If we can't all live in harmony in this building what hope is there for the nation." (64) Although she frets much more about her graying hair than about the harmony of the nation.

The inert half-dead Vishnu sprawled on the staircase is reminiscent of the corpse in Eugene Ionesco's *Amedee or How to Get Rid of it*, which lies sprawled in the bedroom of an old couple and keeps growing in geometric progression. Here Vishnu does not grow physically but his growth could be seen in terms of the mental space that he increasingly starts occupying in the minds of the inhabitants. The apartment dweller's disquiet about what to do with Vishnu intensifies as the novel progresses. Further as the corpse in *Amedee* is best understood as a poetic image and carries a multitude of meaning at one and the same time. Similarly, Vishnu's presence is a constant irritant for the inhabitants of the building—impinging on the consciousness of the people. More importantly, the incapacitation of Vishnu suggests the moral values that are stultified. He is the conscience of the apartment/nation/world that is lying in a sluggish state.

Around Vishnu, in this three-floored microcosm of Bombay, the lives of middle class apartment inhabitants unfold. On the first floor are the Asranis and the Pathaks, with the perennial skirmishes between the housewives—Mrs. Asrani and Mrs. Pathak. On the second floor the devout Mrs. Jalal who has lost faith in her intellectual, atheist husband. We have the lovesick teenagers--Kavita Asrani from the first floor and Salim Jalal from the second. And finally, on the third floor Mr. Taneja grieves over his dead wife in utter solitude.

Couched in caricature and comicality the novel opens with the hullabaloo created by Vishnu having thrown up on the landing where he lives. Hypocrisies and affectation of the middle

class is demolished, as Mrs. Asrani's callousness is laid bare: "It occurred to her that she didn't know if Vishnu was alive or dead. But it didn't really matter, she had done her duty in either case." (2) As Vishnu's health deteriorates, his delirium is peppered with memories of childhood. The writer mentions in a conversation with Nirmala Lakshman: "I wanted to make some patches of his life beautiful, that is why it was nice to have his mother as a figure who really loved him. She is the only one in the whole book who really loves him."[5] Vishnu's mind is laced with reveries of three women he loved—his mother, Kavita, daughter of Mrs. Asrani and Padmini. His selective memory takes refuge and revels in the past. He thinks of diwali and many subsequent diwalis when Kavita would descend the stairs with phujhadis and how he sees her grow with each passing diwali. Images unfurl in his mind of the day he went frolicking with Padmini to a mela—with its photographers stall, guddi ka baal, and stall selling kitchen things and how the evening ends with his admission of his love for Padmini. The novel narrates the pedagogy of identity for a prostitute like Padmini who desires an upward trajectory out of the brothel and into the secure position of the middle class domestic women. Vishnu too like Padmini aspires for middle class domesticity: "An address and a ration card, a postman who brings them mail. A job to go to every morning, a women to whom he is wed." (106) Soon the romantic flight of imagination with its promised provision of marital and domestic fulfillment is revealed as fantasy unmasked: "The absurdity of the situation strikes him. The preposterousness of his images, the foolishness of his feelings, the comicality of chasing currents that skim across Padmini's face." (106) Padmini leaves without informing him of her whereabouts. For people like Vishnu and Padmini real life is repugnant, it fails to sustain their desire of simple domesticity and this desire is sought and enacted through the consumption of fantasized romance.

It has almost been eleven years since Vishnu took up the work in the apartment, before that we are told that Tall Ganga was engaged for the work. After getting all her daughters married off, she goes to her village deputing Vishnu to take over her

job. The perks his job entailed were sleeping on the landing, being paid a paltry sum for his work and be given tea and left over chapatis. When the people of the apartment voiced their discontent over the irresponsible behaviour of Vishnu and wanted a more reliable replacement, Tall Ganga registered her reactionary response asserting her rights: "what do you think I've been staying here due to your generosity? I came here long before you did Pathak memsahib. Every family that's ever lived in this building has eaten off the dishes washed by my hands. I may not be rich like you but I have more rights here than anyone in this building!" (5) She asserts her identity and makes a bid to salvage her dignity, "I have already given my word to Vishnu . . . and I hope as a person who brought the milk that your children grew up on, that you will preserve my dignity." (5) She demonstrates that she and others like her are no longer content to belong to the category of the voiceless. We are also told of short Ganga who works as a substitute maid when Ganga or Vishnu is indisposed. She is a fiery character. She comes alive because of the way she is portrayed. She has an ace up her sleeve as she was supplying cheaper variety of milk. When interrogated, she becomes belligerent: "All these years he has worked for you and this is what you give him? A death worse than dogs." (160) The brutal truth of her statement leaves the middle class ladies dumbfounded. The text implicitly promotes just such models of revolt.

Vishnu lying on the stairs coughing blood, instead of sympathizing with his condition, the Pathaks are worried about getting infected. Humanity endlessly enacts its petty dramas of sadism and cruelty. The fee charged by the doctor appalls Mrs. Pathak: "Didn't these doctors have any heart even for people who slept on the landings?" (11) Ironically her reflection is rebounded on her own callousness. Her sole concern is to create an impression upon her kitty party friends with her Russian salad samosas, and American Kraft cheese. Vishnu is like a Lazarus at her door, a mote in her eye, a pockmark in the fair face of her apartment. The pointedness of the indictment of an inhuman system blurs the lines of humanity in the picture. Mrs. Pathak is outraged at the idea of her husband arranging for an ambulance: "we don't

have money to send Rajan to boarding school you're going to order an ambulance for Vishnu!" (11) She is ready to exonerate herself from any responsibility, making vain attempts to cover up: "she sends Mr. Pathak down to the landing with an old white cloth to cover Vishnu up as best as he could: make it look natural! . . . I want people to think he's asleep, not something else." (43) This succinctly states a flaw in the society where such window dressing is often done.

An ambulance is called but it leaves without taking Vishnu as neither Mrs. Asrani nor Mrs. Pathak want to pay for the ambulance to save him, thereby showcasing what man has made of man. The text's projection of the underdogs involves a denial of any virtue whatsoever of the upperdogs. Suri counterpoints two modes of conceptualizing value embodied in one culture that prioritizes quality of life—basic human requirements, love and happiness. And in another quantitatively-oriented culture committed to accumulate monetary wealth at the expense of life.

Spiralling up through the floor of the apartment building, we are pulled into the drama of the residents' lives. In Mr. Jalal's obsessive search for higher meaning the text parodies the quest for enlightenment and renunciation of great saints like Mahavira, Christ, Gautam Buddha, Hindu saints and fakirs. Mr. Jalal believes himself to be the prophet of Vishnu. He imagines Vishnu's body metamorphosing: "The head had multiplied, and were now craning their long necks to surround Mr. Jalal and stare at him from all directions." (156) Vinod Taneja's longing for the wife he has lost—whose dying wish was to make the Guinness book of records by memorizing every line in a movie. All this appears hopelessly juvenile. The comic elopement of Salim and Kavita Asrani, who imagines herself the heroine of a Hindi movie and wants her affair with Salim to be "just like it had been for Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Singh in *Zahreela Insaan*, for Rajesh Khanna and Sharmila Tagore in *Daag*." (66) Among these mundane concerns, Vishnu a rather passive character is valorized. He seeks a greater spiritual understanding of his existence.

Mr. Jalal's feverish utterances of Vishnu actually being the Hindu God invoke in him the question whether he is actually Vishnu. Various stories told to him by his mother come to his mind, how in her stories he was always the god, Vishnu. All representation is overdetermined by a structure of interests.[6] The writers' representation of Vishnu as a Hindu God--imaginatively by his mother, in a deluded delirium by Mr. Jalal and somewhat doubtfully by himself underscores the programme of the novelist.

One of the various stories told to Vishnu by his mother is in conformity with the project of hegemony unleashed by the author. It is the story of the yogi spirit Jeev born to be a Brahmin. In a village where the caste nexus was operative, one day a jamadarni was cleaning the gutter. Just then Jeev was walking by, without thinking she looked right into his face and began to wish him. For this she was beaten up. Jeev, a Brahmin, did not meddle with the established rules. King Indra witnessed the scene and voiced his disapproval, the lesser gods arranged for Jeev to be born as a monkey. The non-observance of prescribed boundaries demand punishment .The sweeper was obliged by societal and caste demands to distance her from upper class men. When the jamadarni is beaten up, violence serves to illustrate the extent to which castism is used both as means of social division and social control. However, here Gods are projected as benign and protective—mediating in social revivalism and resurgence.

As the novel comes to a close, Vishnu's body becomes weightless; he loses his ability to touch. He observes the ants and follows them up. He stands right outside Mrs. Pathak's door but she cannot see him as she stamps the ants with her sandals. The absurdity of Vishnu's predicament reminds us of Gregor Samsa in Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* where he is transformed into an insect. Vishnu's body lies in the stairs it is his spirit that seems to be moving upwards.

Vishnu's ascent of the staircase parallels the soul's progress through the various stages of existence. His mother's words fill his mind: "one day my Vishnu will find his Lakshmi, and Garuda the eagle will appear to fly them to Vaikuntha" (303) and

"Ananta the snake will rise from the sea and his endless coils will my Vishnu rest his head." (304) His real life comes back to him as reel life as he pictures himself seeing a movie at metro cinema "Amitabh as Vishnu, Reshma as Padmini." (307) And "Vishnu walks across to the center of the stage . . . the rest of the audience getting ready to applaud as he takes his final bow." (310) Suri seems to be echoing and alluding to Shakespeare's *Seven Ages of Man.* As Vishnu closes in on the riddle of his own mortality, we wonder whether he might not be the God Vishnu, guardian not only of the fate of the building and its occupants, but of the entire universe.

The affectation and hypocrisy of the middle class is further deflated towards the end when Vishnu dies and each one vying with the other in front of the inspector to project themselves as Vishnu's benefactor "actually, inspector, we knew him better. . . . I used to feed him chapatis every day. He was like a family member to us. The same food I used to cook for my family, I used to feed him also" (324) and ultimately break down flagrantly fighting. This ingrained irresponsibility and insensitivity of the Pathaks and Asranis is presented as an underlying fabric of Indian society. The good and evil is thrown together pell-mell. The evil is redeemed to some extent by such sympathetic souls as Vishnu's mother, Kavita and Mr. Taneja and also the novelist who at the end seems to be silently entreating the readers like Linda in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*: "His name was never in the papers. He is not the finest character that ever lived. But he is a human being . . . so *attention* must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog."[7] The text has assumed the task of ensuring Vishnu's visibility. What this entailed was a finely tuned sensibility to the search for some form of validation and valorization for those whom society has all but abandoned. In a new configuration, Vishnu stands at the centre not the margin of this work dedicated to the representation of working class experience /aspiration /fantasy.

Finally the book's formal invention, parody, allusion and satire significantly expand the generic conventions of the so-called class novel. And above all the novelist makes the reader

achieve what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "sympathetic co-experiencing."[8]

NOTES

1. John Berger, *The Success and Failure of Picasso* (London: Penguin, 1965), p. 129.
2. Stephen Ross, "Introduction: Working Class Fictions," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 47, 1, (Spring 2001), p. 3.
3. Manil Suri, *The Death of Vishnu* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001).
4. Plato, *The Works of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 137.
5. Nirmala Lakshman, Living and dying in Suburban Bombay, in conversation with Manil Suri, *The Hindu*, Sunday, March 25, 2001.
6. Kamala Viswesaran, "Small Speeches, Subaltern Gender: National Ideology and Its Historiography," in Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty, ed., *Subaltern Studies*, IX (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996), p. 84.
7. Arthur Miller, *Collected Plays* (London: Cresset Press, 1958), p. 162.
8. M.M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, trans. Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), pp. 81-87

Identity Crisis of Women in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*

SANGEETA DAS

Tara is an ideal character of Dattani which has been widely applauded and variedly interpreted. Dattani himself has tried to depict the feminine side of oneself which always has to come to terms with the society which favours male in a male-dominated world. No matter how much the world proclaims about woman enfranchisement and feminine liberation, subconsciously all women are aware of the fact that they have to go a long way to break shackles. If ever women will be considered equal to men by men, is a big question to answer.

Tara gives us a glimpse into the modern society which claims to be liberal and advanced in its thought and action. It is therefore evident enough to confirm male chauvinism prevalent in the present society. In a society which claims that its mothers are educated today and have 'Devis' like Durga, Kali, Saraswati Laxmi etc. whom not only women but men also pay obeisance, differentiate between a male child and female child. All the propagandas of equality between male and female, equal opportunities to women in all the fields are belied. Dattani has attempted an uphill task of pulling out all the taboo subjects from under the rug and putting them on the stage for the public to review. Considering his foresight, it can be said that young playwrights like Dattani, having guts to bring forth such poignant issues and present them threadbare, should be spawned and encouraged.

Dattani's *Tara* gives us a picture of the helplessness of woman in our society. It has received great applause in foreign countries where students have pointed out Tara and Chandan as two aspects of same personality. As Chandan exists, in writing

about himself, writes about Tara to rediscover the neglected half of himself. But Dattani's aim in writing the play was to highlight the preference given to a male child over a female child. Whenever the question of choice comes between male and female, it is the male who is chosen.

The play *Tara* also brings forth the bizarre reality of the woman playing second fiddle to man. It opens with Chandan changed into Dan in order to absolve himself from the guilt of killing his sister. Though the poor soul had nothing to do with his sister's untimely death but he bears the brunt of his grandfather's and mother's cruelty. He feels someway responsible for his sister's death and decides to atone for it. For that reason, he escapes to London and transforms his name from Chandan to Dan and lives a self-condemned life. The viciousness of the grandfather and his mother not only takes away the life of the girl but also ruins the life of the boy who was very much attached to his sister Tara.

The fateful leg which was the cause of Tara's bad health and consequent death could not be given to the boy as it became useless after few days. The leg would have been complete success with Tara's body. It would not only have saved her life but also made her a complete person which she very much desired to be, more than Chandan. Chandan was more complacent with his handicapped life while Tara craved every moment for a complete and normal life. The awareness that she has a handicap and the humiliation meted out to her by Roopa and her friends when she was forced to show her handicapped leg to them was like a dagger-jibe to her heart.

Dattani is known widely for picking up scintillating social problems of which this is perennial and glaring. The preference for the beneficence of the male child while staking the life of the female child is pathetic and takes to culmination the feeling of rejection felt by women in our society. So much for the educational policies framed out for the literacy of the women folk and the society as whole. After self-reliance attained by many women in almost all the fields, if such differentiation is done as

in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*, all the declarations and proclamations are bound to go to the drain.

Patel and Bharati are educated parents and the step taken by them is lamentable. Bharati's father, a resourceful person, is also considered to be one of the factors in this mishap but I should say that it is the ultimate decision of the parents which is effective in the life of their children. If Bharati had been led astray by her father's high-handed decision, why didn't Patel put his foot down and stand against their decision? Isn't a father strong enough to fight any hurdle, no matter how strong it is, for the benefit of his siblings? I strongly condemn such parents and would refute the privilege of parenthood to such parents. The incompatibility which comes between Patel and Bharati after this operation and its futility, tolls heavily on their later life which becomes full of bickerings and showdowns.

Having proved wrong in her decision on the fateful 'leg', Bharati tries to shed her burden of guilt by showing maternal love and concern for her daughter and to assert her moral superiority over her husband. She also tries to expiate by the act of donating kidney to her daughter which was ultimately futile. Patel on the other hand has no compunction for being party to the wrong decision, thanks to gender patriarchy. He tries to accommodate his son Chandan and plans out his education and career for him.

At one point when Tara refuses to fill forms for college and Chandan does likewise, Patel wants Tara to comply not for her own sake but for the sake of her brother. Patel seems to have ruled out the pangs of guilt from his heart of complicity in the injustice done towards Tara and conveniently shifted it on the shoulders of Bharati and her father. Bharati at least tries throughout her life to make up for the damage done. Tara being a girl has been taken for granted by Patel and all his expectations and dreams rested on Chandan whereas Chandan has been shown a boy of a different mentality. When he finally comes to know about the injustice done towards Tara by their parents and grandfather, he is filled with self-guilt and takes up the burden solely on his own shoulders so much so that he leaves India and

escapes to London under the name of Dan. Even today, the girls, most of the time, have to submit to the desires of their parents to see their brothers comfortably settled. The sons may be less talented and less intelligent than their daughters, but parents prefer spending money on sons for they believe that the sons are such assets which would stay with them while the girls would go away to their in-laws. Therefore money spent on girls would prove an unnecessary drain on their purse.

Ours has been a patriarchal society where men have always enjoyed a privileged position. Dattani has cleverly exploited this aspect which still remains like a pock mark on the face of our society.

Tara was more enthusiastic and full of zest and spark of life. She had high aspirations which she could not accomplish because of her handicapped state while the boy was comfortably ensconced and had come to terms with his handicapped life. Why was then Tara denied the privilege of the good 'leg'? It would have remained workable if attached to Tara's body. Its severance not only made Tara handicapped but also endangered her life and consequently she died an early death. Why? Is it because she was a girl? Is being a girl in this society a curse? But do not upholders of the society realize the fact that without girls, and consequently women, the society will ultimately come to a standstill. As it is, the ratio of women compared to men is much less in our country. Why so much partiality and differentiation done to women in a country which has a rich heritage and where women are otherwise placed on a pedestal. This seems sheer mockery and nothing of substance.

Like men, women need space to breathe freely and flourish. Mahesh Dattani has tried to show this by bringing in Dr. Thakkar as a social element with the play. Doctors are thought to be messengers of God because they save lives on this earth. Sometimes, when ordinary human beings falter, it is the doctors who show them the right path. Female foeticide has become very common of late. People have degraded themselves to such an extent that they kill the foetus of the female child even before it takes shape in the uterus.

The government has taken a commendable step by putting ban on such an atrocious practice. Many doctors deny revealing to the parents the identity of the foetus just to save the murder. In this play, Dr. Thakkar belied his godly profession and led himself to be bribed by Bharati's father into becoming an accomplice in the bizarre act of severing the leg. He should have upheld his profession by denouncing the decision at its inception whereas he in a way took Tara's life by severing the leg. His wise decision could have given Tara a safe, secured and complete life. His cruelty not only thwarts Tara's dreams but fills her life with dejection and depression. Her depression made her wish for death than unnecessarily spend money on herself. She also started hating all males including Chandan and Patel. One person she cared for was her mother. Her father's attitude toward their mother filled her with distaste for her father and on one occasion she told Chandan that their father was denying her access to their mother. When Tara comes to know about the complicity of her father, mother and grandfather in denying her a full and happy life, she is devastated and Chandan is filled with self-guilt. He is ashamed of what his parents and grandfather did to Tara. Both turn to each other for support and are shown clinging to each other at the end of the play.

Though this is a play about the injustices done to women, it is also a play about injustice to men such as Chandan. For no fault of his own, he is forced to lead a life of guilt. He could not forgive himself for the atrocity done towards his sister. He considers himself responsible for his sister's death which resulted into his refuge in London. When his father informed him about his mother's death, he refused to come back to India.

Identity crisis is strident in our society. Tara is sacrificed because she was a girl and had no right to have a better life than her brother. The idea of a complete girl-child and an incomplete male-child is so shocking that sacrifice of the girl-child is acceptable than a handicapped male-child. Then the revelation of the futility of the decision is taken with so much coolness that no compunction is shown towards the injustice done to the female-child.

Ours has always been a male-dominated society. The senior male member of the family had made the rules on which the decision has been taken. Even if there happened to be a female member who was elder to the male member, she was not given so much authority as the male. In case of Dattani's *Tara* too, Bharati's father who was senior-most of the three and a powerful and rich politician, was the person who determined about the operation in which the leg was to be given to Chandan instead of Tara. He went as far as bribing the doctor with sanction of land in Bangalore. Dr. Thakkar fell from his high station and without giving a second thought, along with his team, instead of taking a sound medical decision of leaving the leg with Tara, sold out his conscience for his ambitions and the temptation, to people, who had decided on the basis of gender and not on medical grounds.

Bharati's father further strengthened his indulgence for male grandchild by leaving his property after his demise to Chandan and not a single penny to Tara. He has been a consistent upholder of values pertaining to males. Patel's attitude has also been negative. He remained a mute observer of the whole affair. Isn't it because he too subscribes to the ideology of the patriarchal world? He blames his wife and father-in-law for the damage done but his complicity in the whole operation cannot be denied.

The fact that the male is always given the greater chance is obvious from Patel's planning for Chandan's education and future career. Bharati started fawning over Tara because of her sense of guilt but Patel doesn't seem to have cared much about it. It is more of gender patriarchy which dominates the play to underline which Dattani makes Dan apologise to Tara at the end of the play: "Forgive me Tara. Forgive me for making it my tragedy."

After the injustice done, the deficiency is tried to be patched up by love. What we see is that love is an instrument, not an end or a state of being. Men are practical, strong and less emotional than women. Women, when subdued, resort to emotional weapons of which love is one. Bharati uses her love for Tara as a weapon against Patel as well as an expression of her desire to compensate to Tara. Female-children are more sensitive than

male-children. Tara is also taken up by her mother's concern and indulgence of her; little did she know that her loving mother was an accomplice in destroying her dreams. Bharati's unnecessary bullying of Roopa into friendship with Tara and trying to bribe her into spending more time with Tara is disgusting and demeaning. Such acts, instead of easing the life of a handicapped child, further push them into the depths of darkness and decline. Can parental love be taken for granted? Can any love be taken for granted as a natural given? Such relationship puts in jeopardy the chances for individual growth and fulfillment.

The revelation of the skeleton in the cupboard is the typical method of a Dattani play. Here the skeleton points towards the gender issue. The whole set-up leads inexorably towards the revelation, and the characters are seen struggling to meet the imminent moment of crisis. Dattani's novels have the quality of unearthing the secrets of the family life of the present day. Each individual is a social element and cannot escape the societal dictates and familial choices.

Tara is neither Chandan's tragedy nor is it really Tara's. The tragic events depicted in the play are the tragic actions belonging to everyday life. It is Dattani's world where the playwright picks up various characters from the society as puppets, makes society the background and displays to us the fiery issues of today. In this play, Dattani became a juggler and juggles with husband and wife relationship, doctor and patient relationship, son-in-law and father-in-law relationship, parents and children relationship, brother and sister relationship, with special focus on father-daughter, mother-daughter and grandfather-granddaughter relationships.

The gender crisis which has given rise to identity crisis among our women folk is heart-rending when so much social propaganda along with prospective marathon undertaking to strengthen women's progress has been proposed in the country's agenda. Dattani has just made the effort to highlight one of the atrocities done towards a female and belie all the hue and cry for female emancipation and equality with men on all grounds.

In *Tara*, physical deficiency has been given too much weight. Tara has been shown helpless because she has a handicap and is consequently denied the privileges of life. But Tara could have made her deficiency, her strength and fight the society to etch a place of her own. She was a bubbly and energetic girl who had all the qualities of a normal girl. If she had been given moral support by her parents, especially her father, she might have shone like a star as her name justifies. Her father's eager planning for her brother's future and total ignorance towards her forced her to believe that she was incompetent for any productive work. In short, her life was a burden on this earth. This made her lose interest in life altogether. Further she refuses to go to physiotherapy or fill forms for college.

Through Dattani's *Tara*, we come to know about the sincerity and inclination of a girl to prove her mettle in the world of male supremacy. As the name Tara rightfully suggests a star, the girl was a bright and shinning star which was a source of cheerfulness and happiness of the family. A complete life could have done wonders and surely she would have scored the limits which her brother Chandan couldn't have. Chandan did not have the fire in him which Tara had. The character Roopa has been included in the play by Dattani to show the futility of fullness in that girl. She, though normal, was offensive and comic. Her presence makes the reader feel the waste of fullness in her and bitterness of Tara's deficiency. Tara has been depicted as a female character with potential while her brother was not enterprising at all but the father of the two was bent upon securin the future of the boy. Tara's potentiality was sacrificed on the altar of gender. Identity crisis becomes a chain with which a female is fettered when the question of choice between male and a female arises.

Dattani has been successful in hitting the target by writing the play *Tara*. He has not only focused on the futility of capacities in the girl but has also tried to show the pathetic humiliation faced by a handicap through the incident when Tara had to expose her artificial leg to the three girls in her locality. Tara is hurt and in her moment of deep hurt and resentment caused by the

'normal' world she wants to hear only Beethovan. She identifies herself with the musician with a disability who established his greatness in spite of being unable to hear his own creations.

Thus, Dattani's target—gender-identity leading to identity crisis in women—has been deftly revealed in this play. Certain questions spring up in our minds such as: How are men and women constructed in terms of gender? What are the definitions of their roles? How meaningful are these definitions? What is manly and what feminine? Why it should be so? Why can't women go out in the world? Why should men be masterly and women subservient? Why can't men and women be open about their sexuality? Dattani raises these and host of other questions regarding gender and social stratification and hierarchy and sexuality but has left them to be answered by us. We have to ponder over these issues.

D.G. College, Kanpur

BOOK REVIEWS

S.K. Vasishta, *The Snake and the Grandpa and Other Poems*. N.B. Publications, New Delhi.

The main thrust of today's poetry is towards recording the happenings inside the human psyche, i.e. chronicling the self as it encounters the harsh actualities of life. The events of the soul vis-à-vis occurrences outside it are its prime concern. This is what makes contemporary poetry authentic and pervasive. The poetry of S.K. Vasishta, a young Indian poet in English, is compellingly contemporary in this very respect. As one traverses the path of 30 poems in his maiden collection of poems, titled *The Snake and the Grandpa and Other Poems* one is reminded of the essential Indian psyche and milieu, which is primarily romantic and nostalgic. The changing scenario of the familial concept and reality in this country hurts and disturbs the romantic inklings of the poet, as the title poem of the collection demonstrates. The silent turmoil that we perceive in the undercurrent flow of this poem is owing to the loss of bondages between the two generations of values—the old leisurely one getting outmoded and outdated, and the new fast and scientifically logical one yet in the state of uncertainty. The poem reminds one of Khushwant Singh's well known pen-sketch of his grandmother. Substitute 'grandfather' and you find the same world view, the same set of values.

All poetry has an incantatory strength and motive, which cannot be easily explained by any criticism. Vasishta's poem 'Now the Poem Comes' reminds us of this very mystique of poetry. Almost like an incantation the poems begins and explains the poetic vision in a mist of subconscious images:

A silver in the sound.
The soil making way, the root

Becoming the bud, bud the leaf,
The tree breaks and
Covers the whole earth
The pattern runs in whispers. The slowness
changes into a fountain.

Some of the images in these poems are psychedelic. They intrigue and shock the traditional reader of romantic poetry. For example: 'The sun is a peddler . . . Hurrying big (as a mouse ?) . . . the Sun is a prostitute / Selling herself, selling her days / Burning her bloody rays . . . These happy chameleons . . . The Sun / Falling into ponds of shadows / Shreds of skin, a joy for / crocodiles' etc. The female description of the sun has changed the whole concept of sun-worship. The Solar energy has been aptly conceptualized as the primordial mother-goddess. I feel that this intriguing, shocking imagery is the real strength of these poems. Vasishta is not an easy poet; his images emerge from the deep chasms of the subconscious. He merges and welds them into an experience of the soul. His poems certainly require a willing suspension of accepted norms and beliefs. One has to silence all the turmoils one is possessed of to hear the silence of his poems.

One thing is almost certain in his case. Vasishta is essentially a thinking poet. He has a philosophy of his own and almost all the poems in this collection partake of it. The style of the poems is nervy, wherein lies their real strength. There is a deep undercurrent of the subconscious flow of imagination and that flow is never regular, never demarcated, defined or clear. In a way, there is a personalized, experiential mode here which pulsates with a disturbing energy. This style and diction can be traced back to T.S. Eliot of *The Rock*. Some of the experiments with language like the blurange (blue + orange), regreen (red + green) or undecide (used as a verb) surprise us with their pleasing naiveness and ease. The virtuosity with which he handles his language is certainly poetical and the succinctness and lucidity of his diction demands a definite revisit to these poems of Vasishta.

Dayanand College, Hisar **R.K. Raizada**

O.P. Mathur, *Indira Gandhi and the Emergency as Viewed in the Indian Novel*, New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2004, pp. 133, Rs. 300.

For the past ten years or so O.P. Mathur has been bringing out books on subjects unexplored or on writers neglected. Among the significant books he has so far published are: *Sri Aurobindo: Critical Considerations, New Critical Approaches to Indian English Fiction, Indian Political Novel and Other Essays etc.* It highlights a fact that in our universities some teachers vegetate and superannuate, and only a few, rare few, levitate. Professor Mathur belongs to the last tribe. When their gown drops, their pen articulates.

With his interest unflagging in action (karma), he has given us a new book that reminds us of the 20-month long night when New India heard 'the barbarous clangour of a gong' at midnight. By next morning her sons and daughters had lost their tongue, found their pen chained, and saw around themselves nothing but rough faces and handcuffs with marks of tears on them. In the face of such a tyranny "artists of the past" said Albert Camus, "could keep silent. . . . *The tyrannies of today are improved:* they no longer admit of silence or neutrality. One has to take a stand, be either for or against." The modern artists of India (poets) practised neither silence nor neutrality; instead, they communicated the fearful thoughts of common man with intensity. The result was: *Voices of Emergency* (1983), edited by John Oliver Perry.

The book under review may be considered an autopsy of the same event. Here the anatomists are fiction writers who look into the dark frame of the dinosaur and strive to find evidence of the genie that played the monstrous role all through. Some of them dissect its diseased parts and analyze them amusingly. One or two simply laugh—scatologically—at its girth. Mathur brings all such reports under one cover after thirty years of the happening. By doing this he has accomplished what has so far not been thought of. Also, a lesson for critics of the new generation who do not see what lies at their doorstep.

The volume of essays rightly gets a kick start with introduction wherein Mathur touches upon the various literary strategies western novelists of modern era have adopted for narrating their tale of disaffection. The most common instrument of narration he notes is allegory. Alongside it he discusses in brief a few important works of that genre—Utopias and dystopias of Orwell, Wells, Huxley, Kafka, Koestler, Pasternak and so on.

Switching over to the Indian literary scene, the critic attempts to trace the genesis of emergency, its background (social and political), and the role of key players inside the arena and outside. To apprise the new generation of India of the event, he recapitulates the leading features of the Emergency.

His study of novels that follows (Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* Raj Gill's *The Torch-Bearer*, Nayantara Sahagal's *Rich Like Us,* Manohar Malgonkar's *The Garland Keepers,* Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel,* O.V. Vijayan's *The Saga of Dharampuri,* Arun Joshi's *The City and the River*, Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* and others) is neat and fortunately free from the goose bumps of jargon. Once he slips into the text, he swims through all its intricate parts discovering hidden islands which often remain inaccessible to a common reader. For instance, "An important fact, often overlooked, is that Aadam is really the child of divine Shiva and Parvati." (21) This method of close analysis helps understand the text which takes shape on the warp and woof of history and imagination.

This apart, the study reiterates the fact that Indian English writers are more conscious of their role in a developing country than their counterparts in regional languages. Their exposure to western ideas and values through higher education, personal reading, travel etc. gives them special distinction in the Indian world of writing. Yet he does not fail to point out the stamp of Indianness that all their novels bear. That defines their common bond.

Jaipur **I.K. Sharma**

Book Shelf

Gajendra Kumar (Rajendra College, Chapra) and Uday Shankar Ojha (Jagdam College, Chapra). ***Indian English Fiction: Readings and Reflections*****, Sarup and Sons, New Delhi, 2003.**

The book is a commendable effort to examine the creative impulse and imagination of Indian fictionalists. The anthology contains eighteen research-oriented papers which scrutinise the creative devices of modern and postmodern novels in theoretical contours. It has rightly been pointed out that the historicity of Indian English literature and its spectrum is in episodic manner, from poetry to prose and from romantic idealization to various kinds of realism and symbolism. The contributors have exquisitely analyzed the Indian English writers who belong to a microscopic minority have been constantly questioning their choice of English because they are in fact bilinguals and sometimes intensely suffer from a guilt mixed with nostalgia for their mother tongue. The anthology covers a wide panorama of Indian creative urge which is adequately manifested in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, K.S. Venkataramani, R.K. Narayan to Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee to Shashi Deshpande. The collection of essays on different writers will certainly be a meaningful exercise. What is intended is to provide some new insights into the works of these writers. It is hoped that the volume will be of tremendous help to researchers and other academics.

Siddhartha Sharma (M.G. Chitrakoot Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya, Chitrakoot) ***Arun Joshi's Novels: A Critical Study.*** **Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2004.**

The book seeks to present Arun Joshi as a novelist of great merit and as an author of rare sensitivity. It reveals his instinctive ability to articulate the feelings of the post- Independence Indians

trapped between the Indian ethos and Western influences. It also reveals his psychological insight and understanding of the inner lives of the beleaguered protagonists. The study has been made comprehensive enough to reveal the various perspectives of Joshi's novels, thereby helping research scholars whet their critical faculties and appreciate Arun Joshi's originality as a great Indian English novelist.

Siddhartha Sharma (M.G. Chitrakoot Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya, Chitrakoot) ***Shashi Deshpande's Novels: A Feminist Study.*** **Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2005**

The book seeks to study the feminist perspective in Shashi Deshpande's novels. It reveals Deshpande's sincerity and ability in voicing the concerns of the urban educated middle-class woman. Trapped between tradition and modernity^ her sensitive heroines are fully conscious of being victims of gross gender discrimination prevalent in a conservative male-dominated society. A culture-specific approach has been adopted to unravel Shashi Deshpande's pragmatic resolution related to the modern Indian woman's beleaguered existence. The book, it is hoped, will make a rich contribution to women's studies.

Amar Nath Prasad (Jagdam College, Chapra). ***Indian Writing in English: Past and Present*****, Sarup and Sons, New Delhi.**

The book is an attempt to evaluate the great authors of Indian writing in English. It includes scholarly papers concerning Indian fiction and Indian drama. The authors discussed in this anthology are Sri Aurobindo, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, R.P. Jhabvala, Manohar Malgaonkar, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie, Khushwant Singh, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Rajendra Singh. At a time when Indian writing in English is gaining ground and is being taught in both India and abroad, this book, it is hoped, will certainly prove to be a great help for those who want to acquaint themselves with Indian authors in English and their various works.

K. Balachandran, *Critical Responses to Canadian Literature*, Sarup and Sons, New Delhi.

The book is a sincere attempt to present Indian responses to Canadian poetry, fiction, autobiography and drama. The 21 contributors are working in various Indian Universities and they have made this book valuable by way of their fruitful research and findings. Canadian poets like, A.M. Klein, Gwendolyn Mac Ewen, A.J.M. Smith, Irving Layton, South Asian Canadian writers Uma Parameswaran, Himani Bannerji, Laxmi Gill, and Surjeet Kalsey, Canadian novelists like Margaret Atwood, Suniti Namjoshi, Susanna Moodie, Canadian dramatists like James Reaney, Ken Mitchell, Uma Parmeswaran have been taken for study. A comparative study of Atwood and Anita Desai, Atwood and Tamil writer Ambai has also been done. Canadian autobiographer Stan Dragland has been preferred for analysis by a Canadianist. Canadian critic Northrop Frye's critical approach has been applied to Indian and American literature. The twenty-one critical essays throw more light on the different aspects of Canadian living and literature in a clear and appreciable style which is nothing but a literary feast to the students, researchers and teachers of Canadian literature.

N.D.R. Chandra, *Modern Indian Writings in English: Critical Perceptions*, Sarup and Sons, New Delhi, 2004.

This compendium of informed critical study covers almost all the major authors of modern Indian writing in English like Rabindra Nath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand. Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Chaman Nahal, Khushwant Singh, Arun Joshi, U.R.Anantha Murthy, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Despande, Nissim Ezekiel, P. Lal, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, O.P. Bhatnagar, A.K. Ramanujan. Arun Kolatkar and Girish Karnad. The contributors include D.S. Mishra. Anupam Nagar, C.M. Mukheijee. Easterine Iralu, Basavraj Naikar, Mallikarjun Patil. Darshana Trivedi, Ananya S.Guha, A.J. Sebastian, Mani Metei. P. Dhanavel. Savita Goel. This is a student-oriented book, which aims to serve the purpose of general reader as much as the teachers and scholars.

Creative Writing

Success Adjustment

Genius seeking success has to lie
On the uncouth bed of adjustment.
The stream bent on progress meets
Irregular rocks thrown in the way
Or mighty stumbling blocking heads.
It has to buckle in compromise
To get round them or let them
Bend its upright path, distort
The balance and symmetry of form,
Sully pure joy with lecherous looks.
Shakespeare stooped to the height of the boy
And changed his gender in disguise
Attuned his note to the croaking throat,
And stopped to inhale the wind of the pit.

R.S. Sharma (Varanasi)

Waiting for the Lotus

It is not easy at all
to speak the unspeakable
and express the ugly essence
of oneself. Shame is all right
only when it is silent or hidden
from the prying eyes of others. But alas!
I have to expose my own wounds,
not for the exhibition of any sort,
but to tell you, O brute
that wound always hurts,
and it hurts all the more when
inflicted from unexpected quarters.

It is not easy at all
to write the unwritten
and weave a poem.
I am not a child
to weep out my heart;
I would wait for the day
when the lotus rises—
if it rises at all—
from my murky waters.

Pashupati Jha (Roorkee)

The Contact

The shrouded cloud
Stops the glance
From reaching the flash of light
At the escalating height
The consciousness
Filled with vibrations
Suddenly established
The invisible contact
Restored oneness
With Him who sat above
I saw him through closed eyes
Delighted at the vision
That pierced through my soul
The glowing eternity
Beckoned me to follow blindly
Traverse over forest and sky
Hills and streams
Alienated from the isolated
Companionship
Of those dwelling in the
Tempestuous world
Where treachery and treason
Led to tragic intensity
Sanctified at last
By touch of eternity

H.A Singh (Delhi)

Argument

Argument will taint merriment
And you will not like it:
To get the best of argument
Is just to avoid it.

By talks, not tanks, by men, not ranks
All problems we can solve:
Don't fear to talk; under fear, pranks
No issue we resolve.

'Life is hard,' like a saintly bard
Oft warns me, my sweetheart:
'Compared to what?' when ask'd, off-guard
She'll feel, fumbling will start.

A perfect couple they call us;
We weren't so earlier:
Differences, weakness we discuss;
Thus make life lovelier.

Kedar Nath Sharma (Gurgaon)

A Song to Sing

A time to celebrate
for the day has started
for the rain has fallen
for the song has begun.

Count your blessings, child.
They are many, the whole
earth is yours to walk on.
The moth small and the camel tall
Are yours to ride on.
The sun shining, the wind cool
are yours to go with.

Come here, my child, and come.
Play and smell the joy.
The crow nest in the neem.
The soft evening calls
the parents make to them
not seen but visible
not heard but hearing.
The stars dance in the dark,
a step to follow and a step to take,
the blues to touch and the whites to kiss.
The swings filled with smiles,
the elephants packed with eyes,
the waters jumped with sounds.
Come here, my child, and come.
Sing a song and sing a dance.

S.K. Vasishta (Hisar)

On the Demise of Nissim Ezekiel

One can't believe this. How gently he passed away!
For some years, he had stopped speaking
with the world . . . perhaps to prepare us
for this stunning blow.

How painful it is now, even to think or feel,
he would not be seen reading his poems:
'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.' or
'Night of the Scorpion' at the
All India-English Teachers' Conferences?
A gentle soul, who had crushed his scorpion-ego,
will never be seen, waiting for local trains
or lecturing on Poetry or Culture in the halls,
of his beloved city: Bombay.

A frail man, wearing Nehru-shirt and trousers,
with gold-rimmed glasses resting on his Jewish nose,
walked through the sky scrapers and slums.
A human camera, swallowing all he saw or heard
'taking calm and clamour' in his stride,
chewing the cud by day and night.

Foreign writers and critics will find him
missing from the island: his cocoon.
Today, his Poetry like ' The Naked Indian Fakir',
stands erect before the English reading world.

But, the unique warmth flowing through
his eyes, his lips and his hands will
never, never, never be felt,
by his old cronies and peers
all over the World.

M.A. Nare (Nashik)

Modern Love

Love meets to unite,
and parts to separate,
Two loving hearts.

Sincere it begins at first,
They make the thread of love.
Selfish it ends at last,
They break the thread of love.
Making *and* Breaking is quite westernized,
Reminiscent of
"East and West are intertwined."
The flames of mutual protest to follow,
"The killer Love-Flame" seals up the passions of life.
Agreement or Disagreement,
Harmony or Disharmony,
Stability or Instability,
Love was reciprocal in old age,
Love is violent in modern Age.
Exchanging violence in harmony,
is difficult to keep pace with.
For, Love selfish and aggressive,
Parts company to poles apart.

Curious it is in Men,
Anxious it is in women,
Love is need-based and time-served.
For, Base of Love loses its basis
In the world of curiosity and anxiety.
Love of stability is solid as the "Rock of Gibraltar."

Love of Attraction has Love of Rejection
Love of Rejection has Love of Attraction.
However, Love of Aggression,
Love of Violence,
Love of Extremity.
Become harmoniously disharmonised.
What then was a "Labour of Love,"
Is now become a "Mockery of Love."

P.V. Laxmi Prasad (Karimnagar)

Will You . . . ?

At this coldest night of the year
When snow is falling
Love me
And strangle me
I want to be your Porphyria
Death ends
What life prolongs
What to say now?
The life you gave me
Was death itself.
I would prefer
Death to life.
I shall happily die
With floating dreams
In my curtained eyes.
Will you then bring for me
Red red roses
I have been craving for?

S.R. Khare (Obra, Sonebhadra)

Rape

It was nothing of the kind
that one usually sees in films!

There was no rain, no stormy wind,
no ambience of a jungle,
nor an enchanting moon in the sky
that would rouse one to frenzy.

There was no spring
nor the echoing roar of the fuming sea
no haunting music in the background
that one would be wild with passion.

And she was no rain-drenched girl of angelic beauty.
She was just a woman,
she was weak
and those four men—
they were merely men—
raped her behind a wall.

Gulzar, trans. Gopa Ranjan Mishra

The Indian Journal of English Studies

VOLUME XL 2002-2003
Editor-in-Chief: Dr. R.K. Dhawan

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2003-2004

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