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Contents

Editorial
R.K. Dhawan 7

From 'Angrezi Hatao' to 'English Badhao': English in the Republic of India
Sudhakar Pandey 12

Musings on Modern English Literature
A.A. Mutalik-Desai 20

Meaninglessness in the Plays of Harold Pinter
A.K. Singh 28

Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*: A Study in Humanism
Rudra Prasad Mahto 33

Social Crisis in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*
Satish Barbuddhe 42

New Voices: Feminists, Lesbians and Subalterns
Kedar Nath Sharma 49

Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting*: A Study in Gender Discrimination
Sumitra Kukreti and Anupam Sanny 54

Secularism as Syncretism in Nayantara Sahgal's *Lesser Breeds*
Kanupriya 63

'Ball' to 'Call': A Paradigm Shift in Language Acquisition
G.A. Ghanshyam and Tanseem Ara Khan 69

English Language Teaching Learning in India Positions and Propositions
Saryug Yadav 75

Quest for a Poetic Idiom in a Postcolonial space: A Reading of Nissim Ezekiel's "Very Indian Poems"
Lata Chaturvedi 81

Partition in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*
Vikas Sharma 90

Ardashir Vakil's *Beach Boy*: A Study in Identity Crisis
Nagendra Kumar 99

The Theme of Identity and Search for Self in Toni Morrison
Jyoti Kala 105

Filigree and Sovereignty of Human Bonds: A Study of Dynamics in Ameeta Rathore's *Blood Ties*
P. Rajendra Karmarkar 112

From Pain to Pen: Crisis and Creation in the Poetry of Pashupati Jha
Shiv Kumar Yadav 120

Effect of the Environment on the Search for Self in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Kesava Reddy's *He Conquered the Jungle*
Yadava Raju and A. Karunakar 129

Dialogic Ramifications in Karnad's *Bali: The Sacrifice*
Anshuman Khanna 136

Bharati Mukherjee: A Diaspora Novelist
Lalji Misra and Richa Misra 147

Characters in Situation:
Pankaj Mishra's *The Romantics*
B.C. Tewari 159

Shakespeare's Knowledge of Dance:
A Study of His Plays
Manoj Kumar Mishra 166

A Timeless Tale of Thwarted Dreams:
Myriad Myths in Githa Hariharan's
The Thousand Faces of Night
Shubhra Tripathi 174

Nissim Ezekiel: A Poet of Indian Sensibilities
Hemlata Srivastava 184

The Poetry of Kabir and Tagore:
A Spiritual Quest
Savitri Tripathi 191

Anantha Murthy's *Samskara*:
A Critique of Hinduism
Madhumita Ganguli 199

Tradition and Modernity in
Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers*
L.M. Joshi and Hari Priya Pathak 209

Self-Expression and Narcissism in the
Poetry of Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath
Ashok Kumar Sharma 214

Book Shelf

Beena Agarwal *Tagore's "Mukta-Dhara": A Critical Study* 223

Visvanath Chatterjee *Four Romantic Poets: Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats* 223

Rashmi Gaur	*Ananthamurthy's "Samskara": A Reader's Companion*	223
Gajendra Kumar and Uday Shankar Ojha	*Indian English Literature: A Post-colonial Response*	223
Tapan Kumar Ghosh	*Doris Lessing's "The Golden Notebook": A Reader's Companion*	224
Santwana Haldar	*Shashi Deshpande's "That Long Silence": A Reader's Companion*	224
Reena Mitra	*Critical Responses to Literatures in English*	224
Amar Nath Prasad	*New Lights on Indian Women Novelists in English*	224
Basavaraj Naikar	*Perspectives on Commonwealth Literature*	225
Basavaraj Naikar.	*Light in the House*	225
Jyotsna Sahoo	*Sex and Violence in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya*	225
Ramesh K. Srivastava	*Ten Indian English Writers*	225
Jaydeep Sarangi and G.S. Jha, ed.	*The Indian Imagination of Jayanta Mahapatra*	226
P.K. Kush	An Approach to the Poetic Persona of Rabindranath Tagore	226

Creative Writing

R.S. Sharma	Confession	227
Pashupati Jha	Seeking Life in Death	228
Krishna Bose	An Old Cycle Shop	229
H.A. Singh	Didacticism	230
Shiv Kumar Yadav	The Continuity Unbroken	232
Sai Chandra Mouli	Diminution	234
S.K. Vasistha	Mister Tiger in the Cage	235
Hemendra Chandalia	Exchange, Did You Hear Me	236
Kumkum Ray	The Indian *Suhagin*	237
Gopa Ranjan Mishra	Books	238
Kedar Sharma	Forgiveness	240

Editorial
Emergence of the New Writers

R.K. DHAWAN

Indian English fiction has come of age. It is one of the most significant areas of study not only in India but all over the world. More people in the West are reading Indian fiction than ever before. Our writers like Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Salman Rushdie, Meera Syal and Rohinton Mistry have become international writers. How has Indian fiction achieved such a remarkable growth? How has it become so rich and varied within a last few decades? How have the divergent themes added to the complexity and enrichment of the contemporary Indian literature? The answer to all these questions is not simple as there are several factors that have contributed to the growth and popularity of Indian fiction. But perhaps all agree that the depiction of Indian ethos and culture have made a tremendous contribution in making Indian fiction rich and valuable.

Before we talk of 'ethos' in Indian fiction, it is desirable that we analyze the term 'ethos.' What is ethos? According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, ethos (n.) means habitual character, disposition and tendency of a set of people or race. In other words, it stands for a human society that embodies a certain culture or system based on human and other natural values of life. Gandhi, the great advocate of human values, made a great impact on a number of Indian writers like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Chaman Nahal.

While Indian ethos and culture has been the basis of a large body of Indian fiction, it has been projected in two different ways. First by writers, who in their novels, bemoan the vanishing of Indian ethos and values in our day-to-day life, like Arun Joshi in his novel *The Apprentice*. Secondly, there are writers who

celebrate Indian ethos and project this triumph through their novels, like Rama Mehta in *Inside the Haveli*.

Ethos and culture are closely related to the adherence of a writer to his roots. For a true artist, it is difficult not to acknowledge one's roots. Let us look at the fiction of Vikram Chandra, an upcoming Indian writer, who has successfully published two important novels *Love and Longing in Bombay* and *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*. Both these works are rooted in his childhood years and the influences that shaped his environment. He has done so again, in his forthcoming novel *Sacred Games* that has won him an advance of five crore rupees as royalty. The novel is Mumbai-centric, though subsequently it moves in different directions. The protagonist is a Muslim cop and the story whets the curiosity of people's fascination for the underworld. Vikram Chandra has lived in Mumbai, growing there as a young boy, and he is fully conversant with the nexus of politics and mafia. So the world he projects in his novel is no fantasy, but an experience he has lived through his early years in the city.

This year saw the publication of Vikram Seth's *Two Lives*, which has received worldwide attention. This work is a blend of biography and fiction. Again, Salman Rushdie mingled history and fiction in his newly-released novel *Shalimar the Crown*. Set in the age of hyperbole and bloodshed, Rushdie's new work is inspired by Indian mythology, Los Angeles fakery and Hindu culture. The author follows the political assassination of ambassador Maximilian Ophuls, his killer and his daughter. The book details the transformation of a young Muslim boy from shy teenager to Islamic terrorist guided by a radical mullah. Says Rushdie: "One of my good fortunes as a writer is to have access to a lot of traditions—and not just inside western culture, high or low."

In Suketu Mehta's first book *Maximum City: Bombay Lost & Found*—the city has finally found its restless chronicler. Mehta says: "I am happy in transit. My home can be any global city but it has to be a city." Mehta was 14 when he left Bombay. Twenty-one years later he returned to Mumbai. The Bombay of his childhood was beautiful. But that was in the past. Mehta suc-

ceeds in recreating the city of Bombay. It's the city of dreams, the city of vice and the city run rife with the underworld. Mehta's keen eye tracks the life of a hit man, an encounter specialist, the neuroses in tinsel town and the poignancy in a cross-dresser's profession. Mehta shows readers the visceral Mumbai that lurked somewhere in the heart of the bustling megapolis. About Bollywood, he asks, "Why do I love Bollywood movies? To an Indian, that's like asking why we love our mothers; we don't have a choice. We were born of them. . . . They shape the way I conduct my love affairs or think about religion or treat my elders." When he moved to New York, Mehta writes that he "missed Bombay like an organ of my body." On return visits, he finds "the terrain is littered with memory mines." Now that the book that took seven years in the making is out, Mehta has no real reason to stay in touch with the people he hung out with, but he does. These have become memories of the Mumbai he's left behind.

Another new writer who has taken the literary world by storm is Rupa Bajwa, a young woman from Punjab, who has received an international recognition. Without any literary antecedents or a degree from a foreign university, Rupa Bajwa has made bibliophiles of the world sit up and take notice. Not only has her debut book *Sari Shop* been published in the U.K. but it has been longlisted for the prestigious Orange Prize as well. Moving out of Amritsar, Bajwa wanted to satisfy her creative urges. She travelled from one part of the country to another, trying to write and "carve out a space where there was none." The story of Ramchand, an employee at a sari shop in old Amritsar, started off as a short story, which stayed with her long after she was done. When she realized that there was no way she could forget it, she got down to writing it. And before she knew it, she had a novel in her hand. "I had no technical knowledge about the novel form but was sure-footed about my writing. Once the novel was done, I sent it to some friends, who in turn sent it to an agent. Till then, I didn't even know there was anything called a literary agent!" says the 27-year-old young author, who has been

leading a nomadic life so far, eking out a living just enough to sustain herself.

Women writers of Indian origin like Chitra Divakaruni, Shauna Singh Baldwin and Meera Syal have published new fiction. Meera Syal's famous novel *Anita and Me* has been made into a successful film. The plot: Chandeep Uppal, 12, is the daughter of Indian parents living in a mining village in England. When her new neighbour, Anna Brewster, 14, moves in, she is blonde, beautiful and everything that Chandeep wants to be and changes her life forever. Syal's novel was a great success: it sold 50,000 copies.

Another writer who has successfully popularized India-centric fiction in the West is Vikas Swarup whose novel *Q and A* has introduced a fresh theme to the wide-ranging corpus of Indian literature. A senior Indian diplomat, currently posted in the Ministry of External Affairs, Vikas Swarup is said to have sold his debut novel in over fifteen countries worldwide and has even won a film contract. The plot of *Q and A* lends itself to adaptation for the big screen. An eighteen-year-old waiter is nabbed by the Mumbai police. He has just finished reading the fifteenth episode of *Who Will Win a Billion?* and the Indian producers and the overseas associates are pulling everything they can. Published by Doubleday, the novel makes a rich contribution to the growing corpus of Indian English fiction.

Chetan Bhagat arrived on the literary scene with his *Five Point Someone* and then duly followed it with yet another best-seller, the novel *One Night @ The Call Centre*. The plot revolves around five friends working in a call centre and it is obvious that the writer spins his yarn with a definite audience in mind. The story of the call centre has sold more than 80,000 copies; the readers' curiosity to explore new themes has been duly satisfied. Samit Basu's *The Manticore Secret* is a fantasy-based work, a genre many Indian English authors like to dabble in. Basu is a novelist of fantasy and his novel takes us away from day-to-day life. New themes have been dealt with other writers. Rana Dasgupta's *Tokyo Cancelled*, released recently, has done fairly well in the market. It employs an unusual style of storytelling and is

about thirteen strangers stranded at an airport, waiting to board the flight to Tokyo. Thrown together by circumstances, they share and swap stories. Each story constitutes the different chapters of the novel. Siddharth Shanghvi's *The Last Song of Dusk* has been declared as 'the next big thing in the literary scene' by *The Sunday Times* (U.K.). The novel has been nominated for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. Graphic novelist Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor* is based on a new and innovative concept. It weaves together the lives of some urban youngsters. For Banerjee, the best medium of visual storytelling is the graphic novel.

While a number of writers have launched their novels, not many have experimented in the area of Indian-English drama. The only notable name is that of Mahesh Dattani, whose plays *Tara* and *Final Solutions* have achieved great popularity. He continues to write new plays. He is in fact the first Indian playwright in English to have won the Sahitya Akademi Award. Moored in living social contexts, his plays address questions of sexual identity, religious faith, family ties and gender—issues that are of immense significance to contemporary urban India. The ten plays in this volume include *30 Days in September*, performed extensively in India and abroad to commercial success and critical acclaim, the radio plays aired on BBC radio and the screenplays of *Mango Soufflé* (Winner of the Best Motion Picture Award at the Barcelona Film Festival), *Dance like a Man* (Winner of the Best Picture in English at the National Panorama) and *Morning Raga*, premiered at the Cairo Film Festival and winner of the award for best artistic contribution, that establish Dattani as the new voice of contemporary Indian drama.

Having paid a tribute to the new crop of Indian writing that it well deserves, we condole the demise of eminent Indian writers—Amrita Pritam, Nirmal Verma, Madhavan Kutty and O.V. Vijayan. Also passed away, this year, international figures: John Fowles, Arthur Miller and Saul Bellow. All these writers enriched the corpus of global literature and have left a rich legacy behind them.

University of Delhi

From 'Angrezi Hatao' to 'English Badhao': English in the Republic of India

Presidential Address delivered at 49th AIETC, Rae Bareli

SUDHAKAR PANDEY

I must begin by expressing my gratitude to the Executive Committee of the Indian Association for English Studies (IAES) to have given me the opportunity to associate myself with the 49th All India English Teachers Conference (AIETC). My association with IAES goes back to 1984 when my university, the University of Poona, hosted a session of AIETC and I as the Head of the Department of English had to shoulder the responsibility of the Local Secretary of the Pune AIETC. As the Chairman of the Association from 1986 to 1995, I was associated with all its activities and it is after a gap of nine years that I have got this opportunity to meet my old friends and establish new friendships among the English-teaching fraternity of the country.

When I graduated in 1954 from Banaras Hindu University with English, Geography and Economics as optional subjects and wanted to pursue my postgraduate studies, my father made inquiries with his friends as to which subject I should offer. He was advised against English saying that the English have gone and that the English language would lose its importance in independent India. My father, a freedom fighter who was publicly flogged and jailed for participation in the Quit India Movement, was quite convinced of the future loss of importance of the English language and in spite of my own preference for English I had to join M.A. geography. That I left the PG course in Geography in the middle and joined M.A. English programme after losing one academic year is a different story. If I had completed my M.A. Geography studies I would not have been standing here before you today.

Just two days ago we celebrated the 55th anniversary of the Republic of India. Most politicians at the time of independence and after wanted to eliminate English, then seen as a vile colonial implant, and replace it with Hindi. The Constitution of 1950 recognized fourteen Indian languages and decreed that Hindi would be India's official language but as a transitional measure allowed English to continue for 15 years (till 1965).

Let me quote a passage from an article by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, which appeared in *National Herald* on 13 February 1949:

> In India we are rightly committed to the growth of our provincial languages. At the same time we must have an all-India language. This cannot be English or any other foreign language although I believe that English, both because of its world position, and the present widespread knowledge of it in India, is bound to play an important part in our future activities. The only all-India language that is possible is Hindi or Hindustani or whatever it is called.[1]

Pandit Nehru wanted Hindi as a national language but also saw the value of English as a window on the world. That Pandit Nehru was right in his assessment of the important part that English would play in India's future activities is evidenced by the fact that English is the *de facto* language of official life in virtually every sphere. The continuing power and influence of the language is remarkable. But this has happened more by chance than by design.

Politicians of different hues exploit language issues. And this happened in India as well. Socialists like Ram Manohar Lohia were vehemently opposed to English and they launched 'Angrezi Hatao' movement in 1957. The anti-English movement was further strengthened by the Jan Sangh, which launched a violent agitation in 1963 for abolishing English. Not only was the official use of English opposed but even shop signs, street signs and car numberplates in English were defaced in many parts of Hindi-speaking states.

The deadline of 26th January 1965 was approaching when English would be abolished and Hindi would become the official language of India and that worried some non-Hindi states. Some people think that it was the whole of South India which opposed

the abolition of English and resisted Hindi. But in reality the resistance was specifically from Tamil Nadu and particularly from C.N. Annadurai's DMK which denounced the move to abolish English as brazen Hindi imperialism.

Was C.N. Annadurai, who opposed the abolition of English, a champion of English? Not really. In fact he was a Tamil fanatic, a champion of Tamil, not English. His opposition to the abolition of English was to ensure that the Hindi-speaking states did not have advantage over non-Hindi speaking states such as Tamil Nadu. In its early days Annadurai's DMK wanted Tamil Nadu to secede from India to escape the domination of Hindi speaking states. The Indian Parliament capitulated. English could "continue to be used in addition to Hindi, for all the official purposes of the Union and for the transaction of business in Parliament." This was Pandit Nehru's compromise formula. The Official Languages Act of 1963 allowing the use of English after 1965 was thus passed. But it did not satisfy Annadurai. On the contrary, the circulars issued by the Home Ministry under the same Act declaring that Hindi would become the official language of India on 26th January 1965 angered him to such an extent that he embarked on a violent agitation which saw Tamil students immolating themselves and the police firing on rampaging mobs thus killing a number of people. The intensity of the agitation unnerved the Central Government as it feared that the language issue would stoke secession. It assured all the states that the adoption of Hindi as *official* language would be optional not mandatory. The Official Languages Act of 1963 was amended in 1967 to specify that both English and Hindi could be used as *official* languages for all purposes. The political reward that Annadurai's DMK reaped for its successful resistance to Hindi as the sole *official* language of India after 1965 was in the form of a landslide victory in the state elections in 1967 ending the hegemony of the Congress Party and since then it is one of the factional *avatars* of DMK—DMK or AIDMK—that has ruled the state.

The continuation of English in India as the language of power and of prestige long after the last Angrez left for England

made possible by C.N. Annadurai's resistance to Hindi as the sole *official* language of India helped preserve English as India's window to the world, something always wanted by Pandit Nehru, apart from serving two purposes: first providing a linguistic tool for the administrative cohesiveness of our plurilingusitic country and second providing a language of wider communication, both national and international.

The English language, which arrived in India with the East India Company and later came to represent the British Empire and symbolized the hegemony of the colonizers has undergone a change in its character. In the days of the Empire, English was not just a language but more a culture. Note that in his often quoted Minute of 1835 Thomas Macaulay proposed the creation of a culturally distinct group who would form "a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect." But the English language has ceased to be a vehicle of Western culture; it only marginally carries the British and American way of life.

At this point I would like to quote British linguist J.R. Firth, who some fifty years ago specifically addressed the question of international uses of English and said that the study of English

> is so vast that it must be further circumscribed to make it all manageable. To begin with English is an international language in the Commonwealth, the Colonies and in America. International in the sense that English serves the American way of life and might be called American. It serves the Indian way of life and has recently been declared as Indian language within the framework of federal constitution. In other sense, it is international not only in Europe but in Asia and Africa, and serves various African ways of life and is increasingly the all-Asian language of politics.[2]

English faced opposition when it was promoted by the colonizers as a culture. But now, not only in India but in the other erstwhile British colonies as well it faces less opposition from linguistic nationalisms. In fact the legacy of the British Empire, English is the *de facto* international language of the Third World and at the end of the twentieth century it is more widely scattered, more

widely spoken and written than any other. Third World flowering of the English language has now produced some exotic hybrids, among them Indian English, Caribbean English, various forms of African English and Singapore English.

The English language has three characteristics that can be counted as assets in its world state. First of all unlike other European languages the gender of every noun in modern English is determined by meaning and does not require a masculine, feminine or neuter article. The second practical quality of English is that it has a grammar of great simplicity and flexibility. Nouns, adjectives and verbs have highly simplified word-endings. Above all, the great quality of English is its teeming vocabulary, 80% of which is foreign born. It is the enormous range and varied source of this vocabulary, as much as the sheer numbers, native and non-native, and the geographical spread of its speakers that makes English a language of such a unique vitality.

But it is the non-linguistic forces—cultural, social, economic and political—that have made English the first world language in human history. The emergence of English as a global phenomenon—as a first, second or foreign language—is the result of the demands of modernization, technological change and international bank funding, still largely controlled by Anglo-American corporations.

Global English speaks with two voices: British and American. The differences are essentially differences of accent, inflection, spelling and, above all, vocabulary. As it has always happened, language and power go together. American English is accepted for the power and superiority, which America as a nation has acquired in the area of science, technology, commerce, military affairs and politics. As a result it is not surprising that even the speakers of mother English in Britain have become tolerant of the encroachment of the American English into their English, as have the Australians who earlier took mother English as their model. In France, Spain and Germany—in spite of puristic resistance to the American influence on French, Spanish and German—one notices intrusions of Americanisms in the press, and on radio and television. In a number of countries in Asia and Af-

rica, including the erstwhile British colonies, American English has its impact as can be noticed in the newspapers from Ibadan, New Delhi or Singapore.

Given the world of satellites, televisions and telephones, unprecedented developments in information and communication technologies, emergence of knowledge societies and globalization, English will continue to flourish at two different levels. International standard (internationally functional) and Local Alternative (locally functional). The former will evolve more or less uniformly throughout the Standard English-using world. At the educated level, the differences between British English, American English and a Third World variety like Indian English will probably not be so severe as to affect intelligibility. The latter, Local Alternative, will become more and more distinctive and will indeed throw up local literatures, though these are always likely to be overshadowed by the international standard.

Global English is the one foreign language that much of the world wants to learn. While this appears to be nearly a universal aspiration some countries (Singapore, Japan, Indonesia and Philippines) exhibit it more than others. One basic force is the international need and desire to communicate. The more English-speaking the world becomes, the more desirable the language becomes to all societies. As Dr. Robert Burchfield, Chief Editor of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, has remarked that "any literate, educated person on the face of the globe is deprived if he does not know English."

In the Indian context English is the *bhasha* (a word which finds a place in *New Oxford Dictionary*) of the global migrant and the password to knowledge economy. The Indian Diaspora, which has crossed 20 million, dispersed around the globe in more than 70 countries and running more than half a million in 11 countries (Mauritius, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, Fiji, Singapore, Canada, U.K., Netherlands, Australia and U.S.A.) and considers itself a part of the "global Indian family" includes both non-resident Indians (NRIs) and people of Indian origin (PIOs). Many countries in West Asia and the Gulf have a substantial Indian work force, which currently exceeds 3.5 million. After the

reformist policies of late Rajiv Gandhi in the late 1980s, India's makeover from under-developed, overpopulated country to potential economic and political superpower has been quite fast and today India's English-language advantage coupled with unprecedented growth in information and communication technologies in the country has made possible the outsourcing revolution that is moving lakhs of jobs from the West to India. The number of jobs that BPOs, Call Centres and IT (Information Technology) companies offer in India go to such persons who are proficient in the use of the International Standard English. India's software services firms such as Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys Technologies, Wipro, Satyam Computer Services have customers from all over the world. Wipro's customers, for example, include Europe's largest travel firm TUI, and Australia's second largest life insurer, AXA Asia Pacific Holdings.

In the Indian sub-continent India's English-language advantage cannot be matched by Sri Lanka, Pakistan or Bangladesh, earlier as much a part of the British Empire as India. In Sri Lanka English could not acquire the power and prestige it acquired in India because Sri Lankan politicians severely curtailed English education insisting that Sinhalese should be taught only in Sinhala and Tamils in Tamil. Pakistan and Bangladesh have replaced English by Urdu and Bengali respectively very widely. How has this comparative advantage in English that India has over these countries been possible? The answer is simple: these countries never had regional chieftains like Annadurai insisting on preserving English.

The membership of the Indian English speech community consists primarily of those bi- or multi-lingual Indians who use English as a second language mainly in Indian socio-cultural, educational and administrative contexts. In these contexts the interaction is basically among Indians who make use of English as a 'link' language or as an 'official' language. Only a small fraction of the English-using Indian literate population has any interaction with native speakers of English.

English in India is not only tolerated now; it has also been reassigned important roles in language planning. One could not

have earlier predicted that those very people who were anti-English during pre-1967 independent India have developed a distinctly pragmatic language attitude towards the English language. As a result of this changed attitude and a practical need for communicative competence in English there is demand for learning and teaching English. Every small town in the country has English-medium schools and in larger towns and metropolitan cities new public schools, convent schools, international schools with English as the medium of instruction and with a special provision for spoken English are being established. Even in the regional medium schools English has been introduced at the primary level in many states. The slogan now seems to be "English Badhao."

According to the prediction of a linguist, by the next decade Indians will champion the expansion of the English language empire when some 150 million Indians of primary school age will change the demographics of the Anglophone world. The reason for this is that the trajectory of English teaching in India tends to move away from elitist forms of learning and will be a major factor in the spread of the language. The Republic has stripped the language to its bones; it is now just another tool for communication.

NOTES

1. Sudhakar Pandey, et al, ed., *Rose Petals: Selections from Jawaharlal Nehru* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1989).
2. J.R Firth (1956), "Descriptive linguistics and the Study of English," in F.R. Palmer, ed., *Selected Papers of J.R. Firth. 1952-59* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).

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Musings on Modern English Literature

A.A. MUTALIK-DESAI

Let me begin by referring to four novels of the 1920s which have in their different ways recorded their responses to the preceding era. In *Kangaroo* (1923), D.H. Lawrence has spoken about the tectonic upheavals in England's culture and civilization within a generation from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth. As he has stated, it was during the years of the First World War when the damage was done; Europe's manhood was lost; courage to face one's own soul somehow disappeared. In the same year Aldous Huxley depicts in his *Antic Hay* the decadent English society in the immediate aftermath of the War. Diverse characters introduced represent an orchestration of failure. The dilettantish cultivation of music, painting, poetry, science, civilized values and education has failed. A *femme fatale* is so "disabled" by the war that she is weary of wine and men alike that had exulted her only a while earlier.

The malaise of the time is as evident here as in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). If satiated by the sight of bulls and bull-fights, by alcoholic and sexual debauchery, the men and women here seem to be content with "Nada" or nothingness, as are Huxley's men and women content to worship at the altar of "Nil" or nothingness. But it is the latter's *Point Counter Point* (1928), a most quintessential reflection of contemporary England with chronic political instability, uncertainties and chaos in society leading to violence and extremism, sheer paucity of moral and intellectual leadership unable to lead the nation out of the quagmire. Indeed, as the novelist debunks and satirizes the hollowness all around, one of the characters reflects:

> But it's so silly, all this political squabbling . . . so utterly silly. Bolsheviks and Fascists, Radicals and Conservatives, Communists and British Freemen,—what the devil are they all fighting about? I'll tell you. They're fighting to decide whether we shall go to hell by communist express train or capitalist racing motor car, by individualist bus or collectivist train running on the rails of state control. The destination's the same in every case. They're all of them bound for hell, all headed for the same psychological impasse and the social collapse that results from psychological collapse.

Having started my essay without any preamble, let me now repair the damage. The twentieth century has been a theatre for global wars, global economic crises and the redrawing of the political map of Africa, Asia and Europe. If the assassination of the heir to the Habsburg throne triggered the First World War, its ignoble conclusion with the Treaty of Versailles effectively laid down the scenario for the Second. The Wall Street crash of 1929 was enough to plunge most of North America and Western Europe into the "Great Depression," not without a catastrophic world-wide slump, astronomical inflation (as in Germany) and untold misery for tens of millions for a decade. What sent the first shock waves that ultimately shook the hegemony of England's colonial might, namely, the Boer Wars in southern Africa in the 1880s, later galvanized many nationalist aspirations, including our own, and ended in turning many ancient lands into modern nation-states. Contemporaneous was the rise and fall of an ideological empire as well. Such a century also witnessed the nuclear threshold and the rise of the Mass Man.

Among the main influences on the age was the arrival of new prophets, the new "gods" on the scene: Marx, Engels, Hegel, Freud and Jung. Their perceptions, however modified, became part of the orthodoxy of literary studies and criticism. Their impact on the intellectuals who moulded the attitude of the age and on the poets, playwrights and novelists is a net cast far and wide to include Auden and Spender, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone and Andre Gide who were among the first to be disillusioned by the Marxist-inspired communism, the failure of an ersatz god which Richard Crossman chronicled. Oswald

Spengler (in his *The Decline of the West*, 1918-1922) became, briefly, a sort of anti-god, a Jeremiah of the 1920s, whose doleful, dismal lamentations found a receptive readership at a time when there was an air of miasma as Western Europe had become a graveyard of not only the countless youth but also of every myth, faith, idealism and dreams held so dearly before the War. To dream is, in fact, an anathema, notes Antic Hay. After Edmond Rostand (1868-1918) dreams are passé, it is contended. Modern science, another new god, created its own dilemmas as its applications became increasingly suspect as the century wore on and Huxley was to warn about such matters in *Brave New World* (1932), quoting from St. Mark, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for Sabbath."

Modern English literature is heir to and it has responded to such an environment and cataclysmic events and changes. It is its unique role and contribution that while seemingly submerged by the familiar external realities, *the outer voyage*, and intimidated by the then emerging, new perceptions, *the inner voyage*, it has succeeded immensely in aesthetically recreating both as to place the literature of its era on par with those of the greatest eras in English literature. So, even as we have stepped into a new century and a new millennium it is opportune to take stock and acknowledge the peaks scaled by great writers from transitional figures like Thomas Hardy to High Modernists like T.S. Eliot, E.M. Forster, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and the rest to include Tom Gunn and Ted Hughes. Together they have left a rich, complex, diverse and variegated legacy which, even as the century has concluded, will continue to cast its long shadows on the twenty-first—even if it cannot dictate the agenda for the latter.

Despite the fact that Hardy was among the last of the great Victorians and the first among the great moderns, let it be said for convenience that modern English writing began with the poetry of the First World War, i. e., the poetry of "Trench" warfare and with the themes of post-War Europe as a waste land and the god (or gods) who had failed. Siegfried Sassoon, Issac Rosenberg and Wilfred Owen's resentment as much at war's waste and destruction as at the ignorance and the wilful indifference of

those who commanded and who were safely at home contrasts with the youthful idealism and patriotism of Rupert Brooke, who—despite revisionist scaling down—exhibits felt emotion. It is W.B. Yeats, however, *because* of his dark Irish streak and *because* of his fearful presentiments, comes rolling down as the thundering humanist riposte, even a corrective, to all the grim, cynical, Gotterdammerungese tenor which was much in vogue at the time. Recalling "The Second Coming" is *de rigueur*:

> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world . . .
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.
> . . . a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
> Troubles my sight. . . .
> what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Despite all the infectious, inspiring and zealous weight of Yeats's thoughts such as these, a certain necrotic air of the wasteland in the literature of the 1920s cannot be denied. Along with "Nada" and "Nil," etherized patients, dying voices, dead trees, death by water, wrinkled dugs, the sunken Ganga, falling bridges and so forth permeate the prose and the verse of the time. Apart from references to Lawrence, Huxley and Hemingway, Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) should detain us for a moment.

The poet's indictment of the Western ethos of the 1920s is incisive. Combining vision and blindness, life and death, peace and violence, reality and myth, the Christian and the non-Christian, the cultural and the religious, the missing joy and the omnipresent suffering, the spiritual and the sexual and so on, this great poem will testify to the verities of early twentieth-century European life and the corresponding literature as few can. W.H. Auden's "September 1, 1939" is such as to merit a place by the side of Eliot's opus. More direct, more committed, Auden is less sparing as he writes about human folly and the resulting torment and tragedy whether the subject is the Spanish Civil War or the Second World War: It has been "a low dishonest decade"; there

is in the air anger, fear and death; there is also the conventional wisdom expressed by the poet with Biblical fervour, "Those to whom evil is done / Do evil in return." Unlike Yeats or Eliot, Auden went careening down losing whatever faith he had in societal institutions, systems of thought and the trappings of civilization and culture. An authentic voice of the age, he, nonetheless, remained steadfast in his conviction about the worth of individuals and their individualism. Seen thus, the war poets' attitude and performance range from the patriotic and the sentimental to one of hard, unrelenting realism and cynicism. The poets who have followed since are nearly of our own times and they too have moved dramatically from tradition to experiment, from the matter-of-fact to the allegorical and the comic, from philosophic detachment to the conscientiously committed.

As pointed out frequently, from around 1650 to 1850, England produced great actors and actresses. But no great playwright, none whose achievement is even remotely comparable to that of Shakespeare. The revival with the coming of Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde was sustained by small groups of playwrights (traditionalists like Barrie, Galsworthy, Maugham and Priestley, the Irish Theatre group with Yeats, Synge, O'Casey, Beckett and Behan and a few who used verse, notably as Eliot did). For something creditable and enduring one must turn to the post-Second World War rise of the "Angry" generation in theatre and in fiction. Like the novel of ideas, Osborne, Pinter and Arden ushered in a theatre of ideas where free-flowing talk or heated discussion becomes as exciting as the unravelling of the fate of a tragic hero. Just when Great Britain had been reduced to Little England (in the words of John Mander), there came Jimmy Porter blowing his cantankerous trumpet and howling his rage at every symbol and mark of authority such as the church, military, governance, universities and even music and literature. After nearly fifty years since *Look Back in Anger* burst upon the scene there is still no unanimity about what had made Jimmy so incensed. But his trumpet blew away many a cobweb in the English theatre. These playwrights and their counterparts in fiction heralded a new anti-hero whose nature may be encapsulated

thus. He is Jimmy Porter over and over again: intelligent, tough, sore, disenchanted, anti-class, anti-society, anti-smugness, anti-conformism and anti-establishment. To him all is phoney. Suffering is an inescapable fact of existence. There is no soothing balm or palatable anodyne. Neither ethics nor success can console. There is no salvation through religion. What is not in their own selves is bad, wrong, hateful and it must be excised with surgical precision.

However, it is the modern English novel which will satisfy every taste. Somewhat like the growth of the theatre, the novel too had such traditional figures as Bennett, Galsworthy, Maugham, Priestley and Wells. But soon enough it strode high with the coming of Amis, Burgess, Conrad, Durrell, Forster, Golding, Greene, Huxley, Joyce, Lawrence, Murdoch, Orwell, Sillitoe, Snow, Wain, Waugh and Woolf. What an astonishingly rich roll of honour this is! Even an incomplete list of their typical works should convince even a die-hard sceptic of this claim: *Lucky Jim*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Heart of Darkness*, *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Free Fall* and *Rites of Passage*, *The Power and the Glory* and *A Burnt-Out Case*, *Point Counter Point* and *Brave New World*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, *Sons and Lovers* and *Women in Love*, *A Severed Head* and *The Sea*, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Decline and Fall*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and many, many more.

One may look at this literary cornucopia from another vantage. The typically English novel of manners and morals, the stream-of-consciousness novel, the utopian and the dystopian novel, the Bildungsroman and the Kunstlerroman and even the epistolary variety if practised only now and then. There is the semi-documentary type side by side with pure fantasy. There is science fiction, detective fiction, thrillers of several types, and there is the ubiquitous one—"pop" fiction according to some and "pulp" fiction as others may judge it, a latter-day manifestation of the Victorian "Penny Dreadful." There is also the entirely puerile, sappy stuff a la Barbara Cartland. This all too brief retrospective should alert the reader that: a) Events since the 1890s

have been, on the one hand, calamitous and destructive so as to breed pessimism and cynicism about the future of Europe but, on the other, the innovations, the innovative and regenerating spirit and the continued resolve to redeem have been of such a lofty order as to testify again that one has to be sanguine about the human race. b) Rising Phoenix-like from the rubble of wars and reacting to the wasteland all around, English men and women of letters have created poetry, theatre and prose fiction which have scaled great heights. c) Poets who saw nothing but blood and gore, inhumanity and utter, meaningless waste in the trenches, poets who surveyed what must have looked, after the wars, like the Armageddon, poets who mourned the personal, the human and the civilizational losses proceeded, nonetheless, to keep faith alive and to nurture hope. d) Playwrights have responded to the angst and ennui by holding on to their dreams and visions and have asserted a resolve, as Ronnie did in Wesker's *I'm Talking about Jerusalem*, "They [the visions] *do* work! And even if they don't work then for God's sake let's us try and behave as though they do—or else nothing will work." e) Novelists, at least in my partisan view, held up the banner most shiningly which is the case in literatures all over the world. By the democratically flexible form and the free, egalitarian spirit it breathes, the novel has dominated often to the detriment of poetry and drama. From realism to surrealism, from allegory, fable and symbolism to satire, from the stream-of-consciousness to the naturalistic and the documentary, from the cynical to the utopian, from exploration and the celebration of the innermost psyche to the exuberant display of the external reality, from the escapist to the propagandist, from tragedy to entertainment—it is all here in an unrivalled harvest.

Modern English literature has covered a wide expanse politically, historically, ideologically and philosophically. It has been inspired by a multitude of forces, with many of them from beyond the realms literary and aesthetic. Its output in the major forms of literature (poetry, drama and prose fiction and especially the last) must be described in the superlative. Its appeal, despite contrary claims of post-structuralism and postmodern-

ism, is universal, enduring and it cuts across barriers of national, linguistic, religious and cultural loyalties. We, the readers, in turn, should be beholden and reverential towards those poets, dramatists and novelists who have for over a century enlarged the capabilities of the written word to say so much.

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Dharwad

Meaninglessness in the Plays of Harold Pinter

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Harold Pinter was awarded the Nobel Prize this year.

Editor

The opening lines of the book of *Ecclesiastes* in *The Bible* comment on the predicament of human beings living in an unfamiliar universe: "Meaningless! Meaningless! Says the teacher, 'utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."[1] Meaninglessness symbolizes that odd state of the soul in which void becomes eloquent, in which the logical chain of cause and effect is broken, in which the heart vainly seeks plausible answers in a world shorn of all explanations. The consciousness of such a meaningless state can be triggered by a life marked by a banal, dull and repetitive routine in which weariness caused by routine acts is tinged with the question "Why?" The intimations of meaninglessness can also be caused by the realization of time as fleeting and thus an adversary to any sense of stability, purpose or meaning. Camus says it in *The Myth of Sisyphus*:

> Yet a day comes when a man . . . admits that he stands at a certain point on a curve that he acknowledges having to travel to its end. He belongs to time, and by the horror that seizes him, he recognizes his worst enemy. Tomorrow, he was longing for tomorrow, whereas everything in him ought to reject it. The revolt of the flesh is absurd [meaninglessness].[2]

The realization of the innate meaninglessness of life strips an individual of any illusion of a meaningful future. An individual finds himself condemned to live in a universe where the fame or any other human accomplishment is ephemeral and thus subject to the law of death and decay.

The explosion of information and increasing mechanization has further aggravated this condition of meaninglessness in the contemporary society. Man finds himself buried under the load of enormous data whose sense he cannot make out in his ephemeral and fleeting existence. Man, without any purpose and meaning in his life, fails to relate with other individuals and experiences a breakdown of genuine communication. It leads to a condition of alienation and pervasive hopelessness.

Though there is no dearth of meaninglessness dealt by the playwright in all his plays, yet for the purpose of the paper comments have been made on ten important plays. In *The Room*, Pinter depicts the meaninglessness pervading in the lives of a couple who have shunned contact from the irrational world outside and have remained confined to their room. *The Dumb Waiter* underscores the reality of "the arbitrary and irrational universe in which man finds himself."[3] The silence of the dumb waiter suggests the existential void in a universe without any meaning.

The Birthday Party shows the meaninglessness of existence in a hostile universe where menacing forces continually threaten human life. Stanley revolts against the meaninglessness pervading in the world outside by imposing on him an exile from it and confining himself to Meg's shabby seaside boarding house. The world outside threatens him and finally its emissaries succeed in dragging him out to subject him to an endless torture of threats, questions and accusations, which regress him in the end to a state of catatonic stupor.

The Hothouse depicts the meaningless of life caused by the process of objectification and dehumanization caused by the bureaucratic apparatus of the state. The hothouse, an institution created by the government to safeguard sanity and mental well-being, treats human life in such a contemptuous manner that life seems to lose any significance or meaning. Dukore comments on the element of irrationality pervading in that institution: "The hothouse is artificially maintained at a high temperature to cultivate plants without normal resistance to cold or adversity. In the staff rooms of asylum one character reports that the radiator is a

scalding; another that it is too hot and that the institution has always been overheated. What precipitates the events that lead to the destruction of the staff in real life, which the artificial environment of a hothouse aims to keep out—normal birth, an occurrence that according to Roote is unprecedented in this asylum, which is 'so fragile in its conception and execution' that it is sent tottering into chaos."[4]

The Caretaker exhibits predicament of a man reduced to a tramp-like existence in a callous, indifferent and hostile world. Davies nurtures an illusion of identity to relieve himself of a haunting sense of rootlessness and absurdity in his life. He is gripped by a sense of insignificance and inadequacy. His irrational ramblings reveal the gap between the reality and his aspirations.

> I got business to see to, I got to move myself. I got to sort myself out, I got to get fixed up. But when I wake up in the morning, I ain't got no energy in me. And on the top of that I haven't got no clock.[5]

The Collection hints at the problem of verification in a world where each individual is warped in his own cocoon and is immured in his subjective consciousness. It leads to a constant tension in human relationship and defies an intrinsic need for a harmonious, defined and well-ordered universe. Harry, Bill, James and Stella continually manipulate reporting of events as a strategy for domination and control. The indeterminate nature of reality exhibits the tentativeness of human perception in an absurd world. Pinter hints at our limitation in ascertaining the truth of an experience:

> The desire for verification on part of all of us, with regard to our own experience and the experience of others, is understandable but cannot always be satisfied. I suggest there can be no hard distinction between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false.[6]

In *The Lover*, Pinter exhibits a couple making desperate attempts to get rid of their existential vacuity by seeking refuge in a world of make-believe and ritual games. Sarah, being fed up

with the expectations and limitations of a dutiful wife, assumes the role of a lustful whore and engages in the act of coitus with a passionate abandon. Richard assumes the identity of Max, and establishes an adulterous relationship with Sarah, his own wife who is now transformed into a lustful whore and an elegant mistress. But the world of illusion too fails to relieve them of existential anguish, as these find this game-playing both physically tiresome and emotionally exhausting.

The Basement depicts the meaninglessness of life reduced to chasing of desire and security. Man finds his security in his possession but the fragile sense of security often seems to elude him. Law, unable to bear the loneliness of his single life, finds solace and vicarious pleasure in reading illustrated Persian love-manuals. Law's pattern of sitting lonely night after night is disrupted by the arrival of his friend, Stott along with his girlfriend Jane, who soon after their arrival undress and make love without any consideration of Law's presence in the room. The desire to possess Jane leads to his expulsion from the room and he is left again longing for the security of room. The human desires are never fulfilled; they just change their form. Billington observes Pinter's depiction of the futility and meaninglessness of human desires in the play:

> What follows is a mixture of reality and fantasy, revealing Law's deep envy of an hostility towards Stott, and profound wish to possess Jane, The tension between the two men builds into a sequence—taking place in Law's mind—in which they square each other with broken, jagged milk bottles while Jane prepares two cups of coffee, implying that she along with the coffee goes to the victor. Pinter then cuts to a record on a turntable and a replay of the opening scene except that this time Law looks menacing and potent, is the one outside in the rain with Jane waiting to be admitted by the weak, almost wimpish Stott.[7]

The Landscape presents a breakdown of communication between a married couple. Beth retreats into a private world of memory immured from the reality outside and frustrates every attempt of Duff to break ice and initiate communication. This deliberate evasion of communication symbolizes a revolt against

the pervasive meaninglessness in her life. Regal observes: "Beth and Duff are both at a tangent to the world they once inhabited together. She aspires towards the distant past and he comments on the recent past, an earlier betrayal apparently having destroyed whatever life they shared."[8]

Victoria Station depicts the problems encountered in the process of establishing meaningful communication between two individuals immured in their private visions of reality. Failing to make any headway, they switch over to a world of fantasy and illusion to find a shared purpose and thus relieve themselves of the agony of being haunted by the meaninglessness in life.

Pinter, in his plays, depicts the precariousness of human life, time and death as a destructive force and the meaninglessness of life characterized by banal routine and random desires. His characters often find the world outside as an absurd, irrational and menacing force which seek to expel them from their comfort and eventually destroy them. A few take refuge in the world of fantasy and illusion to get rid of this oppressive sense of meaninglessness.

NOTES

1. Ecclesiastes 1: 2 *Holy Bible*. New International Version.
2. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (New York, Vintage, 1991).
3. Bernard F. Dukore, *Harold Pinter* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 36.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
5. Harold Pinter, *The Caretaker* (London: Methuen, 1968), pp. 9-10.
6. Harold Pinter from a speech entitled "Writing for Theatre" delivered at the National School of Drama Festival in Bristol, England, in 1962. Reprinted in Harold Pinter, *Plays: One* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 11
7. Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber, 1997), p. 192.
8. Martin S. Regal, *Harold Pinter: A Question of Timing* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 69.

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Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*: A Study in Humanism

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Before discussing the humanism of Doris Lessing, let us first know about humanism. What do we mean by humanism? Our answer would be: Humanism is a philosophy, the central concern of which is man and his happiness. It underlies the value and dignity of human beings and takes him as the measure of all things. All knowledge as well as human institutions are useful only when they help man to realize his potentialities. Generally Western and Eastern philosophers hold that what matters for man really is this earthly existence and not the unseen other world. Therefore, man's attention should be centred on here and now as against Heaven or Hell. This also implies the rejection of supernatural and denial of a personal God.

However, even those who are religious humanists firmly believe that man's ultimate concern is man himself. Humanists like Socrates, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindra Nath Tagore have the same feeling. The quintessence of Socrates's thought lay in his firm faith in human personality as the fundamental reality whereas all social and political institutions were at best aids to human development.

Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindra Nath Tagore also express similar views. They saw God in man and so proclaimed that the worship of God lays essentially in the service of mankind.

Humanism is an ancient tradition in thought. It has its own historical development like all ancient traditions. It may be said to have begun with the Greek philosopher Protagoras in the fifth century B.C. His famous dictum, man is the measure of all things, is often expressed as a quintessence of all humanism. In due course, various doctrines on the nature of man have come

into being and corresponding to each of these doctrines, various schools of humanism have arisen. It is also associated with the new learning that blossomed over Europe in the fifteenth century Renaissance. It had its roots in the discovery and dissemination of the original texts of the Greek writers. It presented the classical writers for the first time as direct commentators on life. There is also the well-known Christian humanism of the seventeenth century. What is described as Christian humanism is best represented by Erasmus. His philosophy of Christ is essentially an attempt at turning away from scientific questions to the problems of moral life and religious imagination. He insisted on 'the dignity of man'[1] and argued that man was important through Christ's atonement and God's grace. He emphasized the necessity and importance of cultivating a life of integrity and pleaded for an understanding and practice of true Christianity.

Jean Paul Sartre wants us to believe that his Existentialism is a brand of humanism. The only element recognizable as humanistic in his philosophy seems to be daring rejection of the supernatural.

Then there is a particular variety of humanism called the Neo-Humanism. Paul Elmer More and Irving Babbitt who sought to replace both the extremes of the religions and the romantic views of life lead this Neo-Humanism. The principal aim of the Neo-humanists is to create a synthesis for all that is good in ancient cultures and religions after rejecting the belief in a transcendental deity.

The relationship between a humanist and a novelist is very close; or in other words, the humanist and the novelist are intimate to each other and the association between the two "is not accidental."[2] D.H. Lawrence, a great novelist of the twentieth century, places the novel at the centre of humanistic culture because of its unique closeness to human experience. Henry James, another important novelist of the modern age, also makes clear that his "central concern is with human beings."[3]

However, in modern time it is difficult for a novelist to become a humanist. The violent changes in class structure, the breakdown of traditional beliefs and threats of war have brought

many a writer to a complete abandonment of humanist belief. But some of the major post-War novelists for example John Wain, Kingsley Amis, William Golding and Doris Lessing, who deal with the transfiguration of the British class structure in the twentieth century, are essentially concerned with human values and in their novels the essential focus is always upon the consciousness of their characters who find themselves lonely in a hostile world. They are out to enlighten humanity and fight against the modern despair and try to rebuild the broken fragments of optimistic humanism being deeply involved in the restoration and reconstruction of the will. Thus, Humanism is a conception of life that makes man more prosperous and hence more free, reflecting upon the innate goodness of human beings.

Among contemporary English novelists, Doris Lessing is intensely committed to reforming the society through her creative acts. She talks of the 'sense of duty'[4] that makes her join organizations. Her sense of social responsibility leads her to search her values and the literary material among the working classes in London. Her commitment to a sense of social responsibility and a pursuit of those oppressed by society also infuses her fiction about colonial Africa which makes her theme humanistic. It clearly shows that Doris Lessing is one of those novelists who are ready to stand with the unfortunate.

Quite often Doris Lessing is discussed as a novelist dealing with the plight of women. There is, however, another dimension to her work, particularly *The Golden Notebook*. In this work she enunciates her own version of humanism, in which people and society are seen as militating against what may be called human values.

During the early years of writing novels, from 1952 to 1969, Doris Lessing published the five novels which make up the series entitled *Children of Violence*. Taking on the largest possible obligations that a novel of development might impose upon an author, she wished to dramatize "the individual conscience in its relations with the collective."[5] Her example of the individual conscience, Martha Quest, has become a character whom we

mentally lift from the page and incorporate into our own lives as a reference point.

Doris Lessing has devoted a tetralogy to an African problem i.e. "the relationship of black and white."[6] Besides the colour, she is concerned with the rights of women in a world of men and "looks to the politics of the left-wing to bring justice to women and blacks alike."[7]

The international crises of the second and third decades of the twentieth century turned many established ideas and values upside down. The two World Wars have left the world with huge debris and everlasting scars. Modern scientific achievements have added much fuel to the fire. It is an age of pollution and explosion; disillusionment and frustration; neurosis and perversion. Life is but an extension of boredom. It is not only Doris Lessing who has undergone such ordeal, but most of the novelists of her age have experienced such terrifying, disintegrating and killing ordeals. Durrell portrays Alexandria as a hell. Anthony Powell's novels are filled with mythical hells. Even her contemporary poets are not free from the perilous experience of life. Ted Hughes in his famous poem *Cadenza: The New Poets* presents the state of mind:

> The full bared throat of a woman walking water,
> The loaded estuary of the dead
> And I am the Cargo
> Of a coffin attended by Swallows,
> And I am the water
> Bearing the coffin that will not be silent.[8]

In this chaotic and confused world it seems that there is no hope. Adam has lost his Eden. Pandora's box is open emitting all the vile, furious and ferocious objects. Social security and personal ease are threatened by a new dragon. Nothing is left charming and lovely. Lust of life brings more complexities. Death seems the only solution facing life in this mad, strife-torn world. Sylvia Plath wants to celebrate this desire of death. Rosenthal notes: "Under all the other motifs of Sylvia Plath's work, however, is the confusion of terror at death with fascination in it."[9]

Dramatists like Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter watch a bleak and gloomy picture but give a message of hope, like a silver lining in a dark cloud. Their uncompromising rejection of an easy solution or cheap illusion of comfort ultimately has a liberating effect. The nature of man is such that in the very act of facing up to reality of his condition, his dignity is enhanced.

Doris Lessing successfully and brilliantly brings out the chaos, the confusion and the psychological tension of the modern life. She is even farther than D.H. Lawrence in treating the animal instincts wrapped with sexual intensity, lust and passion without any veil of chastity and purity. She is the boldest of all the contemporary novelists who lets her mouthpiece Anna Wulf, the central character of *The Golden Notebook*, herald an equality with man. In this connection, Bernard Bergonzi writes: "On the face of it Anna has achieved a degree of personal freedom that the new woman of Ibsen and Shaw could scarcely have dreamed of; she is as free as any man in all the major spheres of life, professional, intellectual and above all, sexual."[9]

In *The Golden Notebook*, Doris Lessing presents Anna Wulf, the novelist writing a novel and keeping several notebooks revealing different layers of her life. The revitalization of the male of the human species, she finds, is partly due to the quest of women for freedom with the result that an inner bomb seems to have gone off shattering the human personality in the West. Like D.H. Lawrence, Doris Lessing is vitally interested in making life possible in the modern world. She is also seriously interested in art whose nature is discussed by Ella and Saul Green in detail in *The Golden Notebook*. She writes in the preface of the book: "But my major aim was to shape a book which would make its own comment a wordless statement to talk through the way it was shaped" (14)

The Golden Notebook is probably the most important single novel published in England since the War. Its theme is announced in the first line of the first section 'Free Women.' The two women, Anna and Molly, are alone together. "The point is," said Anna as her friend came back from the telephone "the point is that as far as I can see everything is cracking up." (3) The

theme is developed in a number of materials. Within the 'Free Women' section it is dramatized above all in the behaviour of Tommy, Molly's son who deliberately became a psychotic.

At the same time in the 'Black Notebook' section the tension of mutual malice and self-contempt is found. But she also analyses her own inspiration in writing it. She says: "The novel is about a colour problem. I said nothing in it that wasn't true. . . . I have to first switch something off in me, now writing about it, I have to switch it off, or a story would begin to emerge, a novel and not the truth." (63-64)

The poignancy of this for Anna Wulf as novelist or for Doris Lessing is of course the resistance it signals to write again. But it is important to her as political and moral being too. She continues:

> Nothing is more powerful than this nihilism an angry readiness to throw everything overboard, a willingness, a longing to become part of dissolution. . . . That is why I am ashamed and why I feel continually as if I have committed a crime. (64).

The 'Red Notebook' describes about the splitting and splintering of political groups and the counter play of truth and lie, moral enthusiasm and cynicism, each corrupting the other among communists. When she rejoins the Party, she says in her first interview: "both pleased me being back in the fold so to speak already entitled to the elaborate ironies and complicities of the initiative; and made me suddenly exhausted. I'd forgotten, of course having been out of the atmosphere so long, the tight, defensive, sarcastic atmosphere of the inner circles." (155)

The 'Yellow Notebook' reflects in fictional form Anna's love affair with a man who is determined from the start not to commit himself to her and the strain this creates out of which she splits herself into psychic parts.

The 'Blue Notebook' describes Anna's sessions with Mrs. Marks, a Jungian psychoanalyst, who sees her cure exclusively in terms of her starting to write again—to resume her sacred vocation as artist while Anna is deeply ambivalent, deeply split about the value of art.

The 'Golden Notebook' is an attempt to combine the form of art and meaning with the raw unfinished, tentative quality which she values. But from the point of view of the book's theme, the point of the 'Blue Notebook' sessions is that psychoanalysis fails as politics and eroticism to heal the split and to prevent the crack-up.

The form of 'Free Women' is very Lawrentian. It is impossible to imagine that it could have begun the way it did if *Women in Love* had not begun this way. The doctrine of sexuality also is Lawrentian despite the connotation of free women. In the 'Yellow Notebook' we are told that Ella 'floated darkly on her love for him, on her naiveté which is another word for a spontaneous creative faith. . . . What Ella lost during five years was the power to create naiveté." (211-12) Indeed the 'Yellow Notebook' even decides that all her unhappiness derive from her trying to abandon conventional behaviour and trying to be 'free.' Anna and Molly talk of 'real women' and even 'real men' in a way that would shock a sexual libertine and the treatment of homosexuality is very hostile. Indeed, the relationship depicted in *The Golden Notebook* between Anna and Saul may be seen as a conflict and coming together of the Lawrentian mode of eroticism which is embodied in Anna.

The book's ultimate message is spoken by Paul, one of the young men in the African group in the following manner:

> Comrade Willi; would you not say that there is some principle at work not yet admitted to your philosophy? Some principles of destruction? Willi said, in exactly the tone we had all expected: There is no need to look any further than the philosophy of the class struggle and as if he'd pressed a button, Jimmy, Paul and I burnt out into one of the fits of irresponsible laughter that Willi never joined. (427-28)

Doris Lessing has an extraordinary barometric sensitivity to the social climate but she anticipates trends rather than capping them with a novel. Thus the encyclopedic study of intellectual, political women in *The Golden Notebook* preceded and in a sense introduced the Women's Liberation Movement. Despite her heroine Anna's insistence that she and her friend Molly are com-

pletely new types of women, there is an implicit continuity between their experiences, emotions, values and the great line of the independent artist women of the past.

The Golden Notebook is a monumental achievement of Doris Lessing in which she deals with twentieth century women and the female tradition. She believes that the people are heading for a global catastrophe through germ warfare, or breaking down of civilization. Sex and gender are irrelevant in terms of these human disasters. The change in Lessing's fiction from the individual to the collective, from personal to the communal, from female to the global consciousness seems at first like an attempt to transformation. It has, however, been a systematic will and process of escape from a very painful encounter with the self, with the anguish of the feminine fragmentation. The term feminine has class connotation for Lessing as well as suggestions of weakness, affectation and emotionality. The affliction of feminine sensibility portrayed in *The Golden Notebook* is a parody of a lady author, who notes in her journal how essential it is "to have clean linen on one's bed everyday." (438)

In *The Golden Notebook*, Anna finally convinces herself that the personal is political, if Marxism means anything it means that little about the emotions reflects "What's real since the emotions are a function and product of a society." (43) The protagonist of the novel as artist is no remote being, but one who has an uncommon responsiveness to common experience. This is recorded with such fidelity that Anna's primary significance as artist is overlooked. If it is lost it is impossible to respond adequately to the novel's larger meaning. Anna says in the novel: "Very few people really care about freedom, about liberty, about the truth, very few. Very few people have guts the kind of guts on which a real democracy has to depend. Without people with that sort of guts a free society dies or cannot be born." (484)

Thus in our conclusion we may say that the key issue of *The Golden Notebook* is human relationships, especially the relationships between men and women. Lessing is a humanist who supports the cause of downtrodden in the society. Women have been subject to suppression and suffering through ages, they were de-

nied freedom and equal rights. Similarly, the 'blacks' in Africa were treated as slaves by the 'whites' who once were the rulers; the 'blacks' were also denied freedom and political as well as social rights. Doris Lessing champions the cause of women and the 'blacks' in her novels. Anna Wulf has been depicted as the spokesperson of Doris Lessing who gives a vent to the ideas and experiences of the author. She thinks that women are equal to men and is very conscious in giving proper justice to women. When she talks about women she does not talk about herself but she becomes the voice of the voiceless, a champion of women's freedom and rights.

NOTES

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5. Paul Schlueter, *A Small Personal Voice: Essays, Reviews, Interviews* (New York: Knopf,1974), p. 14.
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Social Crisis in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

SATISH BARBUDDHE

The African novel is normally linked with the portrayal of different kinds of cultural anxiety as well as conflicts. There is a state of disagreement between tradition and modernity. But the real argument is between the individual and the society. It is the society which scores over the individual in the African novel. In the European novel the case may be different, where the victory is of the individual over the society.

Chinua Achebe's four novels, *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People* narrate the social changes in the Eastern Nigeria. Achebe's best novel *Things Fall Apart* was first published in 1958. It is termed as 'a classic in modern African Writing in English'. In his interview with Lewis Nkosi, Achebe said:

> I know around '51, '52 I was quite certain that I was going to try my hand at writing and one of the things that set me thinking was Joyce Carey's novel set in Nigeria, *Mister Johnson*, which was praised so much, and it was clear to me that it was a most superficial picture—not only of the country—but even, of the Nigerian character, and so I thought if this was famous, then perhaps someone ought to try and look at this from the inside.[1]

Things Fall Apart is a typical Ibo novel which describes Okonkwo's rise and fall. He was 'well-known throughout the nine villages and even beyond'. His greatest achievement at the age of eighteen was 'throwing Amalinze the Cat'. Amalinze, the great wrestler was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. But Okonkwo threw the Cat at last. It was said that Okonkwo never used his words, when he was angry, he used his fists instead. His father Unoka owed every neighbour some

money, from a few cowries to quite substantial amounts. His earlier days were happier:

> He was tall but very thin and had a slight stoop. He wore a haggard and mournful look except when he was drinking or playing on his flute. He was very good on his flute, and his happiest moments were the two or three moons after the harvest when the village musicians brought down their instruments, hung above the fireplace. Unoka would play with them, his face beaming with blessedness and peace. Sometimes another village would ask Unoka's band and their dancing 'egwugwu' to come and stay with them and teach them their tunes. They would go to such hosts for as long as three or four markets, making music and feasting. Unoka loved the good fare and the good fellowship, and he loved this season of the year, when the rains had stopped and the sun rose every morning with dazzling beauty.[2]

But Unoka, the grown-up, was a total failure. He was called a 'loafer', whom the people swore never to lend any more money because he never paid back. But he was always a successful borrower and kept on piling up his debts. When he died he was heavily in debt. Thank God, a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father. Okonkwo was respected as 'he ate with kings and elders'.

Okonkwo's youngest wife lived in perpetual fear "Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man.' But his life was totally dominated by fear, may be the fear of failure and of weaknesses. His fear was deeper than the fear of evil and 'capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest.'

Okonkwo first heard from his playmate that Unoka was 'agbala'. Agbala is another name for a woman and it could also mean a man who had taken no title. Okonkwo decided to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. Gentleness and idleness was hated by Okonkwo. He never liked laziness.

Okonkwo was not fortunate to have a young wife like his father. "With a father like Unoka, Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men had. He neither inherited a barn nor a title nor even a young wife." (17)

His youngest wife Ojiugo was punished by him in 'the Week of Peace'. Her only fault was that she had gone to plait her hair, leaving her children at the mercy of his first wife. Okonkwo saw that Ojiugo's children were eating with the children of his first wife. So he asked:

> "Did she ask you to feed them before she went?"
> "Yes" lied Nwoye's mother, his first wife.

He knew that she was lying but kept quiet. When his first wife returned, he spared no time but started beating her. He did not have any fear of the goddess and so he continued his beating. In the evening, the priest Ezeani called on Okonkwo in his 'obi'. The priest refused the Kola nut offered by him saying: "Take away your Kola nut. I shall not eat in the house of a man who has no respect for our gods and ancestors." Okonkwo tried to explain but the priest was not in a mood to listen. He told Okonkwo: "Your wife was at fault, but even if you came into your 'obi' and found her lover on top of her, you would still have committed a great evil to beat her." He warned Okonkwo that 'the evil you have done can ruin the whole clan.' Okonkwo was asked to bring to the shrine of Ani one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries. He obeyed the order. His enemies thought that success had gone to his head. Okonkwo felt sorry for what he did but never accepted the wrong in public.

The Week of Peace means no work for the people: they just gathered and drank palm-wine. That year they talked about Okonkwo and his breaking of the sacred peace. There was a long discussion on breaking the sacred peace. Many things were discussed by the people. Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the oldest man in the village, admitted that the punishment for breaking the Peace of Ani had become very mild in their clan. In the past the punishment for breaking the peace was severe: "My father told me that he had been told that in the past a man who broke the peace was dragged on the ground through the village until he died. But after a while this custom was stopped because it spoilt the peace which it was meant to preserve." (29)

The Feast of the New Yam is an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Ani is the ultimate judge of morality and conduct for Ibo society. The preparation for the New Yam Festival was in full swing, as it was an occasion for joy throughout Umuofia. Though everybody in Umufoia was happy as the New Yam Festival was approaching, Okonkwo 'was always uncomfortable sitting around for days waiting for a feast or getting over it.' He would like to work on his farm instead. On the first day of the festival there was the feasting and meeting the relatives and on the second day the wrestling contests were organized. Okonkwo's second wife Ekwefi was interested in wrestling matches. Okonkwo won her heart by defeating the Cat. As he was poor, she did not show courage to marry him. He was not rich enough to pay her bride-price. But she ran away from her husband and started living with Okonkwo.

Okonkwo liked to tell the stories of the land—masculine stories of violence and bloodshed, to the boys—Nwoye and Ikemefuna. Nwoye liked the tales told by his mother. But he knew that 'these stories were for foolish women and children' and what his father wanted from him was very clear. He along with Ikemefuna had to listen to the stories about tribal wars from his father.

Death of Ikemefuna paralyzed Okonkwo. He could not sleep at night. He could not forget Ikemefuna. He did not eat anything for two days. He was not a man of thought but of action. The absence of work troubled him very much. If only he could find some work to do he would be able to forget the death of Ikemefuna. Unfortunately there was no work for him, as it was the harvest time. He thought that he had become a woman. Was he the same Okonkwo who killed five men in battle? Where had his valour gone? He now wanted something which would keep him busy.

Ezeudu had been the oldest man in the village. His death was a great shock to Okonkwo. He remembered Ezeudu's last visit, when he had said, "That boy calls you father. Bear no hand in his death." Ezeudu had taken three titles in his life. He was to be buried after dark with a grand ceremony. Everywhere there was

a smell of gunpowder. Guns fired the last salute, but suddenly there was an eerie silence.

> All was silent. In the centre of the crowd a boy lay in a pool of blood. It was the dead man's sixteen-year-old son, who with his brothers and half-brothers had been dancing the traditional farewell to their father. Okonkwo's gun had exploded and a piece of iron had pierced the boy's heart.

The confusion that followed was without parallel in the tradition of Umuofia: "Violent deaths were frequent but nothing like this had ever happened." (112-13)

Okonkwo had inadvertently killed the boy with his gun. The only course open to him was to flee from the clan. His greatest friend, Obierika tried to find the answer to the question: why should a man suffer so grievously for an offence he had committed inadvertently? Though he thought for a long time, he found no answer. He remembered the incident when he had thrown away his twin children. What was their crime?

In the first part of the novel various ceremonies of tribals are narrated. From the very beginning of the first part, Okonkwo's place in the Ibo society is highlighted. It is Okonkwo's will, determination and boldness which take him to the rank of one of the lords of the clan. He is a prosperous man, one who is acclaimed by the nine villages as a great warrior. In one year the harvest was unsatisfactory. A farmer committed suicide in Okonkwo's village but Okonkwo tried not to lose his head. His father advised him not to despair.

> His father, Unoka, who was then an ailing man, had said to him during that terrible harvest month: "Do not despair. I know you will not despair. You have a manly and a proud heart. A proud heart can survive a general failure because such a failure does not prick its pride. It is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails alone." (23)

Okonkwo had a firm belief that if he survived that year, he would survive anything.

Part two of the novel describes Okonkwo's exile. Most people in the village respected him for his industry and success. But

now he was banished for seven years from the village. 'He had been cast out of his clan like a fish on to a dry, sandy beach, panting.' His mother's younger brother Uchendu tells Okonkwo:

> Your duty is to comfort your wives and children and take them back to your fatherland after seven years. But if you allow sorrow to weigh you down and kill you, they will die in exile. (122)

Uchendu's words of comfort are helpful to Okonkwo.

The arrival of the missionaries in the village of Mbanta was the cause of worry and anxiety for the villagers. The villagers were told about the new god. He was the creator of all the world. When the villagers were told that they worshipped false gods, gods of wood and stone, there was a deep murmur in the crowd. The query was quickly made about the protection of the villagers

> "If we leave our gods and follow your god," asked another man, "Who will protect us from the anger of our neglected gods and ancestors?" "Your gods are not alive and cannot do any harm." replied the white man, "They are pieces of wood and stone." (133)

Okonkwo was not at all impressed by the missionaries. He thought that they were mad people. But 'the young lad' was attracted towards Christianity. Okonkwo was not very happy in Mbanta. He regretted every day of his exile. He wanted to give a feast to his mother's kinsmen. The reason for giving the feast was explained by him: "My mother's people have been good to me and I must show my gratitude." For the feast three goats were slaughtered and a number of fowls. Pots of palm-wine, yam pottage and bitter-leaf soup were the eatables at the feast.

In the third part of the novel Okonkwo returned to his fatherland Umuofia after seven years of exile. Umuofia had changed during this time. There were churches now. Okonkwo's return to Umuofia was not as memorable as he had wished. The village was completely changed. He was deeply hurt to see the clan breaking up and falling apart. Okonkwo was very angry to see his village changing.

Okonkwo killed one of the District Commissioner's court messengers who came to stop the meeting. Okonkwo knew that Umuofia would not go to war. He drew this conclusion when he

saw that the other messengers were escaping. "Why did he do it?" everyone asked. When Okonkwo came to know that he was alone, he committed suicide. The novel depicts the rise and fall of Okonkwo. At the beginning of the novel he rises to a great height, but at the end of the novel he prefers to die than to accept the attack on his own Ibo tradition. At the end of the novel Obierika blamed the District Commissioner:

> That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog. (187)

The whole community is shocked by Okonkwo's suicide, but they cannot touch the dangling body of Okonkwo. They cannot bury him. Only strangers can, because it is a sin against the Earth, his body is evil. Okonkwo's ignominy is equally shameful for his whole clan. We have pity not only for Okonkwo but for the whole community. Things really have fallen apart. Okonkwo was embittered by total inactivity of his clan. He knew that Umuofia would not go to war: 'They had broken into tumult instead of action.' Okonkwo was a man of action. When he noticed fright in that tumult, he judged his own clan which would never support him in his 'mission'. Now he was without the strength or power from his own clan. So it was impossible for him to avoid death. He could not live as a non-existent person in his society. "Okonkwo is not an individual or a mere leader of Umuofia, he symbolizes Ibo pride, and identity. Achebe made it clear that with Okonkwo's death, the disintegration of the Ibo society becomes complete."[3]

NOTES

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Achalpur City

New Voices:
Feminists, Lesbians and Subalterns

KEDAR NATH SHARMA

Three decades ago the topic I chose for my Ph.D. thesis was "The Contribution of Women Novelists to Indian English Fiction." Attitudes and tastes have undergone a lot of change since then. In the present perception I am made to feel guilty of male chauvinism for having used 'women' before novelists. In the just published book, *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*, Shashi Deshpande, the author of *That Long Silence* and *The Binding Vine*, suggests that for the sake of gender parity we must drop women writers or start using the term men writers.

Shobha De, the author of *Strange Obsession* and *Sultry Days*, however, holds a contrary view: "The label of 'feminist writer' is one that marginalizes. I for one identify myself as a woman writer because of being read, judged and perceived differently by male readers on account of my gender." Just a coincidence, nearer home, *Lajja*-fame, fatwa-followed, author of *Aurat ke Haq Mein* and *Happy Marriage*, feminist Taslima Nasreen had to seek amnesty under the 'Women Writers' Committee' of International PEN.

Shashi Deshpande confides, "When I begin writing, I leave a huge margin, a blank space which I know will soon fill up with alterations, corrections, new ideas—in time the margin is full, the words begin creeping onto the centre of the page, the margin and the text merge and finally because what I am now saying comes mostly from the margin, the margin takes over, it becomes the real text." See the irony! Those in the margin, have, indeed, flooded the literary field and there has emerged a tangible feminist, dalit and minority-based literature as a major feature in Indian creative arena. Any writing of protest, projecting

the social, religious and casteist oppression and segregation suffered by the downtrodden, marginalized community, has come to be dubbed as the Literature of Marginality or Dalit Literature. This literature has nothing to do with the mainstream literary traditions and reflects the writer's newly awakened sensibilities, resistance and identity crisis.

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy stands for the literary representation of the 'subaltern,' Antonio Gramisci's term, popularized by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The epithet subaltern denotes a subordinate position in respect of gender, class, caste, age, office or culture. It takes its force from Marxism and post-structuralism and becomes a part of postcolonial criticism. Spivak's famous dictum is, "The subaltern cannot speak." See the paradox! Today the voice is heard wherever there is victimization, subjugation and exploitation. The subalterns in the colonial era have become intellectuals in the postcolonial period. Manju Kapur's journey from *Difficult Daughters* to *A Married Woman* is an eye-opener. The other day I asked her if she had any qualms describing lesbian activities and using once-taboo four-letter words, she said she felt quite at home—as if it were an in-thing. Rohinton Mistry, the author of *Such a Long Journey*, may also be feeling the same way.

Pipeelika Khan finds "Women. So pathetic in their hunger for love" and initiates Manju Kapur's married woman Astha into a lesbian relationship. She has no inhibitions in declaring, "If you want to do anything of your own I guess you have to work your ass off." Hemant, Astha's husband comments on her long phone conversation: "Women . . . always mind fucking." The novelist continues: "Astha cringed. Mind fucking. Not the excitement of the real thing. The organ penetrated, the ears, the weapon of penetration, words . . . listening upon listening, fucking upon fucking." Later Pipeelika and Astha make love to each other. 'Hemant should be pleased,' said Astha to her lover, 'he says women are always mind fucking.' They both laughed at the wife's revenge." Later still, seduction becomes addiction: "She goes to sleep, and I pass my hands over her breasts. At first it seems odd, after years of being made love to by a man, to have

one's breasts met by a similar pair, though larger. No wonder men like them so much. You can do much with a pair of breasts. These loose, hanging, swinging items, breasts, penis—objects of passion and anxiety. Stuff you can hold in your hands, squeeze, maul, make yours, like playing with clay—taking you back to your childhood."

Manju Kapur makes a mention of 'gay' film shows and 'homosexuals' too. Twenty-seven year old Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi however, gives a graphic display in his debut novel *The Last Song of Dusk* (2004). Raghubir Singh "pressed Edward on his haunches and fed him the adamantine sumptuousness of his manhood—a proud thick succulent thing had found his home—each night his stallion's legs shuddered as he rammed Edward again and again, such gentle violence, such refined debauchery, until all of Edward melted—a liquid of flesh spreading over the bedsheets." We have other queers too. "Libya Dass had a string of English lovers all of whom were women. Libya Dass had famously argued that English women were homosexual by choice simply because the prospect of fornicating with a male member of their own ilk was a suitable deterrent to the comforts of La Vie Breeder." Radha-mashi confirms to Mr. Patwardhan: "I know for a fact that all her bed-fellows were women."

See Priscilla's fate in Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* (2001): "Kids in school were beginning to whisper that I was a freak that wouldn't even let a boy kiss me, that maybe I was a lesbian." Then followed a series of exploits to prove otherwise to the extent that she shocks: "Lucky, I am twenty-four, you did not expect me to be a virgin, did you?" However, very proudly she shares a secret: "There is something I have never done. In bed, I mean. I've never let anyone make love to me the way my father was doing with that woman. From behind." Time passes fast. One Saturday, August 26, 1989 we learn: "Before she knows it he is on top of her and inside her. . . . He is still kissing her as he turns her around and she shows no surprise at finding herself on her knees on the mat. He is behind her now—her breasts swaying with each thrust as he takes her from behind. . . . He remembers that this is not supposed to happen that this is the one thing

that she will not do, but he has not asked and she has not resisted . . . he cannot see the solitary tear that drops gently down her love-saddened face." How pathetic! No wonder Priscilla records in her scrapbook: "Loyalty is all one way from woman to the man. And when society stacks-up all the odds against a woman, she'd better not count on the man's support."

The only silver lining is that all this is not shown as a cult, but only as a kind of aberration, a little deviation or as Manju Kapur has suggested, going back to one's childhood. At the end of *The Namesake*, we find that Gogol is just 32, but a divorcee—reason, the discovery of his wife Maushumi's affair with Dimitri. Jhumpa Lahiri analyses the rift: "They had both sought comfort in each other, and in their shared world, perhaps for the sake of novelty, or out of the fear that the world was slowly dying." In Shanghvi's *The Song of Dusk*, we find Sherman advising Nandini to avoid 'lady-lover' Libya Dass. Pointing towards the sun, Nandini observes: "Does the sun know it's the sun. . . . Someone long before decided . . . that's the sun and so grew to become your truth too. Same goes for folks like Libya Dass . . . ages back, someone told her she ought to be all hopped for men but she found the blokes couldn't get her tit up to save its life. Why settle for someone else's version of the truth? . . . Truth is only what we make up."

And the truth is that the fragmentation of Indian literature in English is being resorted to on flimsy grounds of sex, colour and creed. The marginalized, perverted whims and fancies are being highlighted under the misconception that provocation, incitement and even sexcitement or titillation may lead to more sales. A rose is a rose; call it by any name, it smells the same. Good literature will always be read and appreciated. Artificial ornamentations and interpolations are like oil on water and like comical scenes in *Dr. Faustus*, if removed will have no bearing on the main theme. Let its sanctity be maintained. To conclude, Jhumpa Lahiri's comment in *The Namesake* is both revealing and relevant: "Americans, in spite of their public declarations of affection, in spite of their miniskirts and bikinis, in spite of their handholding on the street and the lying on top of each other . . . prefer their

privacy." And privacy stands for protection, prevention, not prolific pulp pornography. Suggestiveness is the sane slogan.

> Her lips were so near
> What else could I do?

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Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting*: A Study in Gender Discrimination

SUMITRA KUKRETI and ANUPAM SANNY

Anita Desai is the harbinger of the twentieth century and occupies a prominent and distinguished place in Indian English literature. Her literary works are instilled with various themes: her concern for social structure and her feminist status (though she never accepted it) is not entirely new but is merely projection of her philosophy and her inner being. Her perception and style of writing in *Fasting, Feasting* is extremely different form the style of her earlier artistic creations. Her earlier fiction, *Cry, the Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, *Fire on the Mountain* and *Clear Light of Day* are contrived solely on individual characters but *Fasting, Feasting*, published in 1999, exhibits a significant change in this direction. Here Anita Desai vociferously articulates the gender discrimination prevalent in the society. She has also tried to unravel the psyche of the victim of gender discrimination. Through her marvellous fiction she has showed that constant neglect and discrimination results in loss of personality. Through *Fasting, Feasting* she has propagated her latest message that all of us should fight against gender discrimination as this is the greatest social evil with dangerous repercussions, that is threatening the very notion of equality and social justice.

Fasting, Feasting is a powerful representation of patriarchal society governed by its dual value system. The characters, here, represent the society where daughters are kept at the periphery and life revolves around the son. Primarily, it highlights sexual discrimination meted out to a girl child. Anita Desai very skillfully and dexterously opens the seam of the tightly knit fabric of the society and introduces the readers with gruesome, detestable

treatment done to women. It is a narrative saga of the fate of daughters and sisters, married and forgotten without even the least care of their future. It is that sickening society where the birth of a son is associated with pride and felicity and considered a great boon while daughters are treated as lifelong burden. The novel depicts Anita Desai's concern for the cause of women and delineates the drawbacks and loopholes in the system, which puts the entire society to shame. *Fasting, Feasting* is a tale narrated through a simple, divorcee girl, Uma, who becomes the victim of social cruelty due to conventional and overbearing attitude of her parents. Richardson's comments explain the nature of her parents:

> In Papa and Mama, the Indian parents, she [Anita Desai] creates two monsters of almost Gothic proportions, locked into inseparable marital disharmony, determined to inflict on their two daughters and only son every ounce of the prejudice and disappointments of their own lives, as a respectable barrister and his wife in an undistinguished town.[1]

Uma, the protagonist and narrator, was a grown-up woman when her mother finds herself pregnant and wishes to get it terminated because of her illness. But Uma's father always wished to have a son in the family; the late pregnancy of his wife tempts him to take a chance of fathering a son. Though there were two grown up daughters in the family yet Papa's desire to have a son was almost irresistible and through him Anita Desai mocks at the Indian mentality to give undue importance to sons: "Would any man give up the chance of a son?"[2] The significance imparted to son results in negligence and humiliation toward girl child. Apathy towards Uma is a depiction of this social reality.

During her pregnancy the father provided every care to the mother and ultimately she delivers a son. His birth remains a memorable event for Uma and her younger sister, Aruna. Throughout their life they had perceived totally different behaviour of their father. But on the birth of their brother, the reaction of overwhelming father pricks their conscience.

Arriving home, however, he sprang out of the car, raced into the house and shouted the news to whoever was there to hear. Servants, elderly relatives, all gathered at the door, and then saw the most astounding sight of their lives—Papa, in his elation, leaping over three chairs in the hall, one after the other, like a boy playing leap-grog, his arms flung up in the air and his hair flying. "'A boy!' he screamed, 'A bo-oy! Arun, Arun at last!.' . . Uma and Aruna, in the portico, looking in, drew together, awe-struck." (17)

This vulgar display of joy at the birth of a son reflects typical attitude of a male member in a patriarchal society. But this show before two grown up daughters, who by this age understand the process of pregnancy and birth, is really shameful particularly if their father makes the display. Along with this, it reminds Uma and Aruna that their status in the family is negligible. The expression of immense joy at the birth of their brother 'Arun,' symbolizes that he carried great importance. Both the daughters in the family take it as a cue that from now on they'll have to remain at the periphery.

The jubilant call of the father 'A boy. . . A bo-oy! Arun, Arun at last!' indicates clearly that the daughters were unwanted; from the very beginning he was aspiring for a male child. The words 'at last' refer that now his desire is fulfilled.

At the time of second pregnancy, they were expecting a male child and the father even selected the name 'Arun' for his child but when his wife delivered a girl, they named her Aruna. Now with the birth of a son, he happily named him 'Arun.' He behaves as if his greatest dream is fulfilled.

This is not the reaction of an individual to the circumstances; the father represents the whole class of male members, rather the whole society. After the birth of her brother, Uma had to assist her mother in rearing Arun. Though Uma is an abject scholar but she possesses an extraordinary zeal for study. Her failure in examination provides an excuse to her parents and they withdraw her from the school without even the least care of her future. The sarcastic comments of her mother reveal her attitude regarding the future of her girl child, Uma. She says, "What is the use of

going back to school if you keep failing, Uma? . . . You will be happier at home. You won't need to do any lessons. You are a big girl now. We are trying to arrange a marriage for you. . . . Till then, you can help me look after Arun. And learn to run the house." (22) Her parents never give any importance to her education; if she had to do her homework the mother would thrust all household responsibilities on her, negating her interest and other priorities of her life. Uma used to plead, "'I've got to get my sums done and then write the composition'—'Leave all that,' Mama snapped at her." (18) Her mother never thought seriously that Uma had to study at home to complete her assignments. In childhood, instead of providing any help in her study Uma's mother taught her, "the correct way of folding nappies, of pre-paring watered milk, of rocking the screaming infant to sleep when he was covered with prickly heat as with a burn." (17-18)
Uma's mother can still be excused for neglecting her daughter's study but even an educated person and a barrister, the father never made any effort to educate his daughter or to provide her training in any other skill or creative work that might have improved her personality. It is possible that had Uma been provided tuition facilities, surely she would have got success in passing the exam as her thirst for education was very keen. In spite of providing such facilities, the father gives his tacit consent to his wife's decision of withdrawing Uma from school. Though Uma assures them to get success in exam and pleads with Mother Agnes to persuade her parents to allow her to continue her education but their decision remains the same. "The joint control exercised by Mama Papa is equally destructive and life-denying. Rituals begin to seem meaningless after sometime, fears become obsessive and channels of communication are disrupted."[3]
The mother expresses her desire to "dispose of Uma" (86) which shows the objectification of Uma and reveals that she has been treated as mere burden, a broken piece of furniture or some outdated decoration, no more required by the owners. Anita Desai's use of the word 'dispose of' is a clear indication that her mother is least concerned about her future and she has no emotional involvement with Uma and in hurry, she fixes her marriage. The

first two attempts prove futile and her father has even to bear dowry and cheating in the second case. Their neighbour Ms. Joshi also criticizes them for taking such hurried decisions of Uma's marriage. She humiliates Uma's mother by saying: "if parents will not take the time to make proper enquiries, what terrible fates their daughters may have! Be grateful that Uma was not married into a family that could have burnt her to death in order to procure another dowry!" (83) But her parents did not pay any attention to such advice, neither they felt guilty about their error of judgment that ruined Uma's life.

Ultimately, at the first opportunity, Uma is married and immediately after her marriage, she confronts reality and comes to know that her husband was already married and he needed money to improve the deteriorated condition of his pharmaceutical factory and that made him marry Uma. Such incidents in the life of Uma expose the gruesome reality of patriarchal system and the negligent attitude of her parents toward her future. Though Uma is never free to take decisions of her life but ultimately, only she is blamed for all the disastrous events that took place in her life. Her father often grumbles about the monetary expenses incurred on the dowry given at her marriage, but it would be a meagre amount in comparison to the money spent on Arun's education abroad. But the father never complained about it. The gender discrimination is clearly discernible in this attitude.

Thus, "Uma's life becomes a series of furtive flights, attempts to escape from the fate which seems to be enclosing upon her life."[4] Her parents are partially responsible for that because they never provided her any opportunity to establish her identity or express her views. She is provided a chance by Dr. Dutt to display her ability but her parents deny her by saying that "as long as we are here to provide for her, she will never need to go to work." (143) It destroys all her chances of economic independence. She is not only providing a bond of emotional security to her parents, but also saving their expenses to hire a servant. Her status and position is that of a bonded labour with no financial commitment. So they never allow her to take decision, as

they know her independence would result in her revolt against such exploitation.

Besides Uma, there is another character Anamika whose life explicitly shows the atrocities of patriarchal system. She is the perfect amalgamation of mind and beauty, "even the adults looked on Anamika's glossy head, her thick dark braids and her big dreamy eyes, and smiled, sometimes sadly as if thinking how their own daughters and daughters-in-law could never measure up to this blessed one." (68) Her versatile personality seems brighter when she wins the scholarship to study at Oxford. But being a girl child that certificate is only a testimony of her intelligence and used as a showpiece to find a suitable groom for her. Ultimately an equally qualified suitor is found for her. Anamika gets married to him but he is totally insensitive to his wife and it seems as if he was a proud representative of society in which women are not considered as an individual but as subservient to men and the end of their life is to provide comfort to their husband and in-laws. A glimpse of it could be seen at the marriage ceremony. When the *saptapadi* ceremony was taking place Anamika looked at her husband, but realized:

> She was marrying the one person who was totally impervious to Anamika's beauty and grace and distinction. He was too occupied with maintaining his superiority. He raised his chin and his nose—which was long and sharp as a needle—and seemed to look over the top of her head as they exchanged heavy garlands of rose and jasmine, then sat before the ceremonial fire. (70)

Anamika's life is sacrificed at the altar of marriage where she is simply regarded as an interloper and ill-treated by her in-laws. After twenty years of marriage ultimately she is burnt to ashes but her in-laws give the form of suicide to her murder. Despite committing such heinous crime, her in-laws are not punished because Anamika's parents do not even file an FIR against them. They console themselves by saying: "God had willed it and it was Anamika's destiny." (151)

Anita Desai mocks at the cruel and callous attitude of parents who think that all their responsibilities are over the day their

daughter is married off while the son is treated as life-long asset. Besides Uma and Anamika, there is another significant character, Aruna, the younger sister of Uma. Though Uma and Aruna are reared in the same environment, the natural instincts and capabilities of Aruna protect her against her family environment. As an eldest child of the family, Uma had to undertake the family responsibilities but even then in all aspects of life Aruna is brighter than Uma. She learns everything instinctively. The most vital factor that has created a wide difference between the two sisters is 'education.' Aruna is educated while Uma has not completed even the primary education. Thus, being an educated woman, Aruna is more confident and vibrant. She regards her sister, Uma, as an object of shame and her attitude towards her reflects resentment. Relations are not the priority of Aruna's life but she is more conscious of maintaining her image. Thus, she believes in leading a life of pomp and show. Aruna's perception towards such life seems shallow to Uma, who felt pity for her and muses, "Was this the realm of ease and comfort for which Aruna had always pined and that some might say she had attained?" (109) But, according to modern perspective Aruna is the happiest being and upto some standard she has attained her goal in life. She is a person who enjoys her life and lives on her own terms.

Besides being educated, there is another aspect of Aruna's personality that turns her not only into a successful person but also makes her a mouthpiece of Anita Desai. Though both Anamika and Aruna are educated, Anamika fails to lead a successful life. She does not even protest against the injustice practised by her in-laws. Ultimately, her submissive nature becomes fatal for her and she is burnt alive. But, Aruna is bold, courageous, ambitious and desirous to achieve her goal in life. Anita Desai glorifies her personality by establishing a comparison between Anamika and Aruna:

> Aruna was pretty too, and in her case it was also evident quite early that her future would be bright, but there was a sharp edge to her prettiness, a harsh edge given to it by a kind of steely determination, a dogged ambitiousness, that seemed to be born of a des-

> peration. In Anamika there was no such thing: she was simply lovely as a flower is lovely, soft, petal-skinned, bumblebee-eyed, pink-lipped, always on the verge of bubbling dove-like laughter, loving smiles, and with a good nature like a radiance about her. Wherever she was, there was peace, contentment, and well-being. (67)

Thus, Anamika is perfect idol of feminine virtues but her character is devoid of such traits which make a person bold and courageous enough to speak against injustice. She is a mute sufferer. Uma's submissiveness and silence is tolerable because she is uneducated but Anamika is highly educated, still she seems helpless and pathetic creature because she is not allowed to take decisions. Anita Desai has presented her philosophy through Aruna who opposes even her mother in Anamika's case when her mother says, "how can she be happy if she is sent home? What will people say? What will they think?" (71) Aruna protests: "who cares what they say? Who cares what they think?" (71) This reaction of Aruna clearly reflects her determination, will power and her ability to express her inner self. Her will is dormant, unshakable and if once she has chosen something for herself, she will adhere to it as her perception about right and wrong is totally clear. This is what leads her to achieve her desired goals in life.

To sum up, Anita Desai establishes that it is the demand of time to educate the daughters and to develop confidence in them. Daughters are in no way inferior to sons and it is the duty of parents to inculcate strength of character and imbibe values in them. The necessity to change the present scenario of society cannot be underestimated. The parents should enable their daughters to think for themselves and to take self-decisions, which will certainly bring positive changes in their lives. Gender discrimination is the most severe injustice done to girls. Half of the globe is its victim and the parents who treat their daughters as inferior should realize to take cognizance from the words of Simon De Beauvoir, "one is not born but rather becomes a woman."[5] Equal treatment in the family and society is the only key to uplift the status of woman that will lead her to fulfillment.

NOTES

1. Andrew Robinson, "Families that Don't Function," *The Spectator*, 5 June 1999, p. 39.
2. Anita Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1999), p. 16.
3. Jasbir Jain, *Stairs of the Attic: The Novels of Anita Desai* (Jaipur: Printwell, 1999), p. 191.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
5. Simon De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. vi.

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Secularism as Syncretism in Nayantara Sahgal's *Lesser Breeds*

KANUPRIYA

Lesser Breeds by Nayantara Sahgal moves with polished ease from the Akbarabad of 1932 to post-Sixties New York, tracing the winding ways in the lives of characters grappling with the concept of non-violence in their political and personal lives. The surface glitter of the narrative, the lucently picked details of landscape, architecture, furniture and behaviour are as fascinating as the growth of Nurullah, an English teacher, into self-understanding in a journey that began with the effort to understand the relevance of non-violence. The reader is advised the line of least resistance as Sahgal's novel takes us through a tumultuous century of pre- and post-Independence India, maintaining a steady cadence of finely tuned words.

Nayantara Sahgal, by virtue of her Nehru lineage, has had a ringside view of some of the most significant events in the 20th century India, and her body of work, which includes books like *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, *Plans for Departure* and *Rich Like Us*, has been acclaimed for her boldness. A winner of the Sinclair Fiction Prize, and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Eurasia, Sahgal, 76, recently published her ninth novel, *Lesser Breeds*, which deals with racial hegemony, wars and the timeless appeal of non-violence. Sahgal pursues ideas with a subtle intelligence that never interferes with the vital sweep of action.

An image of pure sophistication, a member of the 'first family' of Indian politics, the Nehrus, novelist-essayist Nayantara Sahgal predictably oozes that old gentleness and restraint mannerism one identifies with a person from an erudite, well-to-do family. Frail and white-haired she is today, and may not be infused with the individualistic on-the-roll tact and dexterity

welled up by her illustrious mother, Vijaylakshmi Pandit, but with definitely enough steam and command to stack up an oeuvre well-heeled with award-winning novels, essays and political writings with a 'Point of View.' Dwelling in the calm and quiet of the Doon Valley for decades together with her recently-demised husband, Nayantara Sahgal has been silently authoring her works, providing the power of the pen at a time when, unlike today, perhaps the least number of books published in any language would have been in English. In fact, this writer of the autobiography with an interesting name, *Prison and Chocolate Cake* was remarkable in making entry into the arena of Indian writing in English at a time when not many women were writing.

"Books today have become another commodity. Commerce has entered so much into all aspects of our society that saving literature has become a near impossibility," says the writer in her typical restrained tone. Published by Harper Collins in 2003, the 375-page *Lesser Breeds* is an endeavour that hoists questions about non-violence, peace and oppression as pertinent today as in past decades. Weaving the story around a young English literature teacher Nurullah in the imaginary city of Akbarabad in 1932, her latest novel looks at non-violence during the freedom struggle till 1968, raising loaded questions like, is non-violence a lunatic's fantasy? Has it got any place in the world? Did it ever work in India? Shall we know about it?

Having no qualms about voicing utter sadness at the ongoing ferocious attack on the idea of India, of robbing the glory of Indian plural society through Hindu fanaticism, this favourite niece of Pandit Nehru likes to call herself a secularist. "I opposed Emergency too because I do not support dictatorship," comments this Sahitya Akademi awardee about her first cousin, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's decision of totalitarian rule. An ardent supporter of Nehruvian rule, Nayantara Sahgal calls Pandit Nehru a remarkable, civilized human being, a father figure to whom she looked up to after the demise of her father, R.S. Pandit, a great Sanskrit scholar, when she was only 16.

Sahgal took a long time to complete *Lesser Breeds*. In an interview to Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, she says: "writing for

me is a great anchor, a remedy for all kinds of crises, a feeling of consolation. Like an expecting mother, who carries out her normal work with increasing pregnancy, I too carry out my other works along with my writing," (*The Hindu*, 27 February 2003)

The Indian freedom struggle was a cocktail of the peaceful and the violent. Nayantara Sahgal has expressed her concern on the subject in her *Lesser Breeds*. While the book calls upon people to re-look at non-violence, especially in the face of American decision to go to war, Sahgal says that the anti-war demonstrations the world over prove her point. Regretting the fact that India was no longer a voice to be heard internationally on many issues, Sahgal said that earlier this country crackled with ideas. Now we don't have even a single anti-war demonstration. Writing fiction after a long break has been like a homecoming for her

Nurullah, aged twenty-three, teaches literature to first-years at the University of Akbarabad and encounters a non-violent resistance movement against British rule. "A born teacher, with a heart as well as a mind" (107) he does not realize whether he is a "Hindu or Muslim, lord or vassal" (50) and is blessed with a truly secular mind. He believes in "Teaching is give and take" (53) and keeps alive an inspiring eloquence regarding the Gandhian principles. He envisages himself to be "a man of the twentieth century" (30) who walks the earth by human reason.

Eknath, *a bon ami* of Nurullah, fails to perceive that turning a blind eye to the Gandhian principles is of no importance. He raises issues like a leading critic and progressive historian:

> it was violence that made a mark which accounted for all history being Europe's and Europe being master of the world. For savagery as a way of life the Europeans took the prize. (42)

Besides, he interrogates Nurullah, "Who rules the world? Whose history were you taught? Whose literature are you teaching?" (42) He admits that *ahimsa* is a great experiment. But he lays stress on military training. His soft spot is films on gangsters. He is an enthusiastic admirer of patriots. He says that only Japan in Asia has learnt Europe's lesson that "military power comes first." (209)

Nurullah builds a family relationship with Ammaji. He receives Ammaji for her purification dip in the Ganga river on *Makar Sankranti*. Both are faithful worshippers of Mahatma Gandhi. Ammaji, an extremely antagonist towards the British, utters about Churchill, "What does the poor man know about *langots* and how we revere fakirs that he calls them nauseating?" (41) Everyday she spends time on *charkha* and spins thread.

In the opinion of Suhasini Devi, an American missionary, Gandhi is "the Christ of the Indian road." (137) While Nurullah makes a profound impression on the voice from the hut saying, 'Non-violence is not submission, it is the soul's unvanquishable strength and power' or 'I want India to recognize she has a soul that cannot perish and that can rise triumphant above any physical weakness' or 'Strength comes from an indomitable will.' (44)

Nurullah gets wind from a fearless volunteer in a mob, who alleges regretfully, "*ahimsa* turns them into mad dogs." (20) There are many incidents of *himsa*. The mob devastates the National Bank in Amritsar and murders the manager, Mr. Stewart, and the accountant, Mr. Scott. Another mob kills the manager of the Alliance Bank, Mr. Thomson. The furious mob sets fire to the railway station with the ultimatum, "*Takht lo ya takhta*." (95)

Akbarabad, "the soil of Din Ilahi, Akbar-e-Azam's Divine Faith," (367) falls into the hands of mutineers. The mutineers join the mob that despoil and ignite European residences. The mob throws down telegraph poles. Farmers remove fishplates from the rail tracks. A crowd encompasses the jail, sets at liberty prisoners, marches to the district headquarters and announces the district independent in Ballia. The *himsa* spreads at the university. The Vice Chancellor orders to close the university for a week, because of poor attendance. Students burn the Union Jack. Two students are put to death by police firing on the street. Even Pete Ryder undergoes unpleasant moments about the violent uprisings in 1942 and feels that these are considerable setback to *ahimsa*.

Anthony Eden perceives that bombing befit an effective strategy to keep law and order in various parts of the world. But the British has made breach in treaties with tribes and has forced

them to migrate. Nurullah comes across in a book the claim of William Sherman, the 19th century U.S. General: the "more Indians we kill this year, the less we will have to kill next year." (120) Even the Europeans hold, "Nothing's happening in India. India isn't news" (171) and India is "so *complicated*." (349) Nurullah discloses about Europe,

> What a saga of kinship gone wrong was Europe—of brother against brother, of cousinly betrayals, of rampaging rivalries and ferocious bloodletting such as had never before been caused to flow across the earth's expanse. A word that invoked terror. Where had Europe ever gone in peace? (146)

Sir Mortimer points out, "I could not but feel the pride of the power of the sword." (188) But Hilary assures that the imperial fabric rested on the Christian moral code. "Christianity was the keystone of the imperial arch and the bedrock of imperial power." (271).

Nurullah questions Bhai, "Is ahimsa going to change anything? What use is non-violence?" (108) Even Eknath is absolutely hopeless about *ahimsa*: "We couldn't even get violent enough to overthrow our occupier because we got trained in non-violence." (362-63) It demonstrates a significant influence of the Gandhian thought on the Indian culture and society.

Lesser Breeds brings to light perspectives on ethnocentrism, which have been characterized in India with the witness of the crucial developments from 1932 to 1968.The ethnocentric mentality is that "the kind of world it was, made up of Europe and the lesser whom Europe had a right to rule." (153) Edgar comments,

> Fairytales do have some pretty ghastly endings. My sister says their most horrific punishments are designed for those whom Kipling called the lesser breeds. (184-85)

The book ends in 1968 with a lookback and a reconsideration by the man Nurullah has now become. It seems to him a bizarre way for an occupied country to confront an empire in a violent unequal world—one more wrong turn, among others, that Indian history has taken.

Nayantara Sahgal has taken off her genteel gloves, and soaked us in the solar plexus with a book which, in scope and stature, literally takes our breath away. Combining history and fiction in a contemporary cocktail is a tough act, more so when the novel not only delves into acrimonious issues such as the partition of India but unveils dissonance in "sacrosanct" ideologies like non-violence and religious fundamentalism. Akbarabad in the novel sounds suspiciously like Allahabad, while the grand house seems like Anand Bhavan, the Nehru home. Anand Bhavan did become a symbol of the freedom struggle, although no massacre occurred at its gates, as in the book. Sahgal named the city Akbarabad, as Akbar holds a special place in Indian history. He is one of the few who tried to forge a syncretism among the people in India.

Interviewed by Nistula Hebbar about her books that talk of discrimination against 'lesser breeds,' Nayantara Sahgal says that when she was growing up, most of humanity was considered a lesser breed. Anything outside of the master race of Europeans was considered low. As a child she remembers asking her father whether non-violence would rid India of the British. He replied that war is never an answer and that one always goes back to the negotiating table once a conflict is over, so why not begin with that.

'India is not just a mystical entity belonging to Hindus but a pluralistic society. The Hindu fanatics are destroying this,' says Nayantara Sahgal. As an adult, she is convinced that it is the only way out. Now, with anti-war protests sweeping Europe and America, one should realize the truth of *ahimsa*. In fact the ideals of Gandhian values have formed the basis of her approach to all personal as well as political problems. Sahgal shows her unflinching faith in Gandhian principles of universal love, fearlessness and non-violence in her works. The genius of Gandhi, she feels, lay in his awareness of people. Hence, the Gandhian values are the only answer to the present-day problems. To Sahgal non-violence may remain a potent force if used in an organized way.

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'Ball' to 'Call': A Paradigm Shift in Language Acquisition

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Languages were acquired, learnt and spoken long before they began to be taught through instructional programmes in academies. Since times immemorial people are using their fingers to count, and palm-leaves and styluses to write. Later paper was used to record information and abacuses and then calculators to count. Classrooms used books and notebooks to build knowledge. With the advent of printing and the multiplicability of the written word, there was increased access to reference sources, and knowledge in all fields came to be imparted through printed books which ensured a mass reach never before possible in the history of human life. Teacher-controlled classroom; BALL (Book Assisted Language Learning), added another ingredient to the alphabet soup! Book has been the staple of learners for centuries. It has its advantages. It is portable; the learner can enter notes on the margins, search the book using its index, highlight text where appropriate, and follow the outline of the text by looking at the headings and sub-headings. Print materials have been the main vehicles for the spread of education for about three hundred years now. Language education followed the path of heavy bag of school textbooks and notebooks for reading and writing, as there was a heavy information load in other disciplines, the content load of language instruction also became its predominant feature. There is scepticism as to whether computers can contribute to the learning of English, which is a humanities subject. Have not people learnt languages for years without the use of technology? Jones and Fortescue[1] voice the concern of teachers in the following words: "Teachers who themselves mastered a foreign language with the aid of

nothing more technical than a book, blackboard and chalk are now expected to be able to use slide projectors, OHP, Cassette Recorders, Language Laboratories, VCP/VCR and now computers." The disuse of the language laboratory is also cited as an example of the failure of technology. In reply to all these charges, it will be shown how technology has got certain benefits for language teachers. "What we can do with technology is much more important than what technology can do for us."[2]

In traditional classrooms, bright students find the pace very slow, and weak students find it too fast. The teacher is in tight corners to know which level he should aim at. But with the revolution in the field of Information Technology or IT all aspects of our life and lifestyle are changing. CAI or Computer Assisted Instruction became a topic of great interest to educators. CALL or Computer Assisted Language Learning, is an offshoot of this effort. Computer Assisted Learning is a way of teaching a particular subject using the computer as a medium. CAL uses attractive pictures, animations, music and human voices in the background, which make it livelier and get the undivided attention of the students. The online environment provides both the inexperienced and the experienced teachers updated materials that are easy to adapt for use in the classroom. CALL has provided a new lease of life to the language teachers. Language teachers today, have the opportunity of combining a variety of materials to help them in the process of developing the language skills of learners. The flexibility and adaptability of course materials for language instruction with the availability of online resources offers a wider choice for the language teachers.

Multimedia computers have given us the ability to work with all types of information, not just text and still images. Since all types of information exist in digital form, they can easily be processed, stored in or retrieved from databases, copied without loss of quality, or shared over the IP (Internet Protocol) networks. The possibility of using different media in one single interface has exciting prospects for the teaching and learning of English. We can make provisions for a variety of instructional options, learner choices and a high degree of interactivity. This

will enable the learners to adapt the learning experiences to his/her own needs interests and learning styles.

Paul Brett in his article on "Multimedia for Listening Comprehension"[3] points out how computers can be used interactively by providing learner choices in the following areas:

- Content: of what to watch or listen to, and how much
- Mode: video or audio mode, and either supported or not subtitles
- Activity: whether or not to complete tasks
- Type of tasks: comprehension tasks or language awareness tasks
- Difficulty: a choice among several levels of graded tasks
- Level of support: to use subtitles or not to use hypertext or not
- Sequence: learner choice of the next activity
- Time and place of learning: learner control over stop/start of input
- Guidance: through use of online help

Computers must be integrated effectively in the language classroom. Suitable instructional material must be used. A teacher who uses a computer for language teaching can become a language diagnostician, info-gatherer for software programmes, course content developer, evaluator of learning performances, home based instruction designer and targeted distance educator. Language is not a meccano set, in which we assemble pieces into a specified form; it is a creation of the user. Reinforcement of the old type should be avoided: there is no reward but the satisfaction of using language to perform a communicative act. The old approach of "Wrong, try again!" should be avoided too. The target language should be used in context, and this should be done both in interaction of learner with computer and in learner-learner interaction. The word *interactive* is central to CALL. Interaction has to be both on-screen and off-screen.

For the presentation of interactive learning materials, the computer is best seen as tool, or as workhorse. The learner is in control and the computer is used by him in various ways. John Higgins, a pioneer in CALL, has drawn a distinction between 'computer as magister' and 'computer as pedagogue.' The magister controls what happens in the learning process; but the pedagogue encourages learners to explore and discover language by themselves. This latter approach would lead to acquisition rather than learning. CALL material, like most other ELT material, became more and more skill-oriented. Practising skills involved grappling with meaning, and not merely repetition and drill. In many course units, the computer served as the stimulus to language use. The learner was encouraged to use language in speech, writing, problem solving, evaluation and other meaningful tasks. A task or project is more meaningful, less mechanical to the learner, than repetitious practice in the forms of language. Role-play, simulation and communication games could engage the learner's mind and give him the feeling that he was not merely parroting his lessons but taking part in a communicative act. The integration of various elements of language and of the various computer resources has been made possible by modern computer technology.

There has been a paradigm shift in ways of knowing and sharing knowledge. The textbook could be one of the resources but its centrality in the curriculum stands strongly challenged. The Internet provides authentic updated materials on all subjects and is supported by hyperlinks and hypermedia. Thus while illustrations in a conventional textbook depend on the collaborative effort of the editor and the artist, we now have access to graphics and illustrations along with the text or in frames that can be linked to the text. The language teacher thus has limitless resources for every kind of classroom need. The dictionary and the encyclopedia are also at hand and can be excellent resources while reading. The Internet revolution has enabled greater access to self-learning thus empowering the learner. Martin A. Siegal (1999) describes the paradigm shift effected by web-based instruction as a movement from a closed information architecture

(book, diskette, video disk, or CD ROM), which is finite and frozen in time to an open, ever-changing and ever expanding information architecture, which has access to a global network like the internet.

There are chances of exploitation of computer technology but it has been done only to a meagre degree in actual learning programmes. But still the potential is there. A balance has to be found between teacher-controlled and learner-controlled learning. When autonomous learners decide to find their own learning route on the computer or the internet, there is the danger that they will be distracted by the profusion of links that they find on the screen. They will get caught in the cobweb that surrounds the Web. It is the teacher who should make sure that some guidance is provided to the learner to follow the most effective browsing route. If CD ROMs are to be used, it is important not to overawe the learner with the profusion of CDs. The teacher can select simple software, which does not clutter the screen, which the learner can easily navigate. Therefore it might be helpful if the teacher pre selects and presents a collage of the activities that the learners could work on without directly accessing the networked media as a preamble to their engagement therein. The teacher could explain where she/he found the materials as a trigger to make learners move towards greater autonomy. This would be helpful to them not only for language learning but will enable them to transfer language skills to other disciplines of knowledge.

Teachers are in a crucial position in language teaching and language learning. They are the people who operate in the field and need to take on-the-spot decisions when the materials in use do not yield results. In recent times, the classroom teacher has been expected to take on the role of materials writer, which implies that the teacher needs to be a researcher too. Not all teachers can write, but most of them are capable of making selections based on learners' needs and wants. The online environment provides both novitiate and experienced teachers updated materials that are easy to adapt for use in the classroom. From a materials development point of view, the new environment gives

teachers extraordinary flexibility in accessing, preparing and reviewing course materials.

Although multimedia lessons exhibit a high degree of sophistication incorporating the new technology, in actual classroom situations, we have to aspire for much simple lessons, considering the limited resources available and the large size of the classes. Authoring tools can be prepared for the use of teachers who want to produce their own interactive learning materials. Teachers may find themselves more at home with the old model of multiple-choice and pattern drill. Thus, on all fronts, we need to streamline CALL material to effective use in a real classroom, with its considerable limitations. In India, budgetary resources will be a major constraint. Expertise however is not lacking: on the technology side, India enjoys the advantage of having vast human resources in the field of IT. The time is not far when our schools and colleges will have sufficient hardware support for the implementation of modest programmes of CALL to start with; and then we can make bigger strides.

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English Language Teaching Learning in India: Positions and Propositions

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English is a *sine qua non* for human progress and prosperity in the world of twenty-first century inching towards a global village. It is virtually a *summum bonum* for mankind living and breathing on the planet called 'earth.' It is significant to note that English figures among top twenty languages of the world. Chinese stands first with 1000 million people speaking it. English stands second with 350 million people speaking the language. It occupies the first position as far as official language status is concerned. It is the official language of 140 million people and it has produced great scholars and writers. Non-English masters of the language in nations other than Britain have contributed to the growth of English Language and literature. English has the first language or second language status in 70 countries of the world including India. In fact, English has ceased to be the sole possession of the English and without any doubt, it is a global language having tremendous potentiality of adaptability and effective communication.

When we achieved independence in 1947, our political leaders, philosophers and thinkers felt the need for a common language which could be used as a link language for the entire country. In view of the necessity of English language for the progress and peace in the country, it was decided under Article 343 of the Indian Constitution that Hindi in Devnagari script is the official language of the union but English will continue as an associate official language of the Union for 15 years from the date of adoption of the constitution. Stressing the need for English Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, observes: "We are driven to English principally because we

know it a good deal, we have people who can teach it and because it is the most important language in the world today."

It is quite obvious that English has assumed very significant place in our country because of its threefold purposes—as a national link language, as an international link language and as a library language.

We teach English to our students with certain aims and objectives in mind. We want to enable the students to understand, speak, read and write English correctly. In short, our broad objectives are the development of LSRW which are considered to be the basic language skills in any ELTL programme. We aim at LSRW so that our students are able to communicate in English as and when they need to do so. The specific objectives of teaching English may be summed up as developing in the learners the following skills:

- To understand English with ease when spoken at normal conversational speed.
- To speak English correctly and fluently.
- To read with comprehension and at a reasonable speed so as to use it as a library language for gathering information and for enjoying reading.
- To write neatly and correctly at a reasonable speed.
- To enjoy poems, short stories and other literary genres in English.
- To acquire knowledge of the elements of English for practical command of the language.
- To translate common English words, phrases and sentences into the functional equivalents in mother tongue and vice-versa.
- To develop interest in English language in its totality.

Hence, the major objectives of English language teaching learning are to develop the four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). Now the question is whether our students really become proficient in the use of LSRW skills, whether they can communicate in English as and when the situation demands.

It is a common feeling among teachers, parents, educators, experts as well as students that English language learning is not happening in our schools and colleges and the teaching of English is fraught with apathy, disinterest, loss of motivation and intellectual resistance. Most of the problems in teaching English in this country are due to the following factors (R.S. Sharma):

- Large classes, insufficient infrastructural facilities and inefficient and / or inadequate teachers.
- Absence of detailed spelling out of the nature of higher-order language skills and sub-skills.
- Lack of reliable feedback and dependable research related to local needs.
- Failure to go ahead with curricular reforms and the dominance of the status quo.
- Unrealistic courses which do not take into account the learners' entry behaviour and the desired terminal behaviour.
- Almost total negligence of the learners' needs and aspirations and the national needs.
- Inadequate opportunities for task-specific in-service training and subject up gradation.
- Undue interference with policies and, matters pertaining to education in general and teaching English in particular by those who are the least competent to participate in deliberations.
- Unthoughtful adherence to teaching learning models developed in other countries, where the English language teaching situation is different from India

It is, however, remarkable to point out that some considerable efforts have been made to improve the English language teaching learning scene in India. For over four decades CIEFL, RIES, ELTS and some university teaching departments have been trying their best to ameliorate the prevailing sorry state of affairs. To put it differently, the learners of English language and the teachers of English are the essential elements which need to make a cumulative effort leading to an over all change in ELTL programme.

As per the National Education Policy (1986 and 1992) the teacher is the most influential factor in the entire system of education and the role of the teacher is of facilitator in the teaching-learning process. The language teacher assumes a greater significance because language is regarded the greatest achievement of human intelligence and the *tour de force* of all subjects. English in our country is considered a global language and hence the English teacher enjoys a place of distinction in Indian society.

The first important thing to bear in mind as language teacher is that language teaching has to be different from the teaching of non-language subjects because the teacher's concern in language teaching is to help the learners acquire language skills (LSRW) rather to pass on the information. He/ She should present himself as a role model of a good teacher of English language. A good English teacher first improves his/her pronunciation and acquires fluency through practice and by listening to good models of spoken English such as the varieties of English used in the news bulletins of BBC, the voice of America etc., as well as by some individual speakers of English.

Nevertheless, a good teacher of English language tries to insure pupils' participation in all the classroom activities and provides ample scope to the students to interact among themselves and with the teacher. He gives lots of opportunities to the students to practise English. He also keeps records of the mistakes made by the students and takes corrective measures. He takes interest in arranging debates, extempore speech competitions, seminars, symposia etc. in English every now and then for students. A few suggestions for English teachers are as follows:

- Teachers should make the students speak, read and write good English.
- Teachers should do some translation from English to Indian languages and vice versa.
- Teachers should practise writing English so that their students will emulate and imitate them. They can write letters to the editors, reviews, articles and try their hands in creative literature also.

- Teachers should do some research in English and make every effort to publish the same.

A critical and careful analysis of English language teaching-learning in the country reveals the fact that the existing state of ELTL programme in terms of learners achievement in not satisfactory and the factors responsible for this sorry state include non-availability of standard textbooks, lack of clear-cut goals, shortage of well-trained and dedicated teachers, lack of suitable teaching-learning technical resources, unrealistic evaluation system and dearth of innovative techniques and methods to handle English language effectively in actual classroom situation. English teaching needs a sympathetic handling along with the application of appropriate approaches and audio-video aids right from the school stage. English should be taught as a language not as a subject and the teacher has to be competent in the basic language skills by going through latest materials and attending various training programmes on English language organized from time to time by ELT institutes in the country and abroad.

Proficiency is not enough, a considerable amount of dedication on part of the English teacher is essential because lack of commitment destroys everything. English has acquired the status of a living and breathing language used for national and international communication. The evaluation of the English language should be skill-based, continuous, life-related, using multiple techniques and should be used for improvement in learning communicative ability of the students. It may be reaffirmed that the teacher's role in promoting ELTL programme is of paramount importance and a conducive atmosphere of cultivating communicative skill in English can be easily created in our educational institutions with knack, knowledge and commitment. Let every teacher be a facilitator and English language learning a joyful experience.

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Quest for a Poetic Idiom in a Postcolonial Space: A Reading of Nissim Ezekiel's "Very Indian Poems"

LATA CHATURVEDI

This paper on Nissim Ezekiel will raise issues which relate to the use of English as a medium of creative expression in the postcolonial context. It will argue how Ezekiel in his "Very Indian Poems in Indian English" had reshaped English to articulate a specific Indian sensibility. He is perhaps the first Indian poet in English who has paid a focused and persistent attention to the craftsmanship along with his subject matter.

Language is one of the subtlest and most dynamic means by which a poet's vision is made manifest in a tangible form. Throughout his poetic career Ezekiel has successfully wielded English as a medium of creative expression. The range, variety, themes, attitudes, and voice of Indian English poetry have remarkably changed in the recent years.

His "Very Indian Poems" illustrate how the process of nativization of English may enable a poet writing in a postcolonial space more fully and intimately belong to the Indian society which he portrays. English in India has failed to achieve the individuality and liveliness of usage, which one can detect in the other non-native varieties of English, as one can sense in African or West Indian writing. That is precisely why Ezekiel's experimentation with the creative resources of English in his "very Indian poems" becomes commendable. As Parthsarathy has observed, there is "the absence of a linguistically respectable variety of Indian English" and there is no special Indian English idiom either.[1]

In the present century one can safely contend that there does, indeed, exist an entity, rather a phenomenon which can be called

Indian English. This has now become as recognizable variety of English as American English, Australian English or New Zealand English, with of course the difference that while those others are native varieties of English, Indian English is a non-native variety. Varieties like Indian English can better be known as interference varieties because they bear marks of the influence or interference of the mother tongue of the speakers. A representative Indian English poet like Nissim Ezekiel has grappled with the resources of Indian English not merely for parodic, ironic and humorous purposes but for creating far more serious effects. His poems like "The Patriot," "The Professor," "The Railway Clerk," "Good-Bye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S." "Soap" and "Irani Restaurant Instructions" serve as a paradigm case. Ezekiel has made a sincere effort to give expression to Indian culture and milieu

His 'Very Indian Poems' reverberate with the characteristic Indian habits. "Good-bye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.," for instance, depicts Indians who suffer from xenophilia and are always curious to visit a foreign country to improve their prospects. Cast in the form of an address during the farewell, the poem puts on record a rambling and highly patterned Indian way of speech. As it is realized in the following address of the speaker,

> You are all knowing friends,
> What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa,
> I don't mean only external sweetness,
> But internal sweetness,
> Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling
> Even for no reason,
> But simply because she is feeling. . . .
> Now I ask others to speak
> and afterwards Miss Pushpa
> will do summing up.
> Coming back to Miss Pushpa,
> She is most popular lady,
> With men also and ladies also. (*CP*, 190)

'The Patriot' again is contemptuous of the new generation's craze for 'fashion and foreign thing.'

> But modern generation is neglecting—
> Too much going for fashion and foreign thing. (CP, 237)

'The professor' avows the necessity of keeping pace with the changing times.

> We have to change with times,
> Whole world is changing. (*CP*, 239)

The Railway clerk's predicament looks pathetic in an amoral setting.

> My wife is always asking for more money.
> Money, money where to get money. (*CP*, 184)

The shopkeeper's behaviour is 'Soap' makes the customer reflect.

> Some people are not having manners.
> This I am always observing, (*CP*,268)

The most conspicuous and highly recurrent syntactic feature in Ezekiel's very Indian poems is -ing form which is invariably used in all contexts and for all tenses. In 'The Patriot' the speaker is obsessed with his concern for the present progressive tense.

> I am standing for peace and non-violence
> Why world is fighting, fighting,
> Why all people of world are not following Mahatma Gandhi.
> I am simply not understanding.
> Ancient wisdom is 100% correct.
> I should say even 200% correct.
> Other day I'm reading in newspaper
> (Every day I'm reading *Times of India*,
> To improve my English language)
> How one goonda fellow
> Throw stone at Indirabehn
> Must be student unrest fellow,
> I am thinking Friends, Romans, Countrymen,
> I am saying (to myself)

Lend me the ears.
Everything is coming-
Regeneration, Remuneration, Contraception,
Be patiently, brothers and sisters. (*CP*, 237)

Here one comes across many syntactical features of Indian English. For instance, the use of the progressive (-ing) form for stative verb which are not used in the progressive in finite verb phrases e.g. "I am standing for peace," "I am not understanding." Quite strikingly, again 'ing' form is irreparably used in all contexts and for all tenses in these poems. The omission of articles like (the) modern Generation (the) newspaper, threw (a) stone is common in the poem. One comes across certain other interesting features like the use of transitive verbs without objects 'Modern generation is neglecting' and an extended use of nouns and noun phrases as premodifiers for nouns in hybrid formation like 'one goonda fellow,' 'student unrest fellow,' the cases of semantic shift like 'Be patiently' i.e. have patience, total teetotaller, completely teetotaller, are found. Like his readymade solution to the problem of world peace gush forth the unusual interrogative sentences "you want one glass lassi?" "What do you think of prospects of world peace?" "All men are brothers, no? you are going?" The patriot's comforting and slipshod idea gets sustenance from literary pilfering, "Friends, Romans, Countrymen/ lend me the ears." The speaker is not able to get rid of his obsession for the vital present progressive. As he says.

Pakistan behaving like this,
China behaving like that.
It is making me very sad,
I am telling you really, most harassing me. (*CP*, 237)

His is a portrait of a confused mind, which has withdrawn into a parody of Gandhism. Here is a patriot who mistakes platitudes for thought and action. In modern India his only solution to national problems is to have lassi and talk of brotherly love. The clichés, triteness, and unintended puns in his Indian English only add up to his pretence and confusion.

Remarkably enough, Ezekiel has always been interested in drama. He has written these poems presenting a clear-cut solution evocatively visualized in which one or more characters are seen to perform. In the monologues in poems like "The Patriot" and "The Professor," one comes across characters visualized clearly as a type. 'The Professor' sets another realistic example of mental confusion and superficiality.

> Remember me? I am Professor Sheth.
> Once I taught you geography. Now
> I am retired. . . .
> By God's grace, all my children
> Are well settled in life.
> Every family must have black sheep. . . .
> Sarla and Tarala are married,
> Their husbands are very nice boys,
> You won't believe but I have eleven grandchildren.
> How many issues you have? Three?
> That is good; these are days of family planning. . . .
> This year I am sixty nine.
> and hope to score century.
> You were so thin, like stick.
> Now you are man of weight and consequence. (*CP*, 238-39)

The poem imitates the idiolectal features of English used by Gujarati-influenced speakers. The speaker's obsession with the present progressive tense for the simple present tense, an un-English collocation of lexical items, and literal translation of phrases and idioms provide humour. His speech is in perfect defiance of the rules of grammar.

> 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)

Language reveals the speaker's mind and the social context. Unlike their creator Ezekiel who is acutely conscious and aware of the Indian social reality, here we come across characters who are reluctant to acknowledge reality. Needless to say that wit and humour flow spontaneously from these poems.

The railway clerk's Indian English speaks of his poor socio-economic condition. His speech perfectly announces his helplessness.

It's not my fault.
I do what I'm told
but still I'm blamed.
Every day there is so much of work
and I don't get overtime.
I wish I was bird

I am never neglecting my responsibility,
I am discharging it properly.
I am doing my duty,
but who is appreciating?
No body, I am telling you. (*CP*, 184)

He finds himself caught by the ensnaring clutches of circumstances. That's why he curbs his ambition of visiting a foreign country.

The railways clerk's language is a variety of Indian English which drops a preposition, article, and connectives where it is invariably used. The same syntactic patterns have been replicated. Reduplication and the use of superfluous words mark his speech. Constructions like discharging (responsibility) and hackneyed expressions like 'twice refused' are difficult to find in British or American English.

Some of the most pronounced features of Indian English again find their way in another, small poem "Irani Restaurant Instructions." The poem interestingly compresses semantic shift in 'spoiling floor,' clichés and platitude. The Indian English of the speaker illustrates his confusion quite effectively.

Do not write letter
without order refreshment
Do not comb
Hair is spoiling floor
Do not make mischiefs in cabin
Our waiter is reporting
come again
All are welcome whatever caste

> If not satisfied tell us
> Otherwise tell others
> God is great. (*CP*, 240)

Needless to say that in Ezekiel's "very Indian poems" India has become a reality which can be seen, felt and experienced and so is his use of Indian English.

The dominant urge to speak English lies dormant in the colonized and at times it results in ridiculous speech patterns. The speaker in "Soap" voices the colonial fancy at the cost of Hindi, the national language .

> So I'm saying very, politely—
> Though in Hindi, I'm saying it,
> and my Hindi is not so good as my English. . . .
> That shopman is saying, . . .
> still I'm keeping my temper. . . .
> Please to note this defect in soap,
> and still he is denying the truth,
> so I'm getting very angry that time.
> and with loud voice I am saying
> YOU ARE BLIND OR WHAT? . . .
> What you will show me
> Which I haven't got already?
> It is vulgar thing to say
> But I am saying it.
> Now small crowd is collecting
> And shopman is much bigger than me.
> And I am not caring so much. . . .
> All right OK all right OK
> This time I will take
> But not next time. (*CP*, 269)

This obsession for English is reflected in a variant of Indian English that is replete with lexico-syntactical deviations, strange collocations (vulgar thing), repetitions and semantic shift. English, the language of the colonizer and powerful, has been engraved on the Indian psyche. Indians, by and large, find it difficult to get rid of this hankering and striving for not only its use but acquiring proficiency and competence. Ezekiel, who has been hailed as the 'patriarch" of Indian English poetry, has can-

onized Indian writing in English as one of the major forces of Literatures in English. As he himself confesses quite unequivocally during the course of an interview: "I regard myself essentially as an Indian poet writing in English. I have a strong sense of belonging not only to India, but to this city. I would never leave Bombay—It's a series of commitments."[4]

Significantly enough, the text of these poems presents a socio-linguistic profile of speakers of Indian English. But it must be observed that unlike the novelist Raja Rao in *Kanthapura*, Ezekiel is not going to invent an English of his own but he is simply employing an available Indian English which brings its social context into the poem.

Many critics have denounced Ezekiel's Indian English poems as mere caricatures. Parthasarathy is discerning enough to think that after Joseph Furtado, Ezekiel is the only poet who is serious in his consideration of "the use of pidgin English." After pointing our that "some of the poems imitate the ideolectal features of English used by Gujarati speakers" he dismisses them as never rising "above caricature."[5] Vilas Sarang could only find that here "Indian English is used only for humour and satire and not as a legitimate vehicle for poetry."[6]

Unfortunately these eminent critics have neglected the fact that these poems stem out of and reflect particular Indian experiences. Ezekiel seems to foreground the reality that English has travelled a long way in Indian English poetry as it has served a variety of purposes. It is in this appropriation that Ezekiel has made the English language bear the weight and texture of multiplicity of sources of languages.

NOTES

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Partition in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*

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Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* portrays vividly the horrors of the partition. It shows how the masses fell prey and puppets to the clever, self-centred and power-wielding politicians. It shows the mass exodus of millions of people. In an objective way, the novelist sees the hand of every one—the English and the indwellers of the subcontinent—for creating tragic events. History is reproduced to show how the events led to tragic and terrible psychological consequences.

The novel opens on June 3, 1947. People were eager to know the Viceroy Mountbatten's plan of the partition of the country. "The plan for the transfer of power to India spelt out the procedure in detail."[1] Lala Kanshi Ram, the protagonist of the novel, intutively felt the dangers at the unfolding of the plan. The quiet life and harmonious living without any prejudice for language were, people feared, at stake. The mental make up of the people in general is revealed by the novelist through the chief character: "Kanshi Ram hated the British, he wanted them to quit India. He loved the national heroes—Gandhiji, Nehru and Bhagat Singh. He longed to be a revolutionary. He wanted the defeat of the British at the hands of the Germans. He remembered Jallianwalla Bagh—the embodiment of the inhuman acts of the British. He feared the horrible consequences "if the English agree to give Pakistan to Jinnah."[2] The only hope of the people at the time was Gandhi who was expected not to agree to the division of the country. But, men like Kanshi Ram's faith in Gandhi was shaken. They feared the division in the British plan. They knew the alien rulers's plan of 'divide and rule' and later of 'divide and quit.' They feared that the English "would rather divide than leave behind a united India."

The idea of giving to the Muslims a section in the East of India and a section in the West, and the talk of a common defence and foreign policy, obviously, dawned upon Jinnah the possibility of realisation of his desire. The offer gave Jinnah a vision of a separate state: "Until then Jinnah had talked of Pakistan but he did not quite know what he meant by it. Gandhi, by going to him, not only gave Pakistan a name, he gave Jinnah a name too." Nahal observes that the offer gave Jinnah and the Muslims to hopefully "go for complete separation." Nahal, thus, stays true to history and shows the fear of the ensuing partition. He surveys the national scene and analyses "the Gandhi-Rajaji offer to Jinnah, its pernicious results, the February 1947 announcement of the British saying that no later than June 1948 India would be free, their hurry to quit India, and the hollowness of the Congress' promise to shed the last drop of blood before conceding the partition."[3] The announcement of the June 3 plan created fear in the Hindus living in the sensitive areas. "If Pakistan is created, we'll have to leave. That is, if the Muslims spare our lives." (41) "There has been much killing going on for the past many months. Imagine what will happen once they [Muslims] are in power." (41) The plan gave a rude shock to Gandhi's and the Congress's emphatic assertion that "India was a single nation not two." (48) The old harmony suddenly gave way to hatred and riots. The League made the Muslims aware of the threat to them in a free Hindu India. Jinnah repeatedly reminded the Muslims of this threat and asked them to view their Hindu neighbours with suspicion. The Hindus, living in the areas likely to fall in Pakistan feared doom, the Muslims looked cheerful and ready to fall on the Hindus. The plan stunned people. The Hindus felt shocked and angry. The Muslims in West Punjab felt jubilant and exploded fire-crackers. They shouted slogans in favour of Pakistan, took out processions and indulged in violence killing, burning and torturing the Hindus.

After Gandhiji's September 1944 meeting with Jinnah, Jinnah told Durga Das, "You see Gandhi has defined Pakistan for me. . . . Gandhi asked me whether it would be a state whose policy on defence and external affairs could be in conflict with

India's. I had only to answer yes."[4] Giving the reason for his spurning the Wavell Plan, Jinnah told Durga Das. "Am I a fool to accept this when I am offered Pakistan on a platter." (216) On the 11th July, "Wavell announced that his private confabulations with Jinnah had failed."[5] Showing the British hand in bringing about the partition of India, Durga Das observes that Jinnah "was expected to announce his final decision on the Viceroy's [Wavell's] proposals to the Press at his hotel lounge. A few moments earlier he had, however, received a message as message from the 'cell' of British Civil Servants in Simla, which was in tune with the diehards in London that if Jinnah stepped out of the talks he would be rewarded with Pakistan." (216)

Talking of Mountbatten's plan, his going to London to seek its approval and the genesis of choosing August 15 as the Independence Day, Durga Das remarks: "Mountbatten left for London on 14th May with the agreement reached with the Congress and League leaders and suggested to Attlee that the date for the transfer of power be advanced from June 1948 to 15th August, 1947 (I was told he chose 15th August because the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies on this date in 1945. Attlee approved both the agreement and the change of date, and a vastly pleased, Mountbatten returned to New Delhi in time to meet the Indian leaders on 2nd June." (54) Durga Das gives Patel's views to show, what Nahal asserts, that the Rajaji-Gandhi offer of 1944 made Jinnah a hero of the Muslims. Patel commented: "Gandhi must bear part of the blame for the unhappy developments. Why did he listen to his samaddhi (son's father-in-law, namely C.R.) and hold talks with Jinnah? This recognition had "made a hero of Jinnah in Muslims' eyes! Had not Gandhi talked of self determination for the Muslims? Why only for them?"[6] Highlighting the evil effects of 1944 offer, Nahal comments:

> Who took Jinnah seriously before September 1944? It was doubtful if he took himself seriously, either ever since then he had been sharpening his teeth and becoming more and more menacing. If the Congress would give this much, why not go for complete separation. (73)

Nahal shows that the announcement of June 3 gave sudden rise to communal riots. The mob busied itself in killing and firing. The assurance from the leaders to effect the partition without any panic and violence and with full protection from the government looked and proved meaningless. The reality of Pakistan filled people with fear. The Muslims celebrated the acceptance of Pakistan with determination "to make the meaning of that acceptance apparent enough."[7] Violence looked writ large on the faces. Jinnah had already carried his fight into the streets by ordering the observance of Direct Action Day on 16th August, "This was the signal for the great killings in Calcutta (about 5,000 killed, 15,000 injured) and for sporadic outbursts of violence and incendiarism elsewhere."[8] The days following the announcement of the plan on June 3 witnessed mass communal violence. Durga Das observes: "Now that partition was a settled fact, tension between the Hindus and the Muslims increased and riots erupted in Lahore and Amritsar. In an editorial on 24th June, I said 'Governor Jenkins is almost earning the title of a modern Nero. Nothing short of martial law can save Lahore and Amritsar from total destruction." (248-49)

Nahal's *Azadi* attacks the narrow game of the politicians who, to serve their selfish ends, threw the country into fire. It exposes "the conspiracy of politicians behind the whole move. Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan were coming into an estate; as was Nehru. Why else would they rush into azadi at this pace—an azadi which would ruin the land and destroy its unity? For the creation of Pakistan solved nothing. One would have to go round tweezers through all the villages to separate the Muslims from the Hindus . . . politicians gave ideas legs even though they were the wrong kind of ideas." (96)

Durga Das, too, finds the politicians at fault. He blames them for their selfish ends: "Both in India and Pakistan, power-hungry politicians were hatching diabolical plots in their self-interest which involved the disruption of the lives of millions of innocent helpless peasants on the greatest and the most tragic movement of refugees in history." (248)

Azadi states: "the partition was the most stupid, most damaging, most negative development in the history of the freedom struggle here." (122) It shows the riots in Sialkot on June 24, a day after "the Legislative Assembly of the Punjab formally decided in Lahore to opt for the partition of the province." (122) It describes in detail the communal fire engulfing the country: "Many cities of the Punjab had been aflame for months, there were large scale killings and lootings in Lahore, Gujarat, Gujranwala, Amritsar, Ambala, Jullundur, Rawalpindi, Multan, Ludhiana and Sargodha." (125) Nahal points out the brutal acts and says:

> The killing was invariably done with a knife, and often the knife, the large blade driven clean through, was left in the body of the victim. Where the victim survived the first blow, he was repeatedly stabbed in the chest and abdomen. Faces were not disfigured, but the killers had a macabre fascination for ripping open stomachs. In each case, the intestines of the man would have spilled from the body and would be lying next to him in a pool of his blood." (126)

Fires, more ghastly than murder, blasted and flared up in the different corners of the city and looked well planned. Violence gave rise to more violence. The Muslims in the eastern part of the Punjab suffered equally at the hands of the Hindus. They were driven out of their homes with whimpering, smouldering, and blood-curdling cries. Nahal points the violence rising on both sides of the newly-created border. Pointing out the inhuman treatment meted out to the Muslims in India, Nahal observes:

> every day hundreds of refugees from India continue to arrive with tales of terror and disgust. Whatever is happening here in Sialkot, things very much like that are happening on the other side too—let's make no mistake about it. It is not the collapse of Congress Muslims in Pakistan, apparently it is the collapse of Congress Hindus in India also. Why refugees with stories of personal misfortunes land here, the politicians use them to their advantage to fan up further hatred. (140)

The mass exodus on both sides, rape, abduction, arson, fire, killings; massacre, train-tragedies, attack on convoys—all these

things are minutely shown by Chaman Nahal. Referring to the colossal tragedy that accompanied the dawn of freedom, the country's vivisection, and the holocaust in which half a million people perished and some ten million were uprooted from their homes, Durga Das observes: "hardly had the echoes of 'Jai Hind' died in the capital than the nation was plunged in sorrow as reports came in hourly of millions of refugees on the march and of dreadful carnage on both sides of India-Pakistan border. About ten million people were uprooted from their homes and another half a million massacred. Thousands of women and girls were kidnapped and raped on both sides." (263)

Azadi pictures the uncontrollable and unimaginable violence, destroying the atmosphere of brotherhood, harmony, trust, love and solidarity and creating hatred, disgust, murder, fire, rape and arson. "Trains had been as much victims of violence as individuals." (141) The voice of sanity fell on deaf years. It is shown through Chaudhri Barkat Ali: "All my arguments for peace have failed with my brother Muslims; they have ceased to be Muslims and have become shaitans." (138) People suddenly turned alien in their own houses. Mass violence was "really a failure of man." (138) People felt that "the English have let us down." (140) Nahal holds the English responsible for all this carnage and feels: "If today the man in the street feels insecure and if the government is powerless to protect his life and property, I hold the English responsible for the crime." (141) Historians find the British responsible for the emergence of Pakistan. It served their end. Scrutinizing the British hand in the partition of the country. Durga Das observes. "Unknown at the time, Churchill played a key-role in the creation of Pakistan. Following the outbreak of the war, he realised that India could not be held indefinitely and, as revealed by King George VI in his book, *His Life and Reign*, decided to give up India to the Indians after the war. Churchill and his colleagues decided, at the same time, to save what they could out of the wreckage and it was this conviction that lay behind the offer to Jinnah of 'Pakistan on a platter.' Pakistan was expected to give them a foothold in the sub-continent." (255)

Nahal blames the English for having the biggest hand in the butchery. In the train the Hindus and the Sikhs "were singled out and mercilessly slaughtered." (171) Their houses and property were set on fire. They were either annihilated or converted to Islam. The Muslims in India also fell victim to communal violence. The British officers, in their own reticent way, refused all protection. They were critical of India and without any remorse stated that Indians wanted freedom and they, now, had it. *Azadi* presents the immediate consequences of the partition, the massacre in trains, the burning of the selected houses, the heap of corpses and their prompt disposal by burning them, the mass exodus, the forces engulfed by the communal loyalties. "The minorities in East Punjab and West Punjab were slaughtered while men of the Boundary Force looked on." (211) The involvement of the government made the people incapable of saving themselves: "The two new governments were parties to the facticidal war, and how could unarmed men and women withstand organized slaughter." (212) The announcement of the Boundary Commission's award left the two governments ignorant of their rights and privileges in the area of other. The government owed the responsibility of bringing its refugees safe to the homeland. The local authorities, however, did their best to prevent the safe going away of the refugees.

The historians, also, show the hand and the partisan attitude of the local authorities in brewing trouble. *The Hindustan Times* reported that "while the communal orgy of March 1947 was the result of the Muslim League's preaching of violence and hatred, the holocaust of the past three weeks is the work of the civil officials and the military." (264) Blaming the British for this inhuman slaughter, the report in *The Hindustan Times* concluded that "Mountbatten had hurried through with partition without making sure that the Boundary Force would be able to maintain peace." (247) At Guru Nanak Sahib, "the town where Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith was born and which was the holiest of the holiers for the Sikh," "all the Sikhs were massacred and the shrine was closed." (247-48) The convoys were attacked. Only one half on any convoy could reach the destination safely. *Azadi*

shows the starvation deaths: "They perished of hunger, or disease or exposure or they were killed by violence." (259) The convoys of ten miles in both directions became a common sight: "Virtually the entire five hundred and fifty miles of the border between East and West Punjab was used by the minorities to cross from one side to the other, the people heading for the point nearest to their own homes." (257) Nahal shows the deserted villages, the wiping out of the Hindus in Pakistan, the defiling of the Hindu-Sikh places of worship, the insolence of the Muslims, the phantom villages and many shameful acts done in mad communal frenzy:

> A number of abducted Hindu and Sikh women were in their custody. Many of the kidnapped women disappeared into private homes. A lone Muslim dragged the woman away, and kept her own exclusive use. Or he took her with the consent of other Muslims, converted her to Islam, and got married to her. The rest were subjected to mass rape, at times in public places and the presence of the large gatherings. The rape was followed by other atrocities, chopping off the breasts, and in even death. Many of the pregnant women had their wombs torn open. The survivors were retained for repeated rapes and humiliations, until they were parcelled out to decrepit wrecks—the aged, the left overs who could not find a wife, or those Muslims who wanted an additional wife. (293-94)

Without any interference from the local authorities, the police and the military, women were paraded through the street.

Azadi shows the plight of the refugees. It is true to history. Giani Kartar Singh, in tears, appealed to Nehru "to save the hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Sikhs who had gathered in various towns in West Punjab, seeking protection in numbers." Durga Das reports the long caravan and the plight of the people seen by him personally in the company of Nehru. An elderly woman, not aware that she was addressing Nehru but judging him an important personage from his dress and demeanour said: "Partitions take place in all families. Property changes hands, but it is all arranged peacefully. Why this butchery, loot and abductions? Could you not do it the sensible way families divided?"[9]

Nahal shows the misery of the refugees from West Pakistan in India. They found no room, the houses of their relatives in India were overcrowded, the trains going to Pakistan were derailed, attacked and the Muslim passengers butchered to death. The Muslim women met the same fate in India as the Hindu-Sikh women did in Pakistan. They, too, are paraded naked in the streets: "Whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we're doing it to them here." (338) The problem of rehabilitation and the attempt to get compensation for the left behind wealth in Pakistan are, also, dealt in *Azadi*.

Nahal's *Azadi* offers an epic delineation of the tragedy of the partition. It follows history and very closely unfolds the game of the selfish politicians and the developments leading to the partition of India, spotlights the plight of the refugees, the communal partnership of the authorities, the police, and the military, the holocaust of the partition and the problem of resettlement. It plunges deep into the inner recesses of the victims and studies the influence of the storm on the psyche. The novel is a scared document recording the upheaval of the troubled days of the history of the sub-continent.

NOTES

1. K.K. Aziz, *The Partition of India and Emergence of Pakistan*, p. 293.
2. Chaman Nahal, *Azadi* (New Delhi: Arnold Henemann, 1975), p. 39.
3. K.K. Sharma and N.K. Johri, *The Partition in Indian English Novel* (Ghaziabad: Vimal, 1984), p. 92.
4. Durga Das, *From Curzon to Nehru and after* (Delhi: Rupa, 1973), 213.
5. *Ibid.*, 215.
6. *Ibid.*, 231.
7. *Loc. cit.*
8. *Ibid.*, 248-49.
9. *Ibid.*, 264.

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Ardashir Vakil's *Beach Boy*: A Study in Identity Crisis

NAGENDRA KUMAR

After Salman Rushdie's great success of *Midnight's Children*, there is an increasing number of young, articulate Indian writers who—like Jeet Thayil and Vikram Chandra in the U.S., Kirpal Singh in Singapore, and Ardashir Vakil in the U.K.—make themselves at home in a postcolonial world that has become a village. Equipped with a good education, a willingness to adapt to a new environment and an eloquence to tell original stories, they touch upon aspects frequently associated with postcolonial studies like nationalism or the impact of colonialism on gender roles; and the issues surrounding historiography. In the case of Ardashir Vakil, born in Bombay (Mumbai) in 1962 and currently a teacher in London, one can add to this list "the problem of juvenile disorientation and subsequent identity crisis,"[1] the problems that shape his debut novel *Beach Boy*.[2]

The winner of a Betty Trask award and a finalist for the Whitbread Prize for first fiction in England, *Beach Boy* was praised by American and British critics for riding the crest of a new wave of Indian fiction that is bringing out fresh voices. It was even hailed as a gush of fresh air by the literary greats like Rushdie and Updike. While Rushdie termed it 'A highly original book . . . sharp, funny, and fast,' in his introduction to *Mirrorworks*, a celebration of Independent India's fiction; '*Beach Boy* gives us an India remembered, like Nabokov's Russia,' Updike added in his review in *The New Yorker*. (Qtd. dust jacket)

In this award-winning novel, set in Bombay in the early 1970s, Cyrus Readymoney, the eight-year-old son of a successful shipping broker and a beautiful former tennis star, introduces

us to his magical universe of movies and mischief, sex and samosas, tennis tournaments and truancy from school. His mind is filled with daydreams of becoming a grown-up, but with the collapse of his parents' marriage and his father's sudden death, Cyrus finds himself caught between the innocence of youth and the responsibilities of adulthood. Vakil seems to have a love-hate relationship with his city of childhood, his 'backward place' as Ezekiel loved to call it, the city of Bombay. As he himself confesses: "I find Bombay a very strange place, I hate nostalgia, but the city of my childhood is the city that I love—and that city has disappeared. Geographically, humanity-wise, Mumbai is a different place. I find it fascinating, but I don't love it."[3]

Beach Boy is in the classic mode of the coming-of-age story. Its hero is only a bit younger than usual—a very precocious, even highly sexed, eight-year-old. Cyrus Readymoney belongs to Bombay's privileged Parsi class, those adherents to Zoroastrianism who have been largely westernized. He feels no guilt about his family's wealth in a city of grinding poverty, and his closest adult friend is a holdover from the Imperial regime, an eccentric and brilliantly evoked maharani. Rather neglected by his social (and adulterous) parents, Cyrus wanders all over Bombay, usually in search of Hindi and Hollywood cinema. He even pretends, with some success, to be an Indian child film star. His fantasy life injects both humour and pathos in Vakil's portrait. Set in the early 1970s, the novel is clearly autobiographical. Even if Vakil's own adolescence didn't so closely parallel Cyrus's, the luxurious sensory detail of the story would reveal the author's teeming memory of the sights, sounds, and, most of all, tastes of his setting. Cyrus loves to eat, and one of the richest pleasures of the book is in vicarious feasting.

Vakil lets the story unfold through character and incident, not formal plot. And the characters are vivid and unique—from Cyrus's love interest (the adopted daughter of the maharani) to his imperious Aunt Zenobia and his neighbour Mr. Krishnan, a thundering but lovable Communist. The boy's immediate family only gradually come into focus, however, and for good reason.

By the end of the novel, great sorrow will come to the Readymoneys, and Cyrus will confront a harsher world.

Cyrus, the precocious child that he is, has an insatiable urge for food, sex and movies. As the novel opens we find him in the movie theatre watching *Haathi Mere Saathi*. Even at that moment of "painful concentration" he can not help "cocking an eye at his lead lady [Mrs. Verma], who sat in her pink sari, eyes laden with mascara, coyly surveying the scene" and worrying "about the popcorn and masala chips in the interval." (120) His sensuous evocation of food is enough to leave us salivating: "My eyes were on the screen, but my head was filling up with Punjabi samosas, Five Star chocolate, chutney sandwiches, Smarties, Peanuts, Mangolas." (13) He is proud of his general knowledge of Hindi movies, although a dismal failure in his studies who is punished quite often for being rude and off the target by the tyrannical school vice principal as we find him musing; "I knew all about Hindi films from magazines like *Stardust*, from song programs on the radio, from the hoarding dotted around the city, and from listening to filmi gossip." (16)

This first person narrative has so many confessional statements. As in this one Cyrus admits "I have been bunking off school to go to movies. I have stolen money, I have sold things, I have double-crossed my friends." But why does he do these errands? Because even after being born to rich parents, he feels his childhood is neglected. There is no one in the house to bother about him as if he does not matter at all to them. He spends his time in the company of Vermas or Krishnans, Maharanis or Horaces and finds a surrogate in their company:

> The Krishnans were my friends. I went running with them, I copied their mannerisms, I spent hours playing marbles with them, sitting in their living room, eating their food, going out with them, meeting their friends and relatives. All day, during the holidays, we roamed around in nothing but our swimming trunks. We ate, drank, played, swam, and slept in these trunks. . . . There has been no call from my family. They knew where I was, or my presence hadn't been missed. (26-27)

Since his parents don't bother about him he is left to the care of unruly neighbours who at times rebuff him: "Why doesn't his mother feed him properly? They've got so much money and they can't even feed their children properly." But he seems to be enjoying these insults:

> References to my mother's not feeding me enough, sometimes overt, sometimes snide, had a currency amongst the neighbors at whose houses I often ate. I considered these insults a fee one had to pay for eating their food, for demanding their friendship, for sleeping in their beds, partaking of their quarrels, sharing their holidays, walking their dogs, making love to them, even sharing in their dreams. Generosity is often spiked. (28)

His vivid childhood memory is often marked by bruises and scars which he tries, playfully, to keep at bay. His indecent outings with his friends, his sexual exploits, his frequenting to the movie halls are all signs of his inner restlessness. He wants to gain attention of the people at any cost even for the wrong reasons. But still there are moments when his hurt sentiment comes to the fore. Like when he alights from the bus just to pick up the soiled chocolates and finds people gazing with mocking eyes, he reacts:

> The embarrassment of being on the display turned into egoism of showing off, of procuring things I wouldn't otherwise be able to get, of proving myself worthy of recognition. . . . Afterwards there was always the opportunity to tear off this mask and talk to myself. Feed myself with dreams, tinker with fantasies of sport and sex. I entered into imaginary dialogue with another voice that acted as a kind of friendly interlocutor. When I found myself alone—on the bus, walking on the road, waiting for a film to start, in my boredom, on the roof of our house—I posed myself questions, discussing the different steps I might take in overcoming a problem. (48)

His parents' marital discord, as he vividly recollects: "Late at night I heard screams coming from my parents' bedroom," (39) his Granny's disbelief in the bag episode and his careless loss at the tennis match are some of the incidents that result in his further unhooking from his family ties. For all his emotional appetite he tries to find an answer in friends, movies and thoughts of

sexual indecencies. He realizes that his life has been an example of lost opportunities. The author uses the game of tennis as a metaphor to reveal the secrets of Cyrus's life. As he recounts the moment of his loss at the tennis match:

> I've seen it a hundred times after that. A pathetic half-lob floating pitifully toward where I was waiting at the net. The easiest shot in the game to play. I could have closed my eyes and hit a winner ten times over, in twenty different ways. I swung at the ball with all my strength, there was a strange tiny vibration in my hand, I saw the ball fly out of the court, I saw Sandeep Gupta looking at me with his mouth open, I saw sadness and pain stretching out in front of me for the rest of my life. The ball had hit the rim of the racquet and flown over the baseline. (82)

He has created and recreated this scene several times since then. It's hard for him to think why he missed the ball or what was going on in his mind at the moment but it sure is not about the game alone. He is one who has always realized the hollowness of leading a false life. Despite being born to wealthy parents he has never really led a life of care, love and respect. He cannot see Sandeep Gupta languishing in pain for the rest of his life after losing the match and so he virtually forfeits it.

This is a novel about a troubled adolescence; it tells the story of Cyrus Readymoney's childhood, spent on the shifting ground between warring parents and indulgent neighbours, precocious friends and tyrannical schoolmasters. Cyrus lives in a glass house on the beach with his siblings; their world is defined by the acrimonious and eventually explosive conflict between his father, Minoo, and his mother, Mehroo, both of whom are strong personalities who drift apart and into the arms of lovers. Cyrus evolves through the accidental discovery or deliberate exploration of secrets; rumours and keyhole whispers, tall tales and day-dreams guide him towards the uneasy state of maturity. *Beach Boy* is as much about a child's desire to vanish into a world of his own invention, as it is about his need to announce himself in the real world. As we find in one of his diary entries: 'I want to be older than I am. I have read Kafka's Diaries, edited by Max Brod, the first fifteen pages at least. I have read Keats's poems. .

. . My cousin has told me about Freud and Spinoza.' (92) One of the few adults who pay attention to Cyrus is the Maharani—a fantastic confidante, enthroned among parrots, she guides the boy through life after his parents separate. Through his relationship with the Maharani and her adopted daughter, the siren-like Meera, Cyrus gradually grows from voyeur to participant. His life has all along been characterized by dichotomies: sensuality and severity, material abundance and disintegration, security and indifference. He drifts helplessly, without being responsible for his actions, and without the slightest aim whatsoever.

Innocence lost, promise revealed; these are the central elements of Vakil's *Bildungsroman*. He succeeds in painting the city of Bombay in the early 1970s, with its street dwellers and movie stars, its colonial hangers-on and hungry immigrants, its food stalls and littered beaches, its many movie houses and giant middle-class apartment complexes. Cyrus's uneasy excursions from the beaches of childhood into the crowded cities of adulthood take us back to our own teenage years. Thus the novel is a fine manifestation of a study in identity crisis. All through the novel, Cyrus struggles to realize his true self and ultimately finds it after losing his father and going through the crises of life. This kind of conclusion is not without risk especially because the nature of the protagonist does not allow us to derive any substantive meaning out of his actions simply because he is like a rolling ball never static and reflective. But by applying the laws of logic and reading between the lines we can infer that his last act is symbolic of his coming of age.

NOTES

1. Leusmann, *Herald*, Autumn 2000. "Growing Pains in Bombay," *Jouvert*, vol. 3, No. 1.
2. Vakil, Ardashir 1999. *Beach Boy* (New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction).
3. 'I Find this city fascinating, but I don't love it,' *Times News Network*, April 20, 2003.

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The Theme of Identity and Search for Self in the Novels ofToni Morrison

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Toni Morrison is one of the most prolific contemporary black writers of present times. The sense of void that Morrison felt for the tribe of Afro-American women motivated her writing and sharpened her sensibilities as a writer. Her aim was to bear witness to the historical transformation of the self and change the wrong notion of the blacks, specially of black women. She has always been concerned about the unique position of black women in American life and literature. She stated that "there is something inside them that makes them different from other people. It is not like men, and it is not like white women."[1]

Morrison explores the theme of 'self' in her first novel *The Bluest Eye* in relation to the self of the black women. The novel deals with the protagonist's loss of self. Since the blacks are in a defeatist situation against the whites, they developed a negative self-perception. Being the vanquished, they have the tendency to imitate the lifestyle of the victors who are whites. Toni Morrison highlights this kind of dilemma of a black girl in *The Bluest Eye*. Regarding her first novel, she indicates that her plan was to deal with the idea of paucity of love and its consequences. She makes it a major theme of her novel and depicts the inner life and self of her characters. Allied to this theme is the theme of survival in a world where everyone is a victim of something.

The theme of survival runs comprehensively through Morrison's fiction. Pecola Breedlove, the central character of *The Bluest Eye*, struggles to affirm her own identity but finds her efforts thwarted at every turn. The novel is set in 1941 and shows Pecola, an innocent victim of her community and her frustrations,

anger, ignorance and shame. Her situation is extremely tragic. She is raped by her own father, and gives birth to a stillborn child. She dissolves her sense of moral ugliness into madness, convincing herself that she has been given blue eyes miraculously. The title of the novel has a manifold significance. On the most obvious level, it refers to Pecola's only desire to have blue eyes. She believes that these beautiful eyes will alter the bleak circumstances of her life and make her pretty and valuable in the eyes of others. Her blue eyes will be like those of the white girls around her and endear her to her teachers and the other children will cease to taunt her. Her own parents will also become affectionate to her. The title also becomes symbolic of her struggle in life and of her identity through the acquired beauty of the eyes. The eyes are not merely physical organs which enable her to see but they also point to an ideal and humane attitude—a way of looking—to human beings irrespective of their colour and nationality.

Pecola's ultimate fate is to continue living on the fringes of the society. Her complete dependence on others for self-identification destroys her. She loses the courage to offset the rejection of the society after being dubbed as ugly and therefore unworthy of affection. Pecola's situation becomes an example of a different and contrasting perception to Claudia who speaks the following moving lines in the novel:

> All of us who knew her, felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us think we had a sense of humour.[2]

In her next novel *Sula* (1974), Morrison depicts the quest of the protagonist Sula, and shows her carving out her own self and coming to terms with her identity as a black woman in a dominant white community and society. As in the previous novel, Morrison demonstrates the difficulties which black women face when they set out to explore the different facets of their self. The novel is centred on the character of Sula who believes that "she

can create an identity for herself and that she exists beyond the community and social expectation."[3] Sula is different from other black women in that she spends her days exploring and assessing her own thoughts and emotions and allowing them full play. Whether it is pain or pleasure, it is a kind of experiment to her in life. She learns from her experiences that she cannot count on anybody except herself. She believes that she has "no centre, no speck around which to grow."[4]

Morrison creates rather an unusual world in this novel. Her characters have an unusual history to reveal. Sula, her mother Hannah and grandmother Eva Peace live in a place called Bottom in a city in Ohio. Sula is born in a family where women's position is supreme. Her grandmother Eva is the archetypal grandmother who nourishes and protects her family. However, both Eva and Hannah conform to convention by marrying and raising families.

Eva is a woman who "stays alive" for her children. Once she decides to kill her son, nothing can prevent her. Eva has the capacity to rule the world. Whereas Eva's relation to the community is central to her life, Sula dismisses the ties and code that bind the people in the town of Bottom. Sula is in quest for her selfhood. She is prepared to defy the rules, codes, mores and customs which limit her life. Her rebelliousness manifests itself in several ways unlike the other women of Medallion, including her grandmother Eva, her mother Hannah and friend Nel. Sula refuses to marry and settle down to raise a family. But in a bid to insult the women of Medallion, she attends their church scantily dressed, and shuns their husbands. She feels no obligation to please anyone unless she gets pleasure.

Morrison brings out the predominant traits of Sula's character by presenting the character of Nel Wright parallel to her character. In fact, Sula and Nel are the two faces of the same coin. But unlike Sula, Nel comes from a different background. Because of the circumstances of the life of Sula, Nel is encouraged to cultivate friendship with her in spite of her mother's discouragement and warning. They find in each other something that they like intimately:

> Each had discovered years before, that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be. Their meeting was fortunate, for it let them use each other to grow on. Daughters of distant mothers and incomprehensible fathers [Sula's because he was dead, Nel's because he wasn't] they found in each other's eyes the intimacy they were looking for. (52)

Naturally, in the company of each other they discover their own consciousness, start to learn who they are, and what they want to do individually and collectively. Since "Sula grows up with a definition of sex as non-competitive," she places little significance on her sexual activity with Jude. Her friendship with Nel is more important to her and therefore she loves Jude to test Nel's loyalty. But Nel's loyalty lies with her security, so she turns away from Sula. Such a reaction encourages Sula to draw further away from the community and to act in a manner harmful to the community as well as to herself.

A degree to which a woman can fully express herself sexually is an indication of her ability to develop a positive self-image, for the repression of sexuality becomes a tool to perpetuate strict adherence to gender roles. Women have been conditioned to believe that they are required to act as inferior beings and as non-thinkers. Repressed sexuality is also connected to the personal hindrances which trap a character. Individual problems serve as a deterrent to the development of a self-definition. Thus, the woman who can hold things together is only as free to express herself sexually as the degree to which she can overcome individual hindrances. In most instances there are varying degrees of personal obstacles and the socialization into gender roles which influences the character's ability to assert her sexuality fully. Morrison demonstrates through Sula the difficulty women have in finding a relationship in which they can explore all the aspects of their self. The desire to create and define the conditions within which she can know herself fully, not simply sexually, is an endeavour that leads Sula to a seemingly endless search for the ideal relationship.

Toni Morrison's another novel *Tar Baby* depicts the journey of a black woman who struggles to come to terms with her aspirations as a modern materialistic woman. In this novel, Morrison has shown the struggle of a modern black woman for self-fulfilment. Morrison makes a trenchant comment on the problem of woman being pariah in the community of black people:

> There are several levels of pariah figure working in my writing. The black community is pariah community. Black people are pariahs. The civilization of black people that lives apart from but in juxtaposition to other civilization is a pariah relationship. In fact, the concept of the black in this country is almost always one of the pariah. But a community contains pariah in it that is very useful for the conscience of that community.[5]

The title of this novel takes its point of departure from the old folk tale of briar rabbit:

> A farmer sets out a tar baby dressed in bonnet and skirt to trap a troublesome rabbit. The rabbit does not understand the trap and hits the tar baby when it does not answer 'Good Morning.' It gets stuck and when caught, it begs the farmer—'boil me in oil, skin me alive but please don't throw me in the briar patch.' The farmer falls for the trick and throws it into the briar patch and the clever rabbit runs away.[6]

Morrison presents yet another meaning of the word 'tar baby':

> I found that there is a tar baby in African mythology. I started thinking about her. At one time, a tar pit was a holy place, at least as important, because tar was used to build things . . . it held things together. For, the tar baby comes to mean the black woman who can hold things together.[7]

It is this quality of tar to hold things together that Jadine lacks and as a result she acts like a tar baby created by a farmer, the white man, to catch a rabbit, in her case, Son.

Morrison describes Jadine, a character in the novel, as a person who loses her identity as a black woman, internalizes the white values and forces Son, a criminal turned lover and later on her husband, to abandon his identity as a black man. She realizes and imbibes the white values to such an extent that when she

finds him in her closet, she thinks that being a black man he would rape her.

Though Jadine is a black woman, 'she is an antithesis of the black folk and community values.'[8] She is Sorborne educated, widely travelled, leading the life of a model internationally successful, who keeps herself away from the black values and ancient properties, and is ashamed of herself and her heritage. By neglecting the history of her race, she rejects her real 'self' and tries to transplant the white 'self.'

With the false notions settled in her mind, she gets trained, educated and brain washed to ignore her own history and culture and also the history and culture of African-American people. It is the awareness of blackness awakened in her by her fascination for Son that generates passion in her. Morrison shows Jadine's confusion about her cultural identity through her reaction to the African woman. Jadine is a black woman who has been hitherto influenced by the western rules and values. After her encounter with the woman, Jadine begins to question her life and the direction in which she is heading. She travels to the island to be with her relatives and benefactor in order to think about and sort out her confusion. Thus her encounter with the woman causes her to realize that her acceptance of the western values has deprived her of her ability to explore and realize her own history and culture.

Through her novels Morrison has become an integral and inevitable part of black women writers who have changed the course of African-American literature. Her fiction emerges from within the universe of her mind and her experiences shaped by the African-American culture of her childhood and as a black woman trying to establish her identity in a racist and sexist American society. She proudly presents herself as a part of black assertiveness and self-definition. She declares herself to be a black woman writer but does not subscribe to any further categorization. She considers herself representative of the societal and historical roles African women have held in a nation that imported African women as labourers. Despite the oppressive nature of this definition, African women who also worked in traditional Africa continued to expand and improve on what they

knew and came to know about life in America. Morrison realizes that African-American women have a unique place in American life and literature and therefore she feels that there is something in them that makes them different from other people.

Toni Morrison's richly textured fiction reflects a special vision. It is a truly symbolic expression. It is the real experience which is an essential aspect of the reality of America.

NOTES

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2. Qtd. Michelle Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of Superwoman* (New York: The Dial Press, 1979), p. 159.
3. Valerie Smith, *Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 130.
4. Toni Morrison, *Sula* (London: Triad Grafton Books, 1986), pp. 107-8.
5. Claudia Tate, *Black Women Writers at Work* (New York: Continuum Press, 1983), p. 129.
6. Marilyn E. Mobley, "Narrative Dilemma: Jadine as Cultural Orphan in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*," *Southern Review*, Vol. 23, Autumn 1987, p. 764.
7. Thomas Le Clair, "A Conversation with Toni Morrison: The Language must not sweat." *The New Republic*, March 21, 1981, p. 27.
8. James Coleman, "The Quest for Wholeness in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*," *Black American Literature Forum*, Vol. 20, February 1986, p. 64.

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Filigree and Sovereignty of Human Bonds: A Study of Dynamics in Ameeta Rathore's *Blood Ties*

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Relations are hard to be broken unlike the links between friends. They haunt the humans like their shadows. Sheep believes its own butcher. When the choice is between the shepherd and the butcher, the sheep prefers the butcher who has been relentless all the time but appears occasionally in sheep's clothing. Hard-hearted, self-righteous, snobbish, ostentatious and inculpating husband is a bane of woman's life. Such husbands think that women are their subjects submitting to their suzerainty but unmindful of the decisive damage they cause to them. Their hearts sometimes incline to be sympathetic and giving way to exonerate the victims of their intransigence but within no time, they boomerang to their dark and dry bent.

Ameeta Rathore, who was formerly a lawyer, was born in Bihar, one of the backward states in India and brought up in Delhi. Rathore, in her first novel *Blood Ties* (New Delhi, Penguin Books, 2001), tells the story of a minor girl, Ila, born in a Brahmin royal and feudal family marked by traditional binds. Raja Bahadur Brahmanand Singh, who is a landlord and zamindar, holds dominance over the town Brahmanagar situated in Bihar. His only daughter was married to an Indian Administrative Service officer Mr. Prabhat Kumar Jha whose expression of displeasure at his wife's giving birth to a female child, Ila, struck a permanent breach between his wife and himself. Later, Prabhat Kumar's wife died of malaria. Ila received lavishing love not only from her grandfather but also from the servants of the household especially Hirya and Machali Yadav. In a dispute about the custody of Ila, Raja Bahadur sends her to the care of

her father who proves to be callous and self-righteous. When Raja Bahadur files a suit in the court seeking the legal custody of his grand daughter and while framing charges against her father that he is not treating her as her father, Ila's choice of staying with her father surprises the judge and wrecks him and summons a vicious smile from her father.

Traditions and customs are as important as 'blood ties.' They hold the people in their places and guide them with the force of an undercurrent and pursue them to follow the etiquette. Though people might neglect the traditions, traditions seem to cling to them, like parents who do not discard their children even if children are unkind to them. In their compass, traditions rule both the rich and the poor. People preserve the relations for the sake of social life, harmony, and honour, though their love is at its low ebb.

Raja Bahadur Brahmanand was seen dying in a hospital. His sister Ranakpur babi, setting aside a kind of long-standing enmity between her family and her brother's, came to perform the funeral rites of her dying brother. She places the tail of a calf driven into the hospital in the hand of her brother. If a cow is the symbol of a mother, can a calf be the symbol of Ila? Or does this gesture enable Raja Bahadur Brahmanand to attain heavenhood or goddess Parvati's abode? In Ila's grandfather's case this polite fiction had been aided by Ila's Ranakpur babi, who had made sure her brother's oxygen supply was not cut off "till the calf's tail had been placed in his hand." (1) Ranakpur babi, proclaims with her strong appearance at her brother's death bed that her brother is not alone and he is deprived of none. "Ila's Ranakpur babi had forgotten her life long rivalry with her brother to make sure that in his death he was not diminished in any way." (1)

Feudal lords in India have lost their hereditary authority over the area they are living in, after Indian State governments have partially been able to implement the land reforms' act limiting the possession of land and distributing the excess land seized from the landlords to the poor. Moreover, the Government's offer of subsidy to the farmers and amenities like free education, to the poor and empowerment of the depressed classes, prevalence

of democratic values and now and then murderous attacks wreaked on the landlords by the Maoist Communist Naxalites strip the feudal lords' traditionally established unwritten rule and law. Imbibing egalitarian values, people are no longer taking up professions which they inherit by their respective castes. "That was long time ago, when Brahmanagar hummed and throbbed with life, when Raja Bahadur ruled and life was ordered and unvarying, when every caste knew its place, and no one tried to permeate the other's domain." (8)

It goes without saying that after the zamindari system has been abolished, many a landlord is not prepared to cede the lands held beyond the limitation margin. On the other hand they get those lands registered in the name of their stooges and dependants and keep the documents with themselves. The lands a landlord renounces rights on, are barren ones. Neither the Central government nor the State governments find any solution to this offence. The oppressed and the poor find some relief from the saviour role now and then being played by the militant groups living mostly in forest areas. People believe that the militants are fighting for the just cause. Although Naxalites are not related by blood, the poor and the victims foster feelings of spiritual affinity with them and treat them as their brethren and liberators. Ranakpur babi, Ila's grandfather's sister, declares proudly that her grandson, Tuttu, has gone underground to join Naxalism waging armed struggle for social justice.

Servants who have stayed long with their masters often make their presence felt in running the affairs of the large house. They declare their allegiance to their masters in the time of crisis, even if they commit mistakes or small crimes just like the sons and daughters of the house. Their actions demand to be judged in good faith and without reservations. They share the joys and sorrows of their masters. They do not hesitate to stake their life when they see their master's safety endangered. Machali Yadav carries the message from Raja Bahadur Brahmanand to Ila when she is kept in the care of her father. When Ila's grandfather filed a suit against Prabhat Kumar Jha for the custody of Ila, which resulted in strained relations and hostility between Raja Bahadur

and Prabhat Kumar Jha, Machali Yadav risks self-respect to meet Ila. It is he who advises her to exercise her prudence to choose between her father and her grandfather. At the time of Raja Bahadur Brahmanand's death Machali Yadav carries into the hospital ward the 'retting jute' taken from Kosi river with its typical smell symbolizing the spiritual relations invisibly gripped in and around Kosi river, as a last favour or rites he can do to his master.

Hirya, the servant maid in Raja Bahadur Brahmanand's house, has a hefty and strong physique. She appears so robust like Savitri of the legend that men in Brahmanagar and in the neighbourhood do not come forward to marry her. Disappointed and desperate, the members of her family married her to a boy reputed to be mad. But within a short spell, she returned home to resume her usual attendant's work at Raja Bahadur Brahmanand's house and never went back to her husband. She has a knack of mixing with all sorts of people. What is more, Hirya could convince Ila's father the hard-headed and hard-hearted man, that her presence would make a difference in his house and the relations between his wife and himself would have been harmonious had she been allowed into his house. But Ila's father restrains Hirya from accompanying his wife after their marriage because of 'Hirya's size and masculinity.'

The only relation to whom Ila was closely attached was her grandfather's sister, Ranakpur babi, who is so called as she lived at Ranakpur, six miles away from Brahmanagar. Ranakpur babi had a grouse that she was married at ten insinuating the prevalence of the abolished social evil of the Hindu society which gained notoriety of marrying daughters aged between two and ten. Hindu society enjoys its cruelty at the deprivation of their daughters' right to choose the bridegrooms at such tender age. "She had been married at ten by the tenets of the diabolically clever Hindu way of life, which perhaps to protect itself from this very problem, married girls off between two and ten years of age." (43)

Ranakpur babi led a submissive life in her father-in-law's house. When she got married, she was the only daughter-in-law

in the house. But, after her husband's brother married Ranakpur babi lost her importance systematically and was reduced to complaining like a child, a nagging wife whose cries go unheeded. Her husband has never taken her charges against his sister-in-law seriously. "Her husband had died thinking himself the fairest and most just of men, leaving his wife to crave the understanding that she was not bad. (41)

The Hindu marriage system and marital relations are reflected in the lives of adversaries, Raja Bahadur Brahmanand and Prabhat Kumar Jha who remain widowers though they could remarry to lead better lives.

Mrs. Prabhat Kumar Jha, daughter of Raja Bahadur Brahmanand, had western education which made her assimilate modern life style helping her to be extremely sociable with men and women. Her socializing attitude embarrasses her husband and he keeps his mother and his secretary to watch her movements. But it was more a clamor in the mind of the suspicious husband that led him to consider his wife an infidel. His mother, who has been assigned the job of a spy, finds nothing of that sort. Though it is true, somehow it appears an exaggeration when she declares to herself: "She knew, despite her son's assertions, that her daughter-in-law never looked at another man." (86) Moreover, her daughter-in-law offered worship to the Goddess and performed rituals regularly. "She did her Durga Path everyday, spending half an hour reading the praises of the goddess." (77) The fact that her son has never passed an accusation on the veracity of Ila's birth itself shows the virtuous character of Ila's mother.

Developing aversion and ill-will toward his father-in-law, Prabhat Kumar Jha brings up Ila who was left with him by his father-in-law in Patna, in such a way that she is stripped of all the luxuries she had enjoyed at her grandfather's house. Even though her father could send her to English medium school, he deliberately admits her in an ordinary, Hindi medium school where the children of [illegible] subordinate staff are also receiving schooling. Further, he sent her to school in a shared rickshaw. And he did not take her to places to entertain her. But to her surprise, he takes her to the film 'Sangam' which portrays triangle

love between two bosom friends who do not know each other's love towards the girl. The story ends in the death of one of the friends for the sake of his friend, which strikes a resemblance of filial love between father and grandfather for Ila. "It was therefore a great surprise when her father came home and told her he was going to take her to see Sangam, a film every child in her class had already seen. Ila was thrilled at the opportunity to be normal. . . . Her father explained that he was taking her to see this picture because it was not the usual frivolous kind, and because Raj Kapoor and Rajendra Kumar had given a very dignified performance." (92)

Significantly, Prabhat Kumar Jha had never hit his daughter, Ila, because he was a member of shrotriya (Brahmin) caste which knows how to behave courteously in the society but his words and abominable actions are as much lashing as of whipping physically. "He never hit Ila, after all he was a shrotriya and knew how to conduct himself in life. No one could fault him in this respect. His principles did not allow him to touch his daughter, but words were a different matter." (106) Having realized his nature that prevents him from endearing the people, he seeks help from his neighbour, Mrs. Mukherjee, the childless wife of an Indian Police Service officer, who is enthusiastic and officious to advise Ila's father on how to be close to his daughter. Though revolting within, he wants to mould himself. Mrs. Mukherjee did not get scared of the accusation of having an illicit relation with Ila's father. In fact, the charge had not been substantiated. Ever since he lost his wife, many women tried to enchant Mr. Prahbat Kumar Jha as he was alone like a bachelor with his child, but they all fell back because of his poor response. He could reject all the gestures of human bondage. "Women particularly wanted to ingratiate themselves with this wifeless man, either out of sympathy for the plight of a man with a motherless child or out of a desire to curry favour with a still eligible bachelor. (104)

What Providence has given at birth will go upto the grave. But what is acquired in between is destined to perish. People who become friends in the middle of life, are unlikely to carry

affinity to the end. Mrs. Mukherjee who befriended Ila's father, could not play more than a good neighbour's role.

Actually, Prabhat Kumar Jha's actions had never been able to instill faith in Ila's mind, who might have taken pleasure in the troubles taken by her father to regale her. The motives that had driven the father to behave unnaturally natural were evident to Ila. "Ila looking at all these efforts . . . realized her father's motivation." (143) Sensing the defeat for his attempts, Prabhat Kumar Jha resorted to employ moral binding on his daughter. "So I'm sure you will realize that a daughter's home is with her father and not in anyone else's house." (157)

Being a discerning and kind girl, Ila derives strength from the roots of relations which finally come to her rescue when she is embroiled in a crisis. She could acclimatize herself to the adverse environment at her father's house despite her having had a rich, expensive and permissive life at her grandfather's household. Scrutinizing the thoughts of her father, Ila understands that her father being unable to love, seeks her love and wants her to treat him as her true guardian. His nature and bent of mind resembling the lotus leaf that does not hold the drop of water which is in contact corroborates the Brahminical creed that pleads for indifference while one is in the thick of human bonds. Seeing her father's desperate attempts directed at convincing her to turn to his side with his moralistic behaviour, Ila feels incensed. She finds her heart entertaining no love for her father.

Prabhat Kumar Jha asked the collector of Purnea, who was his batch mate to bring pressure on the district judge to have a verdict in his favour. But the success of his efforts to win the game depended on the decision to be taken by his daughter than by the judge or his father-in-law or himself.

Ila does not allow the judge to give a decree, which divests her of the privilege to choose her life. The district judge being apprised of how her father was looking after her and how he admitted her in an unknown Hindi medium school becomes annoyed. "He had been shocked to discover that the girl was not going to the convent in Patna but to an unknown school. . . . The

judge thought 'the man must be mad. The poor child—he surely did not deserve to keep her.'" (164)

The judge who thought that Ila's father's conduct was worse than a charge of rape or sexual abuse, inclined to rule in favour of her grandfather but he was prevented from doing so because of Ila's stunning declaration of her willingness to stay with her father. The judge says to Ila, "we have to see what would be the best for you. If you have any strong reasons why you would prefer to live with anyone, you can tell me. She heard herself say 'My father, I suppose."

> 'Are you sure you know what you are saying? No, strike out, that last question,' he said.
>
> 'You don't have to be scared of anyone when you answer this question. I dare all the powers to make sure you are protected.'
>
> 'I know.'
>
> 'And you would like to live with your father.'
>
> 'Yes.' (170-71)

In fact, Ila in a way, wants to wreak vengeance upon her father. She was less troubled by Machali Yadav who endeavoured to win her love for her grandfather, Raja Bahadur Brahmanand Singh. But, unexpectedly, like a child that searches for its mother, and like an eagle that unpredictably comes from far away and snatches its prey, Ila was seized by the call of blood or gene that drives her to find her right place. It goads her to favour her father in spite of the impending permanent loss of a loving grandfather and her roots at Brahmanagar. Her decision fortifies the tradition that 'a father is a father.'

The way Ila reacted to her chromosome signalled judicious ruling that endorses the law of nature that father is the lord of the house under whose care children enjoy the pride of living. The death of her grandfather soon revealed that she would have been left an orphan if she had gone to live with her grandfather, however, the cruel father did not allow his daughter to have the last sight of the dying man and to have the honour of conducting the final rites.

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From Pain to Pen: Crisis and Creation in the Poetry of Pashupati Jha

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The appearance of a new star in the galaxy of Indian English poets is always a welcome event. And Pashupati Jha deserves a grand welcome on his assured arrival. I feel overwhelmed to read the collections Pashupati Jha, who as a senior and sincere academic was known to me, but as a passionate poet is a new revelation. Two collections of his poems within the gap of two years, *Cross and Creation* (2003) and *Mother and Other Poems* (2005), having forty nine flowers of different hues in each bouquet excluding Preface and Dedication, which are nothing less than poetry, have been published. For instance, take his Preface to *Cross and Creation*:

> After years of
> reading
> teaching
> and suffering,
> now I dare
> the dangerous plunge
> and taste the forbidden fruit;
> fully well aware
> that a fall would be
> the only outcome.
> But who is not tempted
> by the trap of creation?

Jha, perhaps, feels and breathes poetry. His passion for poetry is so powerful and profound, that makes one believe that he not only speaks and talks poetry but lives through and for poetry. Despite having this kind of urge for poetry, not even a single poem seems to be written with a view to making it public, rather it is an effort to understand his own alienation while witnessing

the discrimination and humiliation of the deprived people all around. His striving for a better world becomes his numbers.

A number of periodicals have published the reviews of his first collection, *Cross and Creation*, which indicate that his appearance as a poet has been promptly and positively noticed by the intellectuals, academics, as well as by critics. Bernard M. Jackson of U.K. finds the anthology 'inspired writings of an enlightened intellectual.'[1] Patricia Prime of New Zealand, says about this anthology, "Passion and creation work hand in hand, but it is creation that has the last word."[2] Manohar Bandopadhyay comments, "To Jha's credo, poetry is a serious evocation. He is never in a hurry and quite patiently lets his experience gestate and shape into ripe rhetoric before utterance. He attempts a profound organization of his experience and meditates over his thought rather than being swept away in the tide of emotion."[3] "His poems are conspicuous for their contemporary consciousness, reflectivity and modernist technique," writes Basavaraj Naikar.[4] The present paper takes up an analysis of the thematic concerns of the two collections of Jha, which range from birth to death and rebirth, love in its various forms, identity/ego, cosmic consciousness, family life in all its dimensions, subordination of Indian women, pain and sufferings of old age, generation gap, terrorism, and many more. But basic concern of the poet lies in delineation of lack of sensitivity and the resultant erosion of values. And this is precisely his humanity, philosophy and poetry.

It is said if you are a realist at the age of twenty you are heartless, and if you are an idealist at the age of forty you are brainless. But the advent of Jha on the scene of Indian poetry proves this saying either false or highly exaggerated. Jha, bearing a cross till his forties, has neither lost his emotion nor his intellect, which is perhaps the most inspiring part of his poetry. For a sociologist, civilization is an 'artifact' and culture, a 'mental product,' while for Jha, culture is a product of emotional sensibility and civilization, an intellectual construct. These two coordinates of human society should march on the parallel tracks, but, alas, they move into opposite directions. A poet with little confusion, Jha strives for the fusion of human concern in every

action of an individual, which is the only way to make civilization and culture coexist on the parallel tracks. And how can this fusion be accomplished? Like Matthew Arnold, this poet believes that poetry alone can make it possible. As he himself says: "Give poetry a chance to ennoble your mind and spirit; its impact may be slow but certain."

Jha perceives creation only through agony and suffering of the self and humanity at large, and thus blurs the dichotomy of destruction and creation. Patricia Prime writes; 'As befits the cover, the poems in this collection deal with the themes of life and love, death and salvation.'[5] By his affirmation in his Dedication, that poetry originates from the intensity of acute pain alone, the poet has clubbed himself into the category of *Adikavi* Valmiki (Sanskrit), Prasad and Dinkar (Hindi) and P.B. Shelley (English).

It is significant to note that while Auden underestimated the potential of poetry several decades back, Jha affirms the power of poetry now, despite the greater advancement in the realm of science and technology; he feels that if we have "A heart that lives a little/ poetry makes a lot to happen." This kind of affirmation is an outcome of creative optimism which emerges from his own sufferings which has further strengthened his strong and unflinching conviction in tough, and not sentimental, acceptance of life. In these two collections, more than twenty poems deal with the origin, growth, essence and intricacies of poetry. How does poetry originate? It needs wide and intense experience of life, an acute sensibility, and the divine touch:

> Then you touched me with a smile
> and after a long, long while,
> there was an untimely rain,
> and I was all poetry again. ("Reviving Touch")

It is not only smile but also the fire and smoke of poignant experience that give birth to poetry. It is from the wreckage of life that the optimistic pen can salvage bits of poetry to revive and sustain the poet further: "The waves intensified their fury/ and the storm uprooted many a thing,/but the sheet went on increas-

ing." ("Creation II"). This creation of poetry from the mire of myriad searing events is reinforced in "No Romantic Agony This" when the poet speaks of the sudden spurt of lines: "this red-hot sizzling lava/has to explode and surface/someday into molten words/itch-burning on the virgin page." This agonized concern for creation and creative process continues in the second volume too, when, in "Waiting for the Lotus," the poet explains his silent and agonizing wait for the emergence of poetry from the muddy experience of life:

> 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.

After the creative process, the poet in both the collections, has written many poems on the various moods of love, from ecstasy of fulfillment to the pain of misunderstanding and mismatch. For him, love is the base of human existence and essence; so he puts a lot of premium on this basic human emotion. The growing trend of love's cheapening in this modern age, of quickly loving and quickly leaving, invites his satirical barb in "Love, the Latest Definition":

> Our forefathers were fools
> to focus life-long on
> one beautiful face alone, and
> idiotically calling it a moon.
> We want rather a thousand stars
> to quench our unlimited
> quota of love—and lust
> for we're young, we're smart.

For Jha, love is limitless only in its mystic charm; it is a feeling that defies all definitions, that is within experience of the lovers

and yet beyond it. It is a life-long drive to experience the mystery of creation itself; as he points out in "Definition":

> So, let our love be undefined,
> let our link be mysterious as the universe,
> open to eternal exploration beneath the rind
> where one meaning leads to another search.

For him, love is both physical and Platonic, it begins with the body but soon enters the spirit. It is an all-encompassing emotion that engulfs the entire being of the two, an eternal attachment that does not allow even death to separate the loving souls:

> As an ultimate act of love
> I imprison everything of yours
> on pages—your eyes, your smiles
> your words and events—
> so that whenever I feel utterly alone
> I may easily go to them
> and experience you whole
> without any moral and social qualms.
> I have loved you more than love
> and would not let you fade away
> and die, my dear. ("Phoenix-Love")

So, though the poet is using English language, he does not fake Western love, as most of our poets otherwise do. He is essentially an Indian in his sensibility and belief, his love does not change with the change in weather and age. Love is not limited to physical beauty; one has to accept even the imperfections of the lover:

> Although
> conceived in His own image,
> I am not the original
> but His Xerox copy
> with blotches left
> here and there.
> Would you love them too? ("Xerox Copy")

As Jha has truly loved his mother and other women, so he is acutely conscious of the plight of Indian women. In his poem

"An Indian Woman," he has movingly depicted the subordinate status of a middle class woman, whether as a daughter, or as a wife, or a mother—the only three recognized status given to her. Although loved by her dad, she would be married off to any small fry who would demand little dowry. After being married to a petty clerk, her condition worsens, because every night he vomits all his official frustration on her. Years later when she becomes a mother of a smart young man, he also treats her only to serve tea and snacks to his countless girlfriends. So, the poet devastatingly, but curtly, concludes: "I am a mirror/to this ancient culture/where woman is always worshipped."

In another poem, a middle-class housewife is similarly presented with loads of work from morning to night, serving children, young and old of the family as her religious duty, when she has to care all but none is there to care for her:

> They regard me a goddess of milk and multitude
> I think me a river of flooding tears,
> banked only by my mother's platitude
> and the stigma of social fears (Milk or Tears)

Humane to the core of his heart, the poet is conscious of the plight of widows, prostitutes, and victims of communal rape. In some parts of India, daughters are still married with the onset of puberty; some of them become child-widows too when the husbands are washed off in frequent floods. The social sharks impose rigid restrictions on such a young widow, but trying all the time to exploit her youth and charm. So, the fearful widow has only these words on her lips:

> Only one prayer comes to me
> each time I open my mouth,
> "O Goddess—Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati—
> take courage to be born a widow
> in this country of yours,
> and then you would know the difference." ("Widow's Woes")

But a widow challenging goddesses! How can it be tolerated? So, the poem concludes, intensifying her suffocated grief: "But I am a widow/I better keep my mouth shut." Because of frequent

communal riots in the country, women have been the worst sufferer. The predicament of a young woman, widowed by the recent riots, is depicted graphically in "Nature and Man," where she has to sell her body each night for the sheer survival of her family. The poet has used the power of irony to the hilt when she is depicted as "clutching two notes with beaming Mahatma" on them, while returning home from the hotel where she is hired for a night. In "A Riot Victim," the mindless orgy of a gang rape is subtly but shockingly presented thus:

> And then, again in the name of God,
> they did something much more terrible;
> unmindful of my welling tears
> they mutilated in minutes all the gifts
> I had preserved for years.

The plight of prostitutes is also felt by the rebel poet: "If I am given a choice/I would marry a whore then/to whore the world that has/whored her without asking for her wish." ("My Choice") And he would be doing so to redeem his sin as Man.

Man-woman relationship, family life and the condition of the old people are certain other concerns of the poet which are presented quite poetically and effectively, without any propaganda in his lines. Deeply rooted in Indian ethos, he is quite conscious of the disintegration of family values. Father, mother, son and daughter in "Civilization: A Progress Report" are all guided by their own pleasure principles, with no bonding among them. They leave the house at the mercy of the young maid, who is mercilessly exploited at night:

> Only the young maid remains
> waiting behind, to suffer the drunk
> virility of the Sahib and his son
> when, late at night, they return.
> Next morning, with more stitches
> to her blouse, she mops everything
> away, except her misfortune.

The ever-widening gap in the family relationship is mourned in "Nuclear Family" as "This is our small, squabbling home/where

everyone largely lives alone." But there is an urgent need for family togetherness, for love and affection, without which the toils and trials of life look much more threatening than ever. So, almost like Ezekiel, Jha expresses his earnest desire:

> But dear me, see above the powerful sun
> burning alone in his searing pain,
> yearning for one, who really cares;
> home is where one gets repairs
> and likes to return, again and again. ("Home is where")

It is lines like above that B.K. Das finds Jha's expressions "direct" and his images very "evocative."[6] The poet is also keen on harmonious bond between father and son as comes out in "For Dullu," "Confession after Death," "A Busy Son," and "Our Son Going to College." There is, in the minds of parents, pain of separation and apprehension for the hostel life. But they forget their personal pain for the future of their son and his friends: "We forget our grief in their vive/ may lord keep their zest alive." ("Our Son Going to College") But what is keenly felt by the poet is the neglect of the same old parents by their children in the name of busy schedule of the modern times. But the poet attributes it to the growing individuality of the young generation: "They are infected/with a strange disease/which the doctors/have recently diagnosed/as 'I'." ("The Strange Disease of 'I'")

In the domain of Jha's poetry, all the primary relationships have its place, like Mother, Father, Wife, Son and Daughter, but the glorification of mother and motherhood has got the most sacred space. For him mother is goddess, nothing less, nothing more—an immortal source of love, affection, sacrifice, learning, values and what not:

> Mother, you were
> therefore, we are,
> and would continue to be
> till eternity. ("Mother")

In one poem, Jha finds poetic inspiration when he sees the natural scene of a mother breast-feeding her baby. The persona of "On Becoming a Poet" has tried all means—reading poetry of

great masters, attending lectures and workshops on poetry, falling in love, growing even goat-beard, to become a poet. But all these obvious means fail to inspire his pen. Then,

> Years later, I saw the primal scene
> of a young mother breast-feeding her babe
> unmindful of the public gaze;
> affection flowing to the child
> satisfaction flowing back to her,
> and the thaw in my ink
> melted with the milk
> and for days my pen had no respite.

Thus, his poems, as pointed out by B.N. Singh, are endowed with "the smooth fluency and surprising directness, conveyed by rhythm and diction" of an artist of the top order.[7] After reading the collections of Pashupati Jha, one thing is quite clear. His passionate zeal for rapid refinement in human evolution, not physical but cultural, is intended to complete the journey as soon as possible from sub-human to human, and from human to superhuman, so that another bard never could repeat 'what man has made of man?' He writes poetry, not for publicity, but for humanity. Finally, I quote his own lines, which define his poetry too, though they are meant for his teacher:

> Words assume importance only when
> they are wisely weighed and spaced;
> who could be a better master
> than you, Sir, in all such matters! ("Tribute to a Teacher")

NOTES

1. *The Commonwealth Review*, Vol. XV, No. 1, p. 170.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
3. *Indian Literature*, Vol. XLVIII, Jan.-Feb. 2004, No. 1, p. 195.
4. *The Indian Journal of English Studies*, Vol. XLI (2003-4), p. 170.
5. *The Commonwealth Review*, p. 170.
6. *The Critical Endeavour*, Vol. IX, December 2003, p. 208.
7. *The SPIEL Journal of English Studies*, January 2005, p. 111.

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Effect of the Environment on the Search for Self in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Keshava Reddy's *He Conquered the Jungle*

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Environment or wilderness plays an important role in Atwood's construction of Canadian identity. Wilderness has multiple functions: as a marker of geological location, as a spatial metaphor, and as a popular cultural myth of Canada. Geographically, wilderness is defined as 'wild uncultivated land.' Wilderness is understood, within colonial discourse, as a space outside civilized social order and Christian moral laws, and also as the place of mysterious and threatening otherness. It is in this sense only that wilderness could be constructed as 'blank.' Inevitably such construction of wilderness produces contradictory responses: on the one hand it is constructed by the most Europeans as a place where one can get lost or killed; while on the other, it can be seen as the space of freedom from social constraints. Atwood seems to entertain both these possibilities while recognizing a third possibility of interpreting 'wilderness' from a native perspective. She reinvents the white English-Canadian construction of identity, charting a distinctive New World positioning in relation to history, geography and culture suggestive of continuity between immigration narratives and a contemporary awareness of psychic location. Environment occupies an important place in Atwood's construction of Canadian identity. She asserts:

> You come out of something, and can then branch out in all kinds of different directions, but that doesn't mean cutting yourself off from your roots and from your earth. (*Conversations*, 143)[1]

This organic image of a tree and the emphasis on location points directly to her construction of Canadian identity. She defines identity as follows:

> For members of a country or a culture, shred knowledge of their place, their here, is not a luxury but a necessity. Without that knowledge we will not survive. (*Conversations*, 19)

Atwood speaks against the destruction of the forests, urging the need to pay attention to ecological principles in order to preserve the environment for future generations. Her anxiety is expressed with increasing urgency in *The Handmaid's Tale (*1985) and again in the stories and fables of *Wilderness Tips* (1991) and *Good Bones* (1992). Her novel *Surfacing* (1972) begins and ends with the forest. It begins like a detective story, where the unnamed narrator [like a detective] goes back to the place of her childhood in the Quebec bush to search for her lost father who, as we learn later, has already drowned in the lake while looking for Indian rock paintings. Gradually she discovers that what she is really searching for is her own past. She is looking for those lost bits of herself buried in her repressed memories, and it is only in the wilderness that she finds a way to heal the split within her own psyche, thereby restoring her emotional and spiritual health. The story of the novel traces the multi-layered process of rehabilitation by which a dislocated and damaged woman manages to come to terms with her past, while recognizing that the past cannot ever be retrieved though it may be partially reconstructed through memory and fantasy.

Her most crucial discovery occurs when she dives into the lake, looking for the Indian rock paintings recorded in her father's drawings in chapter seventeen of the novel. She does not find them, instead, she sees a strange blurred image which may or may not be her father's drowned body, but for her that image figures something which has not so far been revealed in the story. It is the repressed image of her aborted child. It reveals the

lie which is at the centre of the novel, for there is neither a marriage nor a child, only an affair and an abortion. The narrator says: "I couldn't accept it, that mutilation, ruin I'd made, I needed a different version." (143)[2]

There is a long, detailed description of how the narrator dives deep into the lake with the pale green water darkening around her. Diving into the lake works both as realistic description and as metaphor for descent into the territory of the subconscious. The narrator says:

> It was there but wasn't a painting, it wasn't on the rock. It was below me, drifting towards me from the furthest level where there was no life, a dark oral trailing limb. It was blurred but it had eyes, they were open, it was something I knew about, a dead thing, it was dead. (142)

As the blurred image surfaces into the narrator's consciousness it signals the beginning of her recovery process, and the search for wholeness, unity of the body, and mind, unity of reason and emotion, unity of past and present. The internal struggle in the narrator's psyche finally ends after she has experienced a sense of wholeness.

Atwood employs 'images' and 'symbols' of separation and dualism. One major symbol that represents the idea of unity or wholeness is the 'fish.' This symbol appears and reappears throughout the narration. For the narrator, the fish symbolizes wholeness, the unity between mind and body that she is seeking. Fish, like other reptiles, have heads that are directly connected with the body and extend into the shoulders, unlike the human beings where there is an impediment—the neck. The neck separates the body from head. She takes a liking for the fish and does not like them to be killed because they represent for her 'wholeness and unity.' 'Neckless head body, the fish is whole' thinks the narrator in part two, she begins to see her problem and her need to resolve it.

> The trouble is all the knob at the top of our bodies. I'm not against the body or the head either; only the neck, which creates the illusion that they are separate. (81)

Later, the narrator, left alone on the island, has a series of wilderness encounters which have been 'likened to shamanistic initiation rituals.' She undergoes a visionary education where psycho-spiritual experience and sensory perceptions are presented as parallel modes of heightened awareness which led to revision and insight. She realizes that she loves and trusts Joe and feels the child breathing within her. She visualizes a future with them. The experience of love for Joe and attachment to her unborn child stirs the "still" emotions within her and helps her see reason as a unified human being. By the end of the novel, the narrator's perceptions of her relation to the world have changed so that she is ready to leave the wilderness to return to society.

In Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea*,[3] Santiago is an old Cuban fisherman who has been fishing in the gulf-steam. Santiago has been unlucky (a solao), for he fails to catch fish during the past eighty-four days. The whole society takes him to be an 'unlucky' man. But the old man is courageous and does not feel depressed at such jeering remarks, even when the boy Manolin is withdrawn by his parents only to be attached to a lucky fisherman. He is a strange old man who firmly believes in resolution and in his own power. He can live the whole day long on a few drops of water. He always dreams of lions and never for a moment thinks even of his dead wife. The lions signify mental alertness and physical prowess. His admiration of the boxers and remembering of lions in Africa make us feel about the potential stuff he is made of.

Through his struggle against the fish marlin and the sharks, his mental state has been beautifully delineated. We come to know about his childhood simply through the 'flashback' technique. The reflections of his past are a source of spiritual strength and physical endurance. Even when he is utterly alienated on the high seas, he doesn't feel lonely, his past is his perennial comrade and he puts up a grand, heroic fight. Major part of the story develops through dialogues of the old man either with himself or with the fish. The old man's struggle is an epic struggle against odds. His struggle is symbolic of man's eternal fight against nature and his helplessness. The novel shows the

spiritual triumph of man although he is physically shattered. During his struggle the old man gains a deeper insight into himself and his relationship with the rest of the world. His alternate feelings of 'hatred' and 'love' for the fish have a mysterious quality, characteristic of man's essential nature.

As happens in a Greek tragedy where 'fate' plays an important role as a 'deterministic factor,' so also in the novel the arrival of the sharks is the beginning of the irony. As the old man fights heroically, the reinforced host of sharks crush him. When he reaches the shore, the sharks have completely eaten the marlin and the old man is left with the base skeleton. All the events are telescoped against this tragic dilemma of the human existence. The tragedy is that Santiago, who kills the biggest marlin ever hooked, collapses during his fight against the sharks. Is this the tragedy of overconfidence? He constantly utters a confessional cry: 'I went too far out.' (99) Thus the novel celebrates man's spiritual courage and physical endurance. At the end of the novel, we are convinced that the old man does not feel any sense of loss, he dreams of lions, reminding the readers, perhaps, that man may be destroyed, but he is never defeated. Thus nature is shown not only as destructive, discouraging and disrupting but also as a source of courage and challenge.

He Conquered the Jungle is a novel translated from Telugu *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* by C.L.L. Jayaprada and published by Macmillan under the series Modern Indian Novels in Translation in 1998. The Telugu original was authored by Kesava Reddy. In *He Conquered the Jungle* (1985/ 1998)[4] also, environment plays a very important role in the struggle of the protagonist. The protagonist of this novella is also an old man who happens to be the head of a swineherd. On an evening, undeterred by his old age, he sets out alone in search of his missing sow, which appears to have entered the jungle looking for a safe place to give birth. Neither his age nor the time of his search deters the old man from his determination to find the sow and her litter. The old man must seek them out and protect them from the wild animals of the forest. Armed with no more than a spear and

a knife, the old man falls back on his huntsman's skills and unconquerable will.

In the forest, it is natural for the wild animals to emerge from their lairs. After a long and arduous search he tracks the sow to a bush, and finds that she has just had ten young ones there. In his eagerness to have a look at the piglets he gets near them and is attacked by the ferocious mother. Lacerations bleeding, the old man shins up a tree to save himself. Strangely enough, his wounds and pain are swiftly submerged by his ecstatic and excited mood—his euphoria lay in the sight of the ten beautiful piglets. He now decides to stand guard over the mother and her litter to protect them from wild animals. As the night progresses, a jackal first sneaks in but the mother pig tears it to pieces. Soon a pack of four jackals approach. The mother-pig kills one, the oldman spears another from his perch on the tree, while the other two jackals run away with a piglet each. A little later a large pack of jackals are seen coming towards the bush. Now the old man realizes that the sow, being one against many, cannot protect her litter. He must come down from his perch to drive the jackals away, but for this he has first to kill the sow. He is reluctant to kill her but decides to do so in order to save the remaining eight piglets. He quickly spears the sow and succeeds in driving the jackals away. Eventually he makes a basket to carry home the eight piglets. When weariness overtakes him on his way back home he drops off for a while, and wakes to find that vultures have pecked to death the already starving piglets. He feels utterly defeated.

Thus the novel is a tale of endurance of a man's archetypal struggle. From this point of view, the novel seems to suggest that to survive is to have struggled. It is true that in both the novels, *The Old Man and the Sea* and *He Conquered the Jungle*, the old men go 'too far' out and have only their courage, determination and endurance to fall back on their lone, heroic, unequal fights. Fighting with their backs to the wall, both display dignity. Both are stoic and reflective. Both are losers in the end but enjoy moral victory for daring the impossible with extraordinary grit and tenacity.

But Hemingway's Santiago seeks and confronts death only in a big game hunt. He seems to seek out death only in order to live life with unusual intensity. For Kesava Reddy's protagonist, however, it is an inseparable part of his daily struggle for existence—the life lived by the humblest folks in India. Significantly, Kesava Reddy leaves his protagonist unnamed. Thus the novel is an affirmation of a primitive order of existence that civilized man has long since forgotten—a life in which instinct, intuition, acuteness of senses and self-preservation are central and restored to civilized social life, would make life whole.

In Atwood's *Surfacing* nature is understood to have a shaping impact on the human mind. In Hemingway, environment is constructed as a challenge to be faced and may be subdued. In Kesava Reddy it is seen as something to be protected and lived in.

NOTES

1. Earl G. Ingersol, ed. *Margaret Atwood: Conversations* (London: Virago, 1992).
2. Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing* (Virago: London, 1979).
3. Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (New Delhi: Rupa, 1995).
4. D. Kesava Reddy, *He Conquered the Jungle* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1995), trans. CLL Jayaprada (1998).

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Dialogic Ramifications in Karnad's *Bali: The Sacrifice*

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Girish Karnad assigns multiple aspects to the interpretation of classical legends, stories and myths in their dramatic renderings. They get illuminated in their purported vision as well as transgressed motives. In his plays the source materials acquire social, moral and cultural ramifications and their reinterpretations lend contemporaneity to them. Thus, the issue became more important than the historical context and setting. Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert remark: "The cultural resources at issue may be material or symbolic, taking the form of particular objects or properties, languages, myths, rituals, embodied techniques." The dramatic action and dialogue in his plays set forth reverberation of meanings which collude, supplement, contradict, supplant and ultimately converge on the main concern. They are rather a perspicacious study into the man's strategical manoeuver to put up a rational, social, moral and religious structure. His cozy living gets disturbed when confronted with the alternatives of his artifacts and his own psychological inadequacies. Mired in the intricate processes of bringing the individual self in tune with the entrenched tradition—the extrinsic and intrinsic forces driving him to take on the bewildering situation staring into the face—he either reasserts as unjustifiably empowered member or resigns as the reassuring believer. This reassuring faith comes as sublimation or salvation of the soul in the face of the insurmountable crises.

Bali: The Sacrifice, based on the thirteenth century Kannada epic *Yushodhara Charite*, offers a fresh perspective of approach vis-a-vis man's psychological struggle and manoeuvers. It presents the cultural, moral and religious dialogics in the context of

the warfare between the losing grounds of reality and conscious right to social survival—a conflict between the effete essentialist position and the conceptualized work of living. Karnad points out in the preface to the play that conflict of moral beliefs of Jain and Hindu religions, the controversy regarding violence in intention and actual practice, and difficulties of practical wisdom to deal with the moral conflict and dilemmas constitute the thematic approach to the play. But the conflict of this nature and the mythological superstructure of the play make the strong undercurrent of gap between ideal moral demands and man's inability to fulfill them more eloquent. It is this gap between the rationally sanctified structure and the truth of irrationality, official authority and subjugated masses, the centre and the periphery, the high and the low, the cultural dictates and acultural pronouncements that keeps displacing the meaning from the immediate contextual overtones. The alternatives in religious discourse and moral conduct serve only as face-saving devices to psychologically come to terms with the precarious situation. It is like clenching the handful of sand that keeps slipping from one's grasp as one desperately applies more pressure to tighten the grip. This inner conflict and the voices of the socio-cultural adversaries pick holes into grand marquee of the super design in the play. They jostle for attention through dialogue, dramatic action and the theatrical efficacy.

The dialogic discourse seems to be operating at social, cultural, religious and psychological levels. The queen walks past the conscious social status and relapses into exhilarating moments with the elephant-keeper, Mahout. The king appears to be reconciling with this situation with the affirmation of the queen to come back to the idealist social tradition. He hopes to achieve, by this way, a psychological relief given as alms by the queen. The Queen Mother tries to efface this blemish under the garb of blood-stained rituals much to the anathema of the queen. The Queen Mother has a satisfactory exit point through rituals. All these efforts are but to turn a blind eye to the reality with one's head held high; a compromise made by striking a balance between moral structure and natural morality. The queen refuses to

succumb to the conceptualized dictates. Mahout's giggles and the queen's denial of giving in to the entreaties of the king serves as the counter-point to the ethical edifice of society. The different ramifications of the thematic approach ultimately merge with the liberated vision of the queen, Amritamati. The effort here is made to analyze the motives behind the actions of the characters and creating space to be considered as free zone.

The play begins with two songs—the first sung by the queen and the second by the king. These songs do not constitute the main dramatic action; they rather serve as prologue to the play. The king's song provides the direction that the action in the play is going to develop into. The song reveals his agony, anguish and predicament:

> Woe betide the times
> Where the king sits alone
> Outside on the steps
> Racked by, sighs
> While the queen cannot
> Escape her lover's things. (74)

The action takes place in the night in the inner sanctum of a ruined temple. The queen and Mahout, the elephant keeper, are two indistinct figures there as they do not know each other. They have spent some unrestrained moments together to which the queen reacts: "It's been lovely meeting you. Every minute of it." (76) For her, no ideology or concept should intrude to denigrate these moments. They are satisfying and desirous despite the fact that one has spent it with someone who does not figure in the preferred category of elite perception. "If you mean you are not tall and fair with an aquiline nose and ruby lips—I live surrounded by such men and I am sick and tired of them." (77) Mahout discloses his identity to her and insists on knowing her name which the queen is not inclined to reveal. She is in a hurry to leave the place and reach the palace before daybreak in order to avoid detection. This situation leads to two basic issues to be addressed—first, the reaction and response of the queen trapped in the quagmire of instinctually gratifying moments at odds with

the traditional ethical structure of society and second, the king's psychological struggle and manoeuver to deal with the situation.

The queen is enamoured of Mahout, but is reluctant to hear a word against her husband. She has no qualms about the enjoyment of personal moments but is careful to conceal it from public knowledge. The king who has been sitting at the doorsteps knocks at the temple gate. The queen and Mahout are in panic and in order to ward off entry of the person knocking at the door, they give the impression of indulging in secret pleasure:

Mahout: Let them think something's going on. . . . That we're making love here. You see what I mean? Sin in the inner sanctum. They'll slap themselves on their cheeks, say what's the world coming to, curse us and go away. Come on. . . . Pant . . . heavy . . . (He demonstrates panting) Hunnh. . . . Hunnh. . . . Yes, like that. Come on. (The queen moans in anguish) That's it. Oh God! You're good, good, this is heaven. (85)

This comic situation, as it appears at the outset, is a sardonic comment on the way the authority is trespassed by a low-born subject. As the door opens, the king enters the temple with a torch in his hand looking for the queen, Amritamati. In a self-assuring voice he calls out and the queen appears before him. In an unbelievable stance Mahout is surprised. This theatrical incidence strips the royalty and the palace of its magnificence and glory traditionally attached to it. These are the anxious moments for the queen as well. Her effort so far to reconcile the private and the public self ultimately ends in smoke;

Queen (gently): Why did you come here? (Pause) Why did you? Until he says you . . .

King: I'm concerned about you. You about him.

Queen: I am talking about us both. (Pause) Until he saw you, he didn't know who I was. I was just a woman, any woman. Now he can gloat. (87)

Neither the queen is remorseful nor the king has any grudge against her. When the queen learns that the king had been following her and was sitting at the doorsteps all along when she was inside with Mahout, she is bewildered. The king only says in exasperation: "what else could I do?" His helplessness stems

from his inability to exercise the right kind of authority to control a woman. He looks for alternatives to it. He must have her for the sake of his personal integrity, the conceptually ordained notion of manhood, and the social perception. He has abandoned his religion, let down his mother, and let off Mahout because the queen is excessively concerned about him. He turns down his mother's idea of sacrificing a hundred fowls because he is met with the worst threat from the queen that she would relinquish him and go with Mahout. He musters up courage to say that he intends to sacrifice a cock of dough and for this he is ready to compromise with the queen's act of treachery and infidelity. This sacrifice, as the king considers, will come as a psychological relief offered by the religion. It will help him and save him from the ignominious situation. His dream metaphorically explains his condition: "I saw that the royal swan in our garden had got caught in mud and was flapping its wings." (103) He wants only one thing: "all this is only so I can get you back." (119) The queen agrees:

> I want to come back to you. I feel fuller. Richer Warmer. But not ashamed. Because I didn't plan it. It happened. And it was beautiful. (119)

The queen prepares herself for the sacrifice of the cock of dough; suddenly she becomes subconsciously alive to the notion of violence and stabs herself. She is honest in her declarations that defy all conceptually circumscribed notions.

II

The cultural configurations in anthropological sense and the subsequent hierarchical status create space for articulating oppositional points of view. Culture, thus, becomes a means of domination, subjugation and suppression, of assuring the rule of one class or group over another, and a means of resistance to such domination. In a literary text, the comic or mocking undertones of cultural warfare become more pronounced in view of efforts made by the dominant group to mend the cracks in the rationalist structure. *Bali: The Sacrifice* becomes a site of struggle between

authority and popular culture. The king is set against Mahout. The voice of authority is disrupted and oppositional forces acting on and within the text call for easy attention. This cultural polemics becomes comprehensive through carnivalesque element. Bakhtin observes: "Carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions."[3]

Mahout is conscious of his assigned category in the social and moral scheme of things, of distinct physical and conceptual characteristics that put him in the 'other' category, of social role and experience the ruling class is immune to. The rational structure and ordering of things, the notion of aesthetic perception, the patterns of behaviour, the approach to scheme behind events are responsible factors behind hierarchical set-up. Mahout fights it out at all levels—psychological, rational, ethical, practical, conceptual and physical. He is even conscious of his contribution and sense of belonging that supports the well-entrenched and long-established system. As he says:

> People mock at mahouts. Call us 'low born.' But where would all your princes and kings be without us, I want to know. What would happen to their elephants? No elephants. No army. No pomp and splendour. No processions. No king! Ha! (80)

He is wise enough to discern the weapons and the overt means that determine superiority at the level of social living—"elephants," "army," "pomp," "splendour," "procession." The expression "Ha!" is the ironic dismissal of all these and his sense of being at the centre of them.

He has an acute sense of being alien to the life, perception and experiences of the elite class. He perhaps cannot think of sneaking into the sophisticated world of theirs. But there remains a penchant for curious enquiry to serve for relative appreciation. He may be led to believe that a queen would not be behaving in an ordinary way, and the experience with her would be a different one. This ironic treatment of being the same and different,

high and low, sophisticated and primitive, strong and weak underlies the structure of the text:

Mahout: Look, I am a low-caste mahout, the King's elephant keeper. (Looks at his arms) And you? I am probably bleeding all over. There. You've almost scratched my skin off. Such long nails. You are no bazaar woman, I can see that. You are from the upper floors. And you haven't done a day's work. That's for sure. Those nails are for a dainty life.

Queen (laughs): You're right. They're not meant for scrubbing the floor.

Mahout: I don't see many rich women. I'm not allowed near them. So it's not likely that I would have seen you. Or recognize you. So why are you hiding your face? (78)

There remains a gap between the idea of beauty and beauty, between idea of love and love, between rational approach to things and things as they exist. Mahout is endowed with his own weapons to fight with, to fight for the authoritative control of things. His singing voice has made up for his looks. He does not have a handsome looks like commander-in-chiefs or the kings have. He would not like to exchange his voice for good looks; and with this immaculate beauty of his voice he wrenches control of the king's possession. The queen says: "Your looks don't matter to me. I came here because I heard you sing. You have a heavenly voice." (78) The blissful moments he spends with the queen are not circumstantial; they occur in a natural course. He is intelligent enough to know the queen in a few minutes which the king is not and that is why he is able to give a tip or two to the king on the ways of pleasing and making love to the queen. When the king is grappling with the social, ethical and psychological problems, it is Mahout's advice, which he follows, to enter into direct communion with God, ask him questions and surrender to his mystic design that is always for the benefit of man. In this way, by implication, the established hierarchy is overturned setting up a popular, democratic counter-culture. Mahout becomes embodiment of social, moral, ethical and religious alternatives.

When the king enters the temple and finds the queen with Mahout who, he knew, had undergone intimate relationship, he

wants to take out his anger on Mahout. The queen's resistance and the apparent show of his commitment after apostasy hold him back. At this, Mahout 'giggles,' sitting on a mattress in the corner with a bottle of wine in his hand. He 'giggles' a second time when the king comes with a cock of dough for sacrifice which signifies an escape route from unconquerable psychological crisis. He 'giggles' a third time when following the tips given by Mahout, the king fails miserably to impress the queen. Mahout obliquely refers to the moments he had spent with the queen and suggests that the queen herself would manage everything if she wants. The king makes for Mahout indignantly but is at a loss to translate his intention into practice. Mahout says:

> I was thinking of going. But now I won't. I'll stay. (Sits in his corner. Takes out a bottle and takes a long swig.) Yes, one more thing. Why do you carry that sword around if you aren't going to use it? Eh? I mean, it's like fangs in a sparrow's beak, isn't it? (118)

In this way popular humour subverts official authority; Mahout's actions and utterances are subversive. It is a kind of liberating influence. They are symbolic of clamour for alternatives and change as Bakhtin points out: "All the parodic-travestying forms of the middle ages, and of the ancient world as well, modelled themselves on folk and holiday merry making."[4] Or there is the possibility of violent self-assertion as at the end of the play we get the glimpse of Mahout coming out in open revolt against the king with a bold and confident voice. He also presents the example of moral edification when he tells the king and the queen: "Listen, two of you, . . . Take my advice. These things can eat into you. Go back to the palace. As for me, I am leaving town." (122) The alternative is to break through the letters of conceptualized framework of world-view and accept the reality of man as one among so many.

III

In *Bali: The Sacrifice* religious faith and beliefs are delineated as support methods to the dimensions of social life and ob-

jectives. They become a means to superiority claim and personal rescue at the critical moment of moral turbulence and self-defeat.

> It's a play about a conflict of beliefs. The mahout is not merely the reason for the queen's transgression, he symbolizes the belief in a listening, logical God. The Queen believes that salvation comes from living a life of compassion, and the Queen Mother follows a Goddess who needs to be satiated with blood to be benign. In between is the King who has forsaken the faith he grew up in to embrace Jainism and is now torn between guilt and confusion about the right path.[5]

The first conversation between the king and the queen before they marry, revolves round the religious discourse. The charm and attraction of the queen strips the king of his religious initiation and he gets converted to Jainism. The Queen Mother takes it as her personal defeat as she appears to have forfeited the claim over her son. When she learns about the queen-Mahout relationship, she tries to use this opportunity to wean her son away: "Throw her bones to the dogs. She has betrayed you. You are not bound by your vows now. All this nonsense about non-violence." (107) At the outset, this reference to non-violence appears out of place, but considering the fact of suppressed animosity, it has a context to be located in. The king becomes the site of war between the queen and the Queen Mother. The ultimate claim over the king will determine the religious as well as personal victory. This conflict has another dimension as well—religion comes handy to ascertain one's superiority and edge over others:

> Mother: The only relationship in the world which does not wither and fade away is that of hate. That'll keep us together—at least so long as my son remains a Jain.
>
> Queen: I refuse to discuss my religion with you.
>
> Mother: I couldn't care less about your religion. It's my son's that concerns me. (115)

The Queen Mother puts her son up to make sacrifice, at least a bloodless one, of a cock of dough as a mark of penitence to blot out the disgrace brought by the queen. She does this for the os-

tensible motive of humiliating the queen. The king agrees to it and looks upon it as a help to him—an act that would provide relief to his agonized mind and anguished soul.

The king persuades the queen to accompany him in the ritual on the plea of compromising her past deeds and actions. The queen inadvertently reconciles with the situation, but as they raise the sword for sacrifice the very idea of violence stirs her conscience and she commits suicide by pressing the point of the blade on her womb. She is not remorseful for whatever has happened. During those exciting moments she was a nameless woman—a human being quite unsullied by the ideological preoccupations. She refuses to subscribe to preconditions of life. The play begins with her song that touches upon the consciousness of two different shades of life. The play ends also with her song. It is her journey through the play that ends with her death—a journey from the knowledge of apparent contradictions to the point of resolution in favour of life of conscience that deserves celebration:

> Night gives in to day.
> Death yields to life.
> Like monsoons piled on monsoons
> So life follows life.
> And through the days,
> Through endless rainy nights
> Throughout our lives We hear the cock crow. (125)

Karnad has enriched the Indian theatre with the introduction of dramatic techniques and methods to form perspectives towards myths, folklore, legends and history. He has given them contemporary contextual direction and new dimension. His plays have opened up new directions in criticism and "scholars awakening to the richness of anthropological, folklore, and performance-studies methods in field research and writing have begun to analyze Indian performance with new purpose and resolve"[6] In *Bali: The Sacrifice* the scriptural narrative transcends the location of time and place, and focuses on human instinct to devise ways and means of domination. The sceptical approach to char-

acters' dialogues and actions reveal new meaning through subtle implication. As for the source material, Karnad deserves appreciation. Aparna Dharwadker aptly remarks: "Karnad has shown us how the matter of myth and legend resonates in modern experience, and how the past history of the nation prefigures its present. The intuitive intensity of such a method should be reason for appreciation, not devaluation."[7] In the play, Karnad lays bare through dramatic techniques and narrative methods the gap between fact and fiction, construction and strategy, and narrative and unuttered truths.

NOTES

1. Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert, "Toward a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis," *TDR:* 46.3 (T175), p. 31.
2. Girish Karnad, *Two Plays: The Dream of Tipu Sultan, Bali. The Sacrifice* (New Delhi: O.U.P., 2004.
3. Mikhail Bakhtin, "Rebelais and His World," Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, ed., *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1998), p. 45.
4. Mikhail Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," David Lodge and Nigel Wood, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (New Delhi: Pearson Education, rpt. 2004), p. 132.
5. Shalini Umachandran, "Powerful Plays," *The Hindu*, December 5, 2004.
6. Parley P. Richmond, Darius L. Swann, Phillip B. Zarrillie, ed., "Afterword," *Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance* (Delhi: MLBD, 1993), p. 467.
7. Aparna Dharwadker, "Playwriting and Criticism: Another Look at Girish Karnad," *Theatre India*, No. l, May 1999, p. 87.

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Bharati Mukherjee: A Diaspora Novelist

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'Diaspora' is gaining popularity as a literary phenomenon. People migrate from their own country to seek opportunities "for work, research and freedom" from a colonial state to a free country." Their cultural identities reflect "the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as "one people" or the sense of "oneness," as observed by Stuart Hall in his 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora.' These migrants project a world of geographical and cultural dislocation that creates the poetics of exile, displacement, rootlessness, homelessness, nostalgia, past and memory. They become 'the marginalized people' in the alien land and build the Third World or 'the otherness' which is a result of diasporic consciousness. Salman Rushdie in an essay in 1983 thus wrote about expatriates:

> Exiles or emigrants are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge—which gives rise to profound uncertainties—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost, that we will, in short create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of mind.[1]

Diaspora writers have created 'a minority community' and, in the context of India, a minority 'little India' in the foreign land whose people, according to William Safran, share the following characteristics:

> 1) they or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral" or foreign regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history and achievements; 3) they

> believe they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it, 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their homeland and its safety and prosperity, and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.[2]

These diaspora writers are constantly in search of their ground, identity and adjustment between 'home,' the culture of origin and 'world,' the culture of adoption. 'Expatriates' and 'immigrants' seek a location, a physical movement and a forward-looking attitude and live in a state of 'exile' which provides them a compulsory isolation and a nostalgic anchoring of past. They remember their past through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth and their search for 'cultural identity' makes them as "individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels."[3] They are put in a state of 'being' and 'becoming' and they think of the difference between 'what we really are' and that of 'what we have become' as 'the lost origins' in a foreign land. As a result, a new person is born as a diasporic person of the 'New World' that Stuart Hall in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" considers as "the beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference" of Afro-Caribbean people as a diaspora of America. He calls it as "the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising, form of 'ethnicity.'" (120) Diaspora identities are creating "the aesthetics of the 'cross-overs' and of 'cut-and-mix'" which make them "anew, through transformation and difference."[4] Therefore, Frantz Fanon in 'On National Culture' in *The Wretched of the Earth* feels,

> A national culture is not like folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover a people's true culture. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of

> thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself in existence.[5]

They have the endless desire to return to their roots as 'the lost origins' which had the overwhelming nostalgia for 'times past.' Such 'return to the beginning' is symbolic representation of desire, memory, myth, search and discovery which cultivates the sense of 'cultural identity' in the diasporic writers. In the post-colonial world, we find the arrival of the Third World intellectuals in First World academe. Edward Said who was a Palestinian, born in Jerusalem and self-exiled to U.S.A., called the expatriates as 'Intellectual Exile' as their journey of exile begins from "homeland" to the globe which, in the beginning, becomes "tender," then strong and finally turns perfect. Said's exile appears to be moving from hybridity to heteroglossia of the world. Such people build a new world of universalism which is a kind of meta-centre which heightens the identity of diasporic world. In his *A Way in the World*, Naipaul encounters with India and many other lands which is a kind of homecoming. As a result, Naipaul "can only find a house, not a home."[6] Therefore, the diasporic people always search their 'homeland,' displacement, centre and representation which make them 'unique' and different as a symbol of 'cultural identity' that Stuart Hall considers as "one of shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self,' hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common." (113) Their cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes of 'one people.' This 'oneness' is a point of difference which is the essence of diaspora.

Indian diaspora represents "half a dozen religions . . . seven different regions of India . . . nearly a dozen castes" (Parikh, 105) and is "like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life" and it spreads out its "roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up." (Parikh, 106) Homi Bhabha treats the journey from 'home' to 'world' as a process of cultural conflict and he calls the diasporic scatter-

ings as a "gatherings of exiles and emigrants and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures, gathering at the frontiers; gathering in the ghettoes or cafes of city centres." (139-40) But the expatriates and immigrants are set in "the process of decentring" and their search of centre is affected by a diasporic space which is not the center but the land of margins which has pushed their home cultures to outer space i.e. the west which still continues to be the place of recognition and judgement. It is noteworthy to record the comments of the Special Fiction Issue of *The New Yorker* (June 23 & 30, 1997) which has questioned the identity of stay-at-home writers not as NRI (Non Resident Indian) but as NEI (Non Expatriate Indian) or RI (Resident Indian). Bill Buford, in his editorial, thus comments, "What does it mean to be an Indian—to be a citizen of a country that for thousands of years was no country, that has not one language but at least eighteen, and that no single race or religion or culture but many races, many religions, many cultures." (*The New Yorker*, 7-8)

The Indian diaspora has also provided one of the finest writers in English language like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, A.K. Ramanujan, Bharati Mukherjee and Amitav Ghosh. As a diaspora writer, Salman Rushdie mythologises history; Naipaul transfers it to a perpetual homelessness while Bissoondath rejects homogenization of 'ethnicity' and treats immigration as "essentially about renewal." 'Postcolonialism' is often referred to the "theory" of migrancy. But it is different from the diasporic writing for two explicit reasons: first, writing generates its own parameters for aesthetic evaluation as negotiation with cultural constructs. Secondly, postcolonialism is variously defined through political and historical conditions and aesthetics. But it requires a careful scrutiny. Critics have located its beginnings in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), its theorizing in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and critical assessment in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989). Meenakshi Mukherjee views it as "an emancipatory concept." Arif Dirlik treats postcolonialism as a child of postmodernism and marks the arrival of the third world intellectuals in First

World academe (329). The transition is viewed from 'colony' to 'the Third World' to 'postcolonial' societies. Jasbir Jain, rightly perceives that "the point of origin is not power, but the collapse of Empires, not the West but Asia and Africa."[7] Diaspora writers, therefore, emerge as 'a fractured self and sometimes appear as 'strangers' to 'themselves' which expresses the diasporic consciousness and which make them writers of 'Third World.'

II

Bharati Mukherjee who was born in India in a Bengali Brahmin family of Calcutta on 27 July, 1940 was married to a Canadian fellow-student, Clark Blaise, journalist and professor at the University of Iowa in 1963. After living in Canada from 1966 to 1980, she became a natural Canadian. She, thus, started her journey of migration from Calcutta to Canada, from East to West which made her realize the sense of "ethnic identity" that she calls it as "to cloak myself in my own Brahminical elegance."[8] Even after marrying a white husband with two assimilated sons, she felt as an "outsider" which has cultivated a natural association with V.S. Naipaul as "an expatriate writer" who writes "about living in perpetual exile and impossibility of ever having a home."[9] But she further adds, "Like Naipaul, I am a writer from the Third World but unlike him I left India by choice to settle in the U.S. I have adopted this country as my home."[10]

But, later on, she rejected Naipaul as a model and selected Bernard Malamud who was chiefly concerned with the life of minorities, their pains and sufferings. In U.S.A., Bharati Mukherjee feels herself as an immigrant writer and in Introduction to *Darkness*, she writes, "For me it is a movement away from aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration." (2-3) Therefore, she preferred Bernard Malamud who writes "about a minority community which escapes the ghetto and adapts itself to the patterns of the dominant American culture" which gave her "the self-confidence to write about my own community."[11]

Malamud taught her the art of overcoming the identity of being other" in a diagonally different cultural milieu. If Mala-

mud's characters belong to poor classes, humble shoemakers, tailors, and bakers, Mukherjee's immigrants are doctors, university professors, businessmen and women married to upwardly mobile professionals. Both address themselves to the diasporic experience of cultural exile, disaplacement, past, and alienation.

As an author, she proudly feels to call herself as "an immigrant American" rather than "an Expatriate Indian." As she tells, "Language gives me my identity" and "I am the writer because I write in North American English about immigrants in the New World."[12] Her journey from Calcutta to Canada is not an expatriation from East to West but from English world of Jane Austen to the American world of Walt Whitman. Mukherjee is more concerned with non-native issues as American critics feel about her writings that she explained to Jerry Pinto:

> I am fighting the American establishment to be regarded as central. I want to destroy the whole notion that Asians, or people of different colour are 'sojourners' where as those who arrived in America from Germany or Sweden are 'settlers.'[13]

Most of critics call her as an autobiographical writer but she intelligently and artistically moves from "particular autobiographical concerns" to much larger themes "of multi-culturalism/ diversity."[14] While visiting India in 1989, she was sari-clad, dark-eyed, dark-haired with a Bengali Brahmin name yet she called herself "the American mainstream writer." But she is evidently accepted in her adopted county as 'an Asian American' or a 'woman of color' but not as a part of 'mainstream' of American writing. A few short stories of *The Middleman and Other Stories* got anthologized with 'mainstream' women's writing but not all stories. Her conflict of biculturalism and multiculturalism is a conflict of Indian ethos with 'foreignness' in the alien land which makes her a writer of 'fractured self' or 'a split personality.' Malashri Lal feels that Bharati Mukherjee has "deliberately problematised her identity" by separating ideologically "from her chosen home and citizenship."[15] But as Maya Manju Sharma finds, there prevails a conflict between her writings and feelings, between American and Indian and "her imagination is essentially

Hindu, and essentially moral."[16] As an expatriate writer, she dwells upon his status of being 'outsider' or 'ex-status' and looms the stories of loneliness, nostalgia, depression and despair. They think of 'past' and live in 'present,' therefore, George Steiner considers them as "the contemporary everyman."[17] Christine Gomez writes that "the expatriate builds a cocoon around herself/himself as a refuse from cultural dilemmas and from the experienced hostility or unfriendliness in the new country."[18]

The diasporic experience of expatriate and immigrant writings of Bharati Mukherjee creates a natural conflict of search for identity, the conflict of soul and mind, native land and alien land that her characters face and react which naturally make her a diaspora novelist.

III

Bharati Mukherjee who was born in a Bengali Brahmin family of Calcutta, lived in London with her parents for three years and returned to India in 1951 and joined Loreto Convent School run by Irish nuns. She enjoyed a privileged childhood as her family was rich, highly educated and westernized. She took her B.A. (Honours) in English at the University of Calcutta in 1951 and M.A. degree in English from University of Baroda in 1961. Sudhir Lal Mukherjee, her father believed in his daughter's creative aptitude and encouraged her to join Creative Writing Programme in the United States. She also went to the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop and obtained an MFA in Creative Writing in 1963 and a Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature in 1969. She met Clark Blaise, a Canadian fellow-student, novelist, professor and journalist in the University and married him in North American style at one lunch hour in September 1963. She lived in Canada from 1966 to 1980 as a naturalized Canadian and lived in Toronto and Montreal and held the teaching position at McGill University and Concordia University. She migrated to U.S.A. in 1980 with her family and became a U.S.A. citizen in 1988. She also taught at Queens College, New York for a brief period before finally joining as a Professor of English at University of California, Berkeley.

Bharati Mukherjee won many awards and scholarships and availed grants from McGill University in 1968 and 1970. She got Canada Grants Council Grant twice in the years 1973-74 and 1977. She was awarded National Book Critics Circle Award for her collection of short stories. *The Middleman and Other Stories* in 1989

IV

Bharati Mukherjee as a diaspora novelist concentrates her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) on the journey of expatriation of Tara, the heroine of the novel, who belongs to an upper class Brahmin family of Calcutta who goes to America for higher studies and marries David Cartwright, an American husband who is a stranger to her Indian background. She could not adjust in the foreign milieu as "Madison Square was unbearable and her husband was after all a foreigner." She comes to India after seven years and finds herself as a total stranger in her homeland She feels that she is neither Indian nor truly American. She is totally confused and lost. The novelist herself feels identified with problems of Tara in America and it has an autobiographical similarity in the novel which shares the diasporic experience of homelessness and rootlessness. Tara finds herself as an exiled Indian and westernized American.

Wife (1975), her second novel, is based on a more complex dimension of theme of immigrant experience of Dimple Dasgupta a middle class Bengali woman who migrates from Calcutta to New York and is married to Amit Basu, a consultant Engineer, who had applied for immigration to Canada and U.S. with her desire to find freedom, fortune and perfect happiness in America. Marriage is a blessing in disguise which would bring her love. But Amit Basu is not her imagined husband and does not bear the image of ideal man. She faces the cultural difference between Indian and American attitude and finally becomes a neurotic wife as she kills her husband. She neither finds India nor America as her homeland and becomes a woman living in dilemmas and rootlessness. The novel is based on the novelist's shaping idea: "what do Bengali girls do between the ages of

eighteen and twenty one."[19] Finally, as a wife, she feels as a woman of nowhere land. *Jasmine* (1989) is a revealing story of adventures of Jasmine, the heroine of novel, who begins her odyssey of journey from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and Iowa like a flying bird in search of nest as a rootless traveller. Her search for identity looms loneliness, depression, despair, displacement, identity and existence and her perpetual "widowhood and exile" continues till she emerges as a survivor, a fighter and adapter. Her cultural context to diasporic world is full of crisis of identity and finally her reconciliation to her choice.

The Holder of the World (1993) deals with the cultural encounter of two cultures with a tale of dislocation and transformation interacting with each other. It is not a journey from East to West but from West to East in quest for art and culture. It is a story of two white women, one living in the 17th century and the other becomes obsessed with a puritan girl brought up at Salem in Massachusetts to 'the bibi' of a Hindu king. The narrator of the story describes it as "uniting people and possessions." Bharati Mukherjee, as a novelist, has united not only Eastern, Central and Pacific zone as a fabric of her story but she has also dealt with the universal theme of time—the past, present and future. For her, 'History is a big saving bank' (6) and she has artistically explored and handled the complexities of cultural confrontation and politics of "otherness" in the novel with a touch of diasporic experience.

*Leave It to Me (*1977) continues the theme of immigration in a way which completes her trilogy beginning with *Jasmine* (1989). The protagonist, Debbie Devi, is a Eurasian orphan who is adopted by a New York family of Italian origin. Born in India with a hippie follower mother of a sex-age guru and her father, the founder of Ashram, a serial killer of Romeo Hawk/Haque, was adopted by Di Maritino family of America. At the age of twenty-three, after graduating from SUNY, Albany, she sets out her search for bio-man in California. As a foundling, she seeks a city, a neighbourhood and a home and finally inherits nothing while she is entitled to everything. It is a story of great culture

shock of a foundling as a creature to nowhere land which is full of immense feelings of rootlessness, homelessness, alienation and depression as a part of diasporic consequences which is beautifully created by the novelist.

After the publication of *Wife* (1975), Jasmine was published in 1989 with an interval of fourteen years and she devoted to two dozen short stories dealing with themes of rootless identity and diasporic experiences. These stories have been collected in two volumes—*Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988). In the 'Introduction' to *The Middleman and Other Stories,* Bharati Mukherjee perceives migration as "aloofness of expatriation" and deals with "exuberance of immigration." (3) She encountered "the racial discrimination" like any Pariah in the Brahminical Indian society in Canada and experienced as "the visible minority."

Darkness is a collection of twelve stories which unfolds the pains and sufferings of Indian people in Canada where violence, rape and fear are rampant everywhere. Violence and sex are spread and officials appear like a dispassionale bureaucrat. These stories are centralized around the theme of expatriation and immigration where her characters appear like 'a split personality,' 'a fractured identity' and 'a divided self as a part of diasporic experience.' We can witness the comments of Leela Lahiri in "Hindus" who appears like a divided self. On the one hand, she says, "I am an American citizen" (133) but she feels "I was a Bengali Brahmin." (133) She loves to find her 'home' in India. It is a quest for biculturalism as well as a cultural conflict between Indian ethos and American consciousness.

The Middleman and Other Stories deals with theme of diasporic feelings which is reflected through the dream of America as a land of fortune, freedom and happiness of characters in the stories. The novelist considers herself as a middleman or an interpreter between two cultures where immigrants of 'Third World' are in a process of 'uprooting' and 're-rooting' that Clark Blaise, her novelist husband, in his book, *Resident Indian,* calls as "unhousement" and "rehousement." (648) In the stories, her characters have to pay a heavy price of being 'American' and

they belong to different countries of world like India, China, Italy, Hungary, Iraq, Trinidad, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Germany, Philippines, Vietnam, and Afghanistan. Protagonists are generally women characters who are crazy and inclined to have a sexual relationship which finally results in the sexual misadventure. In these stories, sex becomes a bond of love which allures them to come to America for seeking happiness and fortune. It is a tragic situation of characters which provides them the sufficient stock of diasporic experience of exile and alienation. *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977) is her non-fictional work, based on autobiographical memories with her husband in Calcutta of days past for a year, where she narrates her experiences as an expatriate writer of 'Third World art' and dreams of V.S. Naipaul as a model writer who insists on "the absolute impossibility of ever having a home, a desh." (287) It reveals her diasporic conflict of being 'an expatriate writer' or "immigrant writer."

The Sorrow and Terror: The Haunting Legacy of Air India Tragedy (1987) is based on a plane crash *en route* Canada which exploded over the sea off the West Coast of Ireland. Mukherjee is perceptive of effects of disaster on relatives of victims in Canada which knits the stories of pain, depression and isolation. It is a sort of diasporic association of human beings with a sense of belonging which highlights the deep sense of love and *karuna* (kindness) for one who is distressed and dispossessed.

The present study thus concentrates on the diasporic consciousness of the novelist whose stories deal with the theme of expatriation and immigration, homeless and rootlessness, quest for past, nostalgia, memory and the sense of displacement. It is also a quest of 'home' in the foreign land which makes her a novelist of diasporic experience.

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Characters in Situation: Pankaj Mishra's *The Romantics*

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One important question asked about Pankaj Mishra's novel *The Romantics* is: Are the characters truly romantic? It is very easy to answer this question either in the affirmative or negative because the term romanticism has more than ten thousand definitions[1] but the attempt will be quite vacuous. A better way to solve the issue is to assume that the characters in the novel are romantic in some way: we cannot deny the title of the story. Mishra sees the drama of innocence and experience within the novel in this light. We have to find out what kind of romantics the novelist has tried to depict.

In an interview given to Mukund Padmanabhan published in the Literary Review of *The Hindu*, Mishra sought to clarify certain aspects of his novel. He admitted that East-West encounter was bound to figure in a general way in any novel concerned with modern India. He, however, significantly adds:

> I was not really aware that this was turning out to be a East-West encounter book or the fact the book was set in places, which are visited by a lot of tourists it was somebody, who read the book in the manuscript form, did point this out to me but I do not think this is hugely important consideration one way or another. After all, a novel is a novel and it could be set anywhere.[2]

In the light of this explanation, it would be improper to treat East-West encounter as the central issue although this is also an aspect of the novel that can be studied. More important than East-West encounter are the elements of structure and character. Mishra says:

> Critics can say just about anything about it but the more important things for me are the structure or shape of the novel and the differ-

> ent narrative challenges it throws up—how one makes a character plausible or a situation plausible. All these technical problems are more interesting to me. (*Ibid.*)

Therefore the best strategy for reading this novel would be to study *characters in situation*, to see how each of them, with a certain kind of romantic temperament is assailed by the new experience of the practical world that drags him out of romantic alcove and forces him to act and make compromises. The novel is the story of certain types of romantics as conceived by the imagination of Pankaj Mishra. The romantics in the novel have the commonness of the uncommon. Each of the major characters in the novel is a romantic in the sense that he or she follows a dream rather than reality. The characters pay no heed to practical considerations of life like barriers of caste, creed and community and differences in the norms of conduct between the people of the east and those of the west. Except for Mrs. West, they are all young, impressionable and sentimental.

The result is a setback to their feelings and sentiments. This factor controls the entire theme and characters of the novel. The crucial point to be noted here is that romanticism in the novel is both inherent and induced. The romantic element in a character is given a chance to manifest itself by a favourable locale or situation and drives up or is diverted when it collides against the hard realities of life. Assi in Varanasi is a confluence of East and West, where mutual fascination arises automatically, in the rush of enthusiasm it is forgotten that the contact is transitory, and the gulf of differences in terms of life style, economic status and cultural mode cannot be bridged. Similarly, it is the situation that generated and fostered Samar's passion for Catherine. Even Priya's crush on Samar is the result of the situation in Pondicherry. The Himalayan region is home to romanticism and contemplation and Pondicherry has a bewitching effect of its own.

Some of the romantic elements, which are illustrated through the major characters are the lingering of the past, a note of melancholy, hankering after the unattainable and the realization of the gap between expectation and achievement. The blurb highlights the theme and form of the novel in the following words:

"The Romantics tells the story of Samar, a young graduate from Allahabad, restless within his uncertain society and fracturing caste system who escapes a future of small town jobs to live in the holy city of Benaras and lose himself in books and solitude. But far from offering him an undistracted existence, the city forces all his silent desires into the light."[3] Miss West, an English expatriate, introduces Samar to a world of bewildering otherness: idealist Americans, Buddhist converts, and Catherine, the French woman, who will ultimately destroy his isolation and equanimity. And always, at the edge of Samar's consciousness, is Rajesh, the poor student he meets at the university, whose tragically compromised life shows him that a self divided between two worlds can inhabit neither fully. With his wonderfully vivid and unsentimental prose, Mishra captures the inner turmoil of people forced to adjust to an ever-changing world. A profoundly moving story of love and delusion, *The Romantics* is a stunning debut. But there is something more than what meets the eye in the novel. All the major characters—Indians and westerners—have their own romantic notions, which are shattered when they come face to face with reality. Only then, they realize that their fancy cannot cheat them so well as she is famed to do.

There is, first of all, the narrator in the novel, Samar, who is none other than the debutante novelist himself. In an interview which I have already quoted, Mishra admits that there are autobiographical elements in the novel: "I did study in Allahabad, which there are references to. I spent time in Benaras. So all of these are aspects of my experiences, though of course much of it has been changed or altered."[4] Mishra also concedes that he was trying to convey the idea that however much one is acquainted with western ideas at the intellectual level, it does not prepare one for the real first-hand encounters as it were. Samar may have read many authors but it is his friendship with Miss West and then with Catherine, which really changes his life. Mishra agrees and then he reveals his mind on the title. He says:

> The novel's title indicates a kind of confusion and incomprehension: You create a certain construct of your own world and other people's worlds and then you find that the constructs you have cre-

> ated clash with other constructs created by other people, which, in the first place, are also not real. The gap between expectation, knowledge and reality was definitely one of the themes of the novel as I see it. It was not something I had set out to do at the beginning but the idea did strike me as I was writing it. (*Ibid.*)

Transition is the essence of the novel. The transition of a youth from a sheltered life to a cosmopolitan experience, from innocence to awakening and knowledge, from emotional passivity to the pain of hurt and rejection. The journey of 21-year old Samar is narrated in the first person and the reader is led into the mind of a young man, who reaches out with tentative, yearning fingers to feel and touch a world beyond the familiar.

Samar secretly longed to be a man wholly dedicated to the life of the mind immersed in intellectual pursuits of the noblest kind, a man with a clear vision of the world, which new discoveries continually expanded. But things turned out to be different. The key word that characterizes his life is chaos, a word which has been used in the novel many times. When he first came to Banaras, it was a time of desires and dreams. At the end, Samar returns to his hotel at a time when it is heavily raining. Inside the hotel, he said, "All was chaos. Water ran down my back, my socks were wet my feet cold but I was feeling quite calm." (277)

Samar has learnt to live with chaos and disorder. Such a situation reminds one of the lines of Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey" where he says: "I have learnt to look on nature not as in the hour of thoughtless youth but hearing oftentimes the still sad music of humanity nor harsh nor grating though of ample power to chasten and subdue."[5]

The young French woman in love with a struggling Indian Sitar player, the middle-aged English woman with her collection of sundappled photographs, the shabbily attired American, who is just passing through and the handsome rolling stone, who, has been poet, painter, Tibetan Buddhist and carpenter—these Western characters are all journeying through the world, a savouring of life, the life itself seeming, unimaginably adventurous. All romantics are travellers. To travel hopefully is better than to arrive is their motto. They are always in search of their ideal,

which remains elusive. Their pursuits epitomize the message in the famous lines of Urdu.

> Kabhi kisi ko mukammal jahan nahin milta
> Kahin jameen toh kahin aasman nahi milta
> (Perfection remains a Utopia. Somewhere there is no earth and somewhere there is no sky)

This is precisely what Firaq has said.

> Wahi toh bharpoor zindagi hai Firaq,
> Jismen aasoodgi nahin milti.
> (Only that life is complete, which does not have complete satisfaction)

Similar sentiments are expressed by the famous Hindi poet Harivansh Rai Bachchan:

> Us pyaley se pyar mujhe jo
> Door hatheli se pyala.
> Us hala se chav mujhe jo
> Door adhar much se hala;
> Pyar nahi pa jane mein hai
> Paney ke armano mein.
> Pa jata tab haaye, na itni
> Pyari lagti madhushala.[6]

Catherine is bewitched by the musical personality of Anand. She is liable to the romantic trait of overestimating the loved object. She valiantly combats the opposing forces of parental behests, economic insecurity and conventional French culture with its superiority complex. There is no doubt that she is sincere in her attachment to Anand. But it is quite predictable that her overblown passion must lead to disillusionment. The fault lies more with social and economic hurdles than with her sentiments. As regards her affair with Samar, it was induced by the circumstances of contiguity and the attraction she feels towards Samar is neither so shocking nor unrealistic. The letter she wrote to Samar makes her position clear as regards her relations to Anand and Samar:

> What was the meaning of this affair in the total economy of our lives, apart from giving me a sense of mischievous adventure and providing instant gratification to both of us? It was a perversion of human emotions, of our humanity. I now see that perversion within myself and feel ashamed. I feel ashamed of your role also. You only encouraged the development of harmful ideas and notions inside me. (210)

After the failure of her romantic enterprise, Catherine changes the course of her life; she moves from boyfriend to boyfriend. Now a young woman, who has her whole life in front of her, what else she could do? The new way of life could also be viewed as a manifestation of desperation, which drives her from one romantic poll to another. But the only precocious experience in her life will certainly be her Indian affair with Anand.

Even Miss West, another major romantic character in the novel, ultimately surrenders to the practical needs. She decides to go back to England (not America, where her married lover resides). While parting from Banaras and Samar forever, she says:

> Come and visit me in England. We shall . . . (275)

The last pronoun and the uncompleted sentence suggest that she was going to lead a married life. Once again, her romantic nature is proclaimed by the fact that she persisted in her love for almost three decades. Her personality cannot be defined in terms of her failure as a romantic, she rebelled against the love laws (to use Arundhati Roy's term)[7] and fell in love with a married man Richard.

Even Priya, who is a minor character, had her moments of romantic love when she felt powerfully attracted to Samar. She, later on, apologies to Samar for what she called her "childish impetuosity," like Catherine she also took a lover. In Dharmshala when she saw Samar, she was accompanied by a boyfriend. We cannot expect a girl to become a sanyasini for the sake of a crush, but the experience of a sudden powerful love that she feels must be a precious possession of her life.

I have analyzed the major characters in the novel in conjunction with the motivating agency of the emerged situation.

The investigation leads us to the conclusion that Pankaj Mishra's first novel deals primarily with characters that possess a romantic element in their make-up, although their personalities are different. It shows us how the romantic temperament perseveres and finally buckles under the pressure of convention and practical necessity but "the past does live on, in people as well as cities." (3)

It needs to be noted that existential awareness is allied to the romantic vision. As Pratap Bhanu Mehta has observed, Pankaj Mishra's novel *The Romantics* was, "in some respects, a journey of self-discovery."[8]

In the end, each character realizes the personal and social factors that have led to his or her failure and at the same time, each character recognizes the worth of his or her romantic enterprise and vision. Without these underlying strings of the theme, it is hardly possible to accomplish a complete and proper reading of the novel.

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Shakespeare's Knowledge of Dance: A Study of His Plays

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Shakespeare's plays have been studied from different angles but very little is known about his knowledge and understanding of the dances that were known and popular during his age. It is said that Queen Elizabeth herself was very fond of dance and that she used to dance *galliard*, known for its leaps and kicking steps, six to seven times in quick succession every morning, in order to keep herself fit. Shakespeare's plays help us know not only about these dances but also reflect his views on them.

The name *Pavan* has been derived from *Padovana*, which is itself derived from Padua, a city in Italy or from *Pavo*, a Spanish word which means peacock and which is also a dialect name for the city of Padua. It is said that *Pavan* moved first from Italy to France and thereafter to Spain where especially in Southern Spain it was performed in churches on solemn occasions. It is also said that it was a new form of *basse danse*, which was the collective name for the walking and gliding dances of the 16th century, performed primarily at the Court of Burgundy. It disappeared in the 16th century giving place to the courtly *Pavan*, a slow and stately dance.

It was the foremost grave and majestic processional dance of the aristocracy of the age. It opened ceremonial balls and was used for exhibiting elegant dress. The gentlemen always wore their caps, swords and mantles and the ladies their long robes and twains. The dancers stepped round the room and then crossed in the middle. While they danced, their garments always touched the ground suggesting the viewers of a peacock's tail. With the passage of time, steps like the *fleuret*, a brief lift of

each foot before a step, made the dance less pompous. This dance was customarily followed by its afterdance, the vigorous *galliard*. The paired dances, *Pavan* and *galliard*, were a forerunner of the instrumental dance suites of the 17th century. Sir Toby refers to this dance in *Twelfth Night:* "Then he's a rogue and a passy measures pavin." (Act V, Sc. i, p. 374)

The word *galliard* has been derived from *gaillard*, a French word which means lively. This quick and lively court dance is said to have originated in Italy in the 15th century. It moved from Italy to France, thereafter to Spain and finally to England. The athletic gentlemen performing this dance used the prescribed four hopping steps and one high leap to impress their partners. To perform the galliard, couples danced the length of the ballroom either together, men leaping higher than women, or separately. Sir Toby refers to many dances in the same breath in *Twelfth Night*, *galliard* being one of them: "Why dost thou not go to church in a galliard and come home in a coranto? My very walk should be a jig; I would not so much as make water but in a sink-a-pace. . . . I did think, by the excellent constitution of thy leg, it was form'd under the star of a galliard." (Act I, Sc. iii, p. 351)

The word *Cinque-Pace* has been derived from a French word, *Cinqpas* which means five. This was called *Cinque-Pace* because it was regulated by five basic steps. Shakespeare refers to this brisk dance in *Twelfth Night* and also in *Much Ado about Nothing*. He spells it as *sink-a-pace* in *Twelfth Night* but *Cinque-Pace* in *Much Ado about Nothing*. Shakespeare suggests what he thinks of this dance in *Much Ado about Nothing:* "Wooing, wedding, and repenting, is as a Scotch jig, a measure and a cinquepace; the first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance, and, with his bad legs, falls into the cinquepace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave." (Act II, Sc. i, p.142)

It is said that this dance originated in the Canary Islands in Spain from where it reached England but dance critics are divided over its place of origin. Shakespeare refers to this sprightly

dance in *All's Well that End's Well* and also in *Love's Labour Lost*. Lafeu tells the king in *All's Well that Ends Well* that he knows a medicine that would make him "dance canary with spritely fire and motion." (Act II, Sc. i, p. 323) This dance is referred to in *Love's Labour's Lost* also: "No, my complete master; but to jig off a tune at the tongue's end, canary to it with your feet, humour it with turning up your eyelids, sigh a note and sing a note." (Act III, Sc. i, p.174)

Coranto is a lively and fast dance called *Courante* in France and *Corranta* in Italy which originated in the 16th century. This dance of French and Italian origin with short quick steps was called "swift coranto" by Shakespeare in *Henry V*. This rapid dance which was pantomimic when it originated became an afterdance of *Allemande* in the 17th century. This stately, dignified dance always preceded the *minuet* in the first half of the 18th century but it disappeared as a dance proper by the time the century drew to its close. Shakespeare refers to it in three of his plays. Lafeu refers to it in *All's Well that Ends Well*: "Why, he's able to lead her a coranto." (Act II, Sc. iii, p. 326) Sir Toby advises Sir Andrew to return home in a coranto in *Twelfth Night* and in *Henry V*, the Duke of Britaine tells the Dauphin and the King of France about the dancing schools in Britain:

> They bid us to the English dancing schools
> And teach lavoltas high and swift corantos. (Act III, Sc. V, p. 567)

Lavolta is a lively dance in which a young lady with the help of her partner leaped and turned in mid-air. It is said to have originated in Italy from where it reached France, and then England. The man in this dance, known for constant turning and high leaps, turned the woman round many times and then helped in making her leap high in which one leg was extended to the side, front or back in mid-air and the other was struck against it. In *Henry V*, the Duke of Britaine refers to it as "lavoltas high." Troilus refers to it in *Troilus and Cressida*:

> I cannot sing,
> Nor heel the high lavolt, nor sweeten talk. (Act IV, Sc. iv, p. 814)

Bergomask is a rustic dance also called *Bergamasca* originated in Bergamo, a place in northern Italy. The dance thus derives its name from a place in Italy. The uneducated peasants of the place of its origin were considered uncultured and uncouth whose ridiculous jargon was imitated by the peasants in the rest of the country. And from the language, they moved on to imitate the way they danced. This fast dance which had a definite melody was performed as a circle courtship dance for couples. Men circled forward and women backward but when the melody changed, the partners embraced, turned a few steps and began again. Though it was quite popular in Shakespeare's age, it did not become a court dance. Shakespeare refers to this dance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "Will it please you to see the Epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?" (Act V, Sc. i, p. 221)

Fading is also a rustic dance which originated in Ireland and was performed on joyous occasions in many parts of Ireland. A king and a queen were chosen from those young persons who were known for dancing well. A garland made of two hoops covered with flowers and ribbons and placed at right angles and fastened to a handle was carried by the queen while dancing. The king and the queen used to lift up their joined hands as high as they could with the queen holding the garland in the other hand. The couple who was the farthest of all in the room was the first to pass under and after that the rest of the persons linked together followed in succession. When the last had passed, the king and the queen would suddenly turn around and face their companions. This was often repeated during the dance. The dancers used to visit newly married couples of status in the neighbourhood on the first of May and received from them a stuffed ball richly decked with gold and silver lace and money. This dance was performed after the bonfires were lighted up; the queen used to welcome the return of summer singing a popular Irish song. Shakespeare refers to this dance which did not become popular with the aristocrats in *The Winter's Tale:* "He has the prettiest love-songs for maids; so without bawdry, which is strange; with such

delicate burdens of dildos and fadings, 'jump her and thump her'." (Act IV, Sc. iv, p. 399)

Sword dance was a ceremonial folk dance performed by men with swords or sword-like objects which were later replaced by trade implements when these dances were taken over by trade guilds. Themes like human and animal sacrifice for fertility, defence against evil spirits and how warriors defended themselves and attacked their enemies were presented by the dancers. There were many types of sword dances popular during Shakespeare's age. They were known as *linked sword dance, crossed sword dance, combat dance* and *guerrilla dance*. While performing *linked-sword dance*, which was called *hilt-and-point dance* also, each performer held the hilt of his own sword and the point of the sword of the dancer behind him and moved in a circle. The performance of warriors in a battle was mimed in *combat dance*. In *crossed-sword dance* the dancers performed over two swords or a sword and scabbard crossed on the ground.

Shakespeare refers to *sword-dance* in three of his plays. Bertram laments in *All's Well that Ends Well* that he is not being sent to wars on the pretext that he is "too young" and will have to stay back with the sword just "to dance with." (Act II, Sc. i, p. 322) Demetrius refers to it in *Titus Andronicus*:

> Why, boy, although our mother,
> unadvis'd,
> Gave you a dancing-rapier by your side. (Act II, Sc. i, p.876)

Antony refers to it in *Antony and Cleopatra*:

> He at Philippi
> kept
> His sword e'en like a dancer. (Act III, Sc. xi, p. 1178)

Jig is a lively folk dance also spelled *gigue* and marked for kicking or jumping steps. It was a very popular dance of the 16th century. The name *Jig* has been derived either from giguer, an old French word, which means to dance or giga, an old English word which means fiddle. The performers sometimes danced across crossed flails and clay pipes and sometimes they wore clogs. The northern jigs were popular at the court of Elizabeth I

and the name was also loosely applied to other dances of folk origin. When the dance reached France, it became very popular at the court of Louis XIV.

Shakespeare refers to it as a sort of comic entertainment in *Hamlet*: "He's for a jig, or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps." (Act II, Sc. ii, p. 1045) Hamlet means the same while reacting to Ophelia's observation that he is merry: "O God, your only jig-maker! What should a man do but be merry?" (Act III, Sc. ii, p. 1050) Shakespeare compares it to wooing in *Much Ado about Nothing* whereas Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night* is reminded of it when he talks of his own gait.

The name of the folk dance Roundel is derived from rondel, an old French word which means small circle. It was also known as *round*. The participants formed a ring and moved in a circle. Shakespeare refers to this dance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when Titania proposes to have "a roundel and a fairy song." (Act II, Sc. ii, p. 205)

Brawl was the dance with which *balls* usually opened. The participants joined hands and formed a circle. They used to give one another continual shakes also. The music that accompanied it dictated the steps of the performers because a change in the tune signalled a change in the steps also. Kissing was also sometimes introduced. This is referred to in *Love's Labour Lost*: "Master, will you win your love with a French brawl?" (Act III, Sc. i, p.174)

Tread a Measure was a grave solemn dance marked for slow and measured steps like the *minuet*. Since it was by nature solemn, it was performed at public entertainments in the Inns of Court. This is referred to in *Love's Labour Lost*:

> They say that they have measur'd
> many a mile
> To tread a measure with you on this grass. (Act V, Sc. ii, p. 188)

Hay, a country dance, reached England from France and is considered a type of *Brawl* by some critics. The performers moved right and left and performed in a circle, straight line or a figure of eight. Dull refers to it in *Love's Labour Lost*:

I will play
On the tabor to the Worthies, and let
them dance the hay. (Act V, Sc. i, p. 186)

Trip and Go was the name of a popular *Morris dance*, a mime dance of Moorish origin and also called *Morisco* and *Moresca.* Shakespeare refers to this dance performed with rapid light steps in *Love's Labour Lost*:

Trip and go, my sweet; deliver this paper. (Act IV, Sc. ii, p. 180)

Satyr's Dance was a very common and one of the means of entertainment in England both before and during Shakespeare's age. The very name of this dance evokes the memory of the accident that occurred at the Court of France towards the fag end of the fourteenth century. There is a reference to this dance in *The Winter's Tale*: "They call themselves Saltiers, and they have a dance which the wenches say is a gallimaufry of gambols, because they are not in't." (Act IV, Sc. iv, p. 400)

Up-Spring, a German dance, reached England from Germany and became popular there. The name of this dance has been derived from *Hupfauf*, the wildest dance of Germany performed on joyous occasions and remembered for its association with wild merry making. Shakespeare refers to this aspect of the dance when he calls it 'swagg'ring' in *Hamlet*:

The King doth wake to-night and
takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swagg'ring up-spring
reels. (Act I, Sc. iv, p. 1035)

Antic was a grotesque rustic dance. This was performed by dancers in a circle. Shakespeare refers to this dance in *Macbeth*:

I'll charm the air to give a sound,
While you perform your antic round. (Act IV, Sc. i, p. 1017)

This is also referred to in *Love's Labour Lost*:

We will have, if this fadge not, an antic. (Act V, Sc. i, p. 186)

Light o' Love was not a dance proper but a dance tune which Shakespeare refers to in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Two*

Gentlemen of Verona. Lucetta refers to it as a 'light tune.' (Act I, Sc. ii, pp. 29-30) Margaret refers to it as a light tune in *Much Ado about Nothing:*

> Clap's into 'Light o'love'; that goes without a burden. Do you sing it, and I'll dance it. Beat: Ye light o'love with your heels! (Act III, Sc. iv, pp.152-53)

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A Timeless Tale of Thwarted Dreams: Myriad Myths in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*

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It is rare for a reader not to approach an award winning book with a mixture of curiosity and expectation for excellence. He is confronted at the very outset with the question what makes the work stand out so as to be awarded. It is therefore not surprising if a reading of Githa Hariharan's debut novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*, winner of the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best first novel (1992), evokes such a response. Among other things like an engaging plot, a masterly control over narrative and technique and well-developed characters, what contributes conspicuously to its success, is the sensitive portrayal of Indian ethos. This ethos is created with two sets of myths: one narrated to Devi by her grandmother and the other by her father-in-law.

At the centre of the novel is the Indian woman—both modern and traditional—caught in a tangled web of matrimony. It deals with the issue of marriage in India, particularly 'arranged marriage.' It shows couples 'surviving' and 'existing' with each other, in a social framework of marriage in Indian society. To them marriage is a social obligation, a necessity and therefore desirable and inevitable. However, it has nothing to do with love, sentiments and emotions. It is all about duties of a wife towards her husband and his family, who in turn have almost no duty or obligation towards her except for accommodating her in a family she is expected to serve. Hariharan shows that the situation is same for an educated modern young woman of today, who has lived abroad all alone, and for an educated or uneducated housewife one generation earlier.

Hariharan's novel is about separate yet linked stories of three Indian women Devi, Sita and Mayamma. These stories explore the various hues of darkness engulfing their married lives. Sita, the protagonist, is a young South Indian woman, who returns to India after a short stay of two years in America for doing M.A. While in America, she meets Dan, a black. They soon "come together in friendship" and "approach romance" (3); but even before this "a link had formed itself between them across the classroom, a bond forged on the fringes of middle-class, vitamin-popping, milk-drinking America." (3) Gradually the bond forged between. Devi and Dan grows stronger as "Promises had been half-made in the dark shadows of the parking lot outside the grimy, friendly dinner they often met at." The relationship, however, does not culminate in marriage. Devi admits:

> Dan was a friend, an experiment for a young woman eager for experience. The possibility of imposing a permanence such as marriage—however flexible in transient America—was somehow obscene. (6)

The way Devi and Dan's relationship was shaping, its logical culmination would have been marriage. In fact close to their graduation time Dan does propose to Devi, "yet when the question was put to her, she was shocked." (5) Dan attributes her reluctance to the fear of taking risk. He is much disappointed. Her reluctance is, however, due to the fact that Dan and she are very different in terms of their beliefs, culture and traditions. At one point, when Devi goes to meet Dan's family she decides that "She would shed her inhibitions, her burden of Indianness," (4) but she is unable to do so. In forming a bond of friendship both had made efforts to bridge these differences; but she also knows that these differences would always prevent them from uniting. She confesses:

> Dan was different. His charm lay in the vast distance they, had travelled towards each other, and in Devi's awareness that this distance was not, would not be, completely bridged. (5)

Moreover, Devi's grandmother had painted a picture of marriage to Devi through the myriad myths she often recounted. This im-

age was deeply embedded in her psyche, so that all ideas of marriage with Dan remained "tantalizing images of some alien mirage, some barely remembered dream of clandestine passion." (3) Perhaps she believes what her grandmother wanted her to believe, that she was like a princess and that when she would grow up, a happy marriage awaited her, full of love and a prince-like husband too. Therefore, "Devi had clearly relegated this relationship to the blurred regions of fantasy." (3)

Devi returns to India, "single, unscathed, her filial piety intact" (12) to an arranged marriage scenario where, "all the matrimonial ads in the Sunday papers demanded fair, beautiful, home-loving and prepared to 'adjust'" (17) kind of bride. She agrees to meet the various prospective matches and their families. She finally marries Mahesh, who " is no prince, but a regional manager in a multinational company that makes detergents and toothpaste." (22) To Devi he appears frank, honest and matter-of-fact. So Devi decides " to play out a travesty of myths that had filled my childhood" and " be as matter-of-fact as Mahesh." (23) After her marriage to Mahesh, a cool sense of detachment engulfs their relationship. All efforts on Devi's part to bring warmth into it and to kindle it with love and passion are futile. Even if he smiles at her, Devi can see that "the smile did not reach his eyes, which were cool and distrustful." (70) If Devi is troubled "Sleep if off, he says, you know you always feel better in the morning." (74) Even when Mahesh asks her "Devi, are you unwell? "she says, "This was not concern; this was a reprimand." (70) As long as Mahesh's father is there, he seems to keep Devi's dream of marriage alive, with his treasure of stories, like her grandmother did. Once he goes abroad, Devi drifts away from Mahesh to Gopal and quietly walks out of her matrimonial home. Gopal is no better than Mahesh. When this truth dawns upon Devi she returns to her mother's home in Madras. Devi finally realizes that:

> My grandmother fed me fantasies, my father a secretive love. My mother sought me out with hope, and when disappointed, pushed me forward in the direction she chose. . . .I have made very few choices. . . . But I was too well prepared, and not prepared at all.

> America, Jacaranda Road, Mahesh, Gopal. I have run away from all my trials. (137)

Once she realizes this she makes a resolve to start afresh with determination and get on with life.

The second story linked to Devi, is that of her mother Sita. Sita was not very beautiful, but she could play the veena superbly. On account of this one talent, she is accepted by the groom's family:

> Her talent had set her apart from other girls; so had her unfeminine determination, and the dark brown skin that prospective mothers-in-law had looked at with disapproval . . . she had brought, with her as dowry twenty thousand rupees, her veena, and a grim resolve to be the perfect wife and daughter-in-law. (30)

After marriage, the situation changes. Her one talent, for which she was accepted as a bride, becomes her crime. Her father-in-law orders her in anger to put away her veena because, according to him, she was neglecting her duty as a wife and daughter-in-law. Sita's training as an Indian girl prevented her from asserting her individuality. She is like a volcano, seething with rage inside, but presenting a cool and calm exterior. She gives up her passion for music. She never picks up the veena again, which was a part of her dowry. Sita draws strength from her subdued desires and curbed individuality. After her daughter Devi is born, she takes place of the discarded veena in Sita's life. Later when Sita's husband goes astray and is infatuated with a young orphaned cousin of Devi, she successfully manages the situation by banishing the girl from her house, much to the despair of her husband and Devi. Sita's frustrations are converted into fortitude and she emerges as a strong individual, capable of handling the problematic situations which confront her after she is widowed.

Like Sita, Mayamma is also a woman who is much frustrated in marriage, but manages her life well without a husband. Her troubles are more torturous because she is uneducated and does not bear children for several years after marriage. She is abused, kicked and severely tortured by her mother-in-law. In order to get a child, she is exposed to extreme discomfort in the name of

tradition and religion. Finally, she is 'blessed' with a son, who becomes wayward and spoilt when he grows up. Her husband also deserts her, when the child is eight years old. Mayamma becomes a caretaker in Baba's, Devi's father-in-law's, house. She is a witness to a lot of upheaval in the house. She is a witness when Parvati deserts Baba, and when Devi deserts Mahesh.

Comparing the lives and struggles of the three women Devi, the protagonist reflects upon their situation, when she is living with Gopal:

> She thought of the three of them, Mayamma, Sita and herself. Three of the women who walked a tightrope and struggled for some balance; for some means of survival they could fashion for themselves. (135)

All three belonged to different generations and were different in terms of education and social circumstances. Mayamma could not bear a child for several years, Sita had a girl child, and Devi couldn't bear one. Mayamma's husband and mother-in-law tortured her physically. Sita's troubles were more mental; and Devi's were due to her husband's indifferent attitude which disturbed her emotional equilibrium. Devi observes:

> Mayamma had been thrown into the waters of her womanhood well before she had learnt to swim. She had learnt about lust, the potential of unhidden bestial cruelty, firsthand. She had no choice really. . . . And she had won some small victory if you could call it by such a grand name. (135-36)

As compared to her Sita's case was different. Sita had married 'late, at the ripe age of twenty.' Unlike Mayamma, she came to her in-law's home with a determination to be a good wife and daughter-in-law on the basis of her talents; but she too "had paid the price for it, not a light one for someone who measured her self-worth so completely in terms of music." (136)

II

The frustrations of these women—Devi, Sita and Mayamma—are vividly portrayed, projecting a facet of Indian ethos. For this Indian customs, traditions, rituals and supersti-

tions are woven into a rich literary fabric with a profusion of ancient myths and not so ancient allusive stories. The fact that the writer explains some of these in a glossary given at the end of the book, for the benefit of non-Indian readers, shows how significant they are for the understanding, appreciation and consequent success of the novel.

The protagonist Devi's grandmother recounted several mythical tales in her childhood. These tales were about many mythological women, their attitudes, aspirations, exploits and achievements. However, the stories were, as Devi says, "sharp, jagged, tip-of-the-iceberg variety." They aroused and stirred young Devi's mind, but seldom explained explicitly or satisfied her curiosity. Therefore, Devi says in the Prelude to the novel, "I must have asked my grandmother why? thousand of times." (1) She further says:

> My grandmother's stories were no ordinary stories. She chose each for a particular occasion, a story in reply to each of my childhood questions. She had an answer for every question. But her answers were not simple: they had to be decoded. (27)

Thus the significance of the myths mentioned by Hariharan has to be decoded. The issues they raise have to be understood and the answers to the questions they pose, are to be sought. Devi's grandmother was not unaware of the thousand faces of the night engulfing matrimony, yet she was optimistic and hopeful for Devi. Her myths and stories were "a window to look at a mysterious, unknown world outside." (27) She wanted Devi to be aware of feminine frailties, frustrations as well as fortitude, so that she could endure these dismal hues and somehow survive. Therefore her mythical stories were linked to situations in Devi's life and women around her.

The first myth she tells Devi is that of Nala, the king of Nishads, and Damyanti, a pretty princess. At her swayamvara she listened to the heralds of various princes, praising their masters' virtues: "but Damyanti listened with only one ear. Her heart, loyal and steadfast, never wavered from the path leading to Nala." (20) Grandmother explained to Devi that she pretended to

listen to the other heralds, "Because a woman gets her heart's desire by great cunning." (20) To Devi the myth seemed to convey that:

> Princesses grew up in the secure knowledge of what awaited them: love, a prince who was never short of noble, and a happy ending. (20)

Her next myth describes how Gandhari meets her blind husband for the first time. When she sees "the pupils glazed and useless" (29) she tears her rich red skirt and ties it to cover her eyes too. She thus shuts out the world of sights. Normally the myth is understood to project Gandhari as a dutiful 'pativrata,' who blindfolded herself because the sense of sight was denied to her husband. She is perceived as a true 'ardhangini' of her husband. Githa Hariharan depicts her differently. She depicts her as seething with silent rage for being deceived. The grandmother interprets this myth for Devi and says:

> In her pride, her anger, Gandhari said nothing . . . lips straight and thin with fury, Gandhari was not just another wilful proud woman. . . . She embraced her destiny—a blind husband—with a self-sacrifice worthy of her royal blood. (29)

Sita, Devi's mother, is like Gandhari. She was not very beautiful but played the veena beautifully. Her great talent was appreciated by her in-laws and they agreed to their son's marriage with her. But once she is married, her father-in-law rebukes her for this very talent. In her father-in-law's house she would play on her veena and the whole house would drown in the magic of her music. Once when she was thus lost in her practice, she couldn't hear her father-in-law calling out to her. He is furious and orders, "Put that veena away. Are you a wife, a daughter-in-law?" (30) Her reaction is like Gandhari's:

> She hung her head over the veena for a minute that seemed to stretch for ages . . . then she reached for the strings of her precious veena and pulled them out of the wooden base, they came apart with a discordant twang of protest. (30)

The two women protest in the same manner. Gandhari never saw anything again, Sita never played anything on her veena again. For each of them, her "fury could seep into every pore of a womanly body and become the very bloodstream of her life." (20) Devi's grandmother understood Sita's rage but she says: "A woman fights her battles alone." (36)

Gandhari's myth is also co-related to Gauri's marriage. Gauri is the grandmother's maid. She is very beautiful, has worked only in Brahmin homes and has even amassed eighteen sovereigns for her dowry. She is very excited about her wedding and so is Devi. But her husband turns out to be an "animal," who "treated her like dirt." (32) Her protest is of a different kind. She runs away with her young brother-in-law, who is afflicted with leucoderma. She even takes away ten of her sovereigns. Like Gandhari she settles down with a man who is physically afflicted and is happy with him.

At one point Devi is sad at the plight of her motherless cousin Uma. At first people are envious of her because a wealthy match has been found for her. But it later turns out that:

> Her husband and his father drank till she was stupefied with fear; even her girlhood spent with an indifferent father and a hostile stepmother had not prepared her for this trial. (35)

Uma returns to grandmother's house after her brief marriage. Seeing Devi's grief, the grandmother says, "Why weep over Uma? A high-born prince, or even a goddess, has been a victim of disaster." (36) She then narrates the myth of Amba, "a truly courageous woman, [who] finds the means to transform her hatred, the fate that overtakes her, into a triumph." (36) She tells Devi, how at the *swayamvara* of Amba, Ambika and Ambalika, Bheeshma forcibly took them away. Amba, who loved the king of Salwa, accosted Bheeshma and his stepmother and returned to Salwa. However, "Salwa roared with crude, mirthless laughter" (37) and commented, "Do you think I feast on leftovers?" (37) The grandmother understands Amba's predicament and tells Devi, "Even when she had been kidnapped from her father's palace, Amba had not felt as orphaned as she did now." (37) She

further tells Devi, "A woman without a husband has no home," (38) just like Uma. The myth, as retold by grandmother, is not merely a tale of revenge. It goes much deeper and conveys that a woman, if wronged, must have:

> Strength to seize sorrow and uncertainty, and pour the mixture into the sieve of her penance. Whatever emerged, however bloody and vengeful, was a distilled potion of good fortune. (40)

One of grandmother's myths is about Ganga, the wife of valiant king Shantanu. Ganga would bear sons and then throw them in the river Ganga. They were 'gandharvas' in a reality, who had to be born on earth as a punishment. This myth amply illustrates that "motherhood is more than the pretty picture you see of a tender woman bent over the baby she is feeding. . . . A mother has to walk strange and tortuous path." (88)

There is another set of allusive stories narrated to Devi, with a different motive. Devi's father-in-law, whom she fondly calls Baba, has an array of not so ancient allusive stories. These do not pertain to mythical characters, but real men and women, forming a part of the rich cultural heritage of carnatic music. He tells her the story of Muttuswamy Dikshitar, a seventeenth century composer, who lived with his two wives, a dark one and a fair one. Through this story Baba impresses upon Devi, that women should forget their desire for ornaments. Another composer of the 16th century, Purandara Dasa and his wife Saraswati Bai's story reinforces that "it takes the wife's flame of *dharma* to light within a man, the divine lamp that is rusting with neglect." (66) Therefore the onus of keeping the flame of dharma alive rested with Devi and not so much with her husband Mahesh. He reads out to Devi a passage about Thyagaraja, another 18th century composer's composition 'Kriti.' He skilfully skips and does not read to her about 'Kritya,' "a ferocious woman who hunts and destroys the house in which women are insulted." (70) There are other virtuous wives also, whose stories are recollected so as to set an example for Devi. Baba tells how Jayadev's virtuous wife is blessed by Lord Krishna himself. Seeing her spiritual greatness, Jayadev falls at her feet and signs *Geet Govinda* as "the

husband of Padmavati." (65) Then there is the tale of Narayan Tirtha, the incarnation of Jayadev: "he, as in the case of all great men, was blessed with an ideal wife. . . . Spurred by his wife's selfless devotion, Narayan was initiated into Sanyasa according to traditional rites." (66) The essence of Baba's legends is:

> A virtuous wife is so devoted to her husband that she dies before him, a *sumangali*, her forehead unwidowed and whole with vermilion, her arms and neck still ornamented with bangles and gold chains. (66-67)

All the allusive stories which Devi's father-in-law narrates, strike home just one point that a wife should be good, virtuous, dutiful, selflessly devoted etc. These stories sum up an all-pervading and truly significant segment of Indian beliefs, religious traditions and social customs. In contrast, though grandmother's stories are ancient myths, they uphold a more modern set of values, where women protest against atrocities, face their trials and tribulations, and are not really dumb shadows of their husbands. "Through the stories of Devi, Sita and Mayamma, *The Thousand Faces of Night* brings alive the underworld of Indian women's lives—where most dreams are thwarted and the only constant is survival." To achieve this Githa Hariharan uses a mix of myriad myths and legends deftly. They do not stand out like a patch but are woven into an intricate pattern of Indian ethos, so that they merge subtly and significantly with the narrative. They seem to suggest that though dreams are thwarted, a woman can, if she wills, dispel the dismal darkness from the thousand faces of night.

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Nissim Ezekiel: A Poet of Indian Sensibility

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Nissim Ezekiel can be termed as a true poet of Indian sensibility. His awareness toward this can be discovered in his concept of Nation, Patriotic Feelings, Indian Culture, Philosophy, Ethos and Moral Values of India. Besides these, Ezekiel was also conscious of the Indian Imagery, Myth, Rites and Rituals, Scriptures and Religions of India. Other sources of Indian sensibilities are the Indian Motifs, Trends and Attitudes (Like that of Renunciation, Resignation and Non-attachment). Above all the Indian Environment, with all its Panorama, its Flora and Fauna, Weather etc. gives Indian colour to his poetry. Lastly, Ezekiel responded to the Indian vocabulary with all its components like Phonological, Lexical and Semantics, which have Indian connotations. All these relate him to Indian sensibility and enrich his poetry with Indian flavour.

Ezekiel published five collections of verse including *The Unfinished Man* (1960) and *The Exact Name* (1965). Other collections of his works are *A Time to Change and Other Poems* (1952), *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *Hymns in Darkness and Poster Prayers* (1976) and *Collected Poems* (1966).

All his poems reveal that Ezekiel was a poet of Indian sensibility. The first and foremost sensibility that any citizen should have is the sense of belongingness to his own country. Ezekiel's poetry is replete with this element. He had a strong sense of belongingness to his own country, India and its environment etc. Not only his poems but also his essay like "Naipaul's India and Mine" are suffused with this Indian spirit, where he emphasizes the sense of being an Indian and wanted to do something for India.

"In India—I am an Indian—. When I was eighteen, a friend asked me What my ambition was. I said with the naïve modernity of youth, "To do something for India—" India is simply my environment—I have not withdrawn from India—I love India."

Ezekiel was strongly obsessed with the sense of belongingness to his country India, especially to his birthplace Bombay, which can clearly be felt in the following lines of the poem "island":

> I can not leave the island
> I was born here and belong.

Even in his poem "Mangoes" the same feelings are stated in a clear-cut manner:

> Perhaps it is not the mangoes
> that my eyes and tongue long for
> but Bombay as the fruit
> on which I've lived
> mining and losing
> my little life.

Ezekiel is sensitive towards his Indian environment. In his poem "Background Casually," Ezekiel declares himself to be part of Indian landscapes:

> The Indian landscapes, scars my eyes
> I have become part of it.

Nissim Ezekiel states about his environment with the touch of finality in the following words: "India is simply my environment. A man can do something for his environment by being fully what he is, not by withdrawing from it."

Few of Ezekiel's poems like "The Exact Name," "Hymn to Darkness" and "Latter-Day Psalms" show his increasing preoccupation with Indian environment. His assimilation into Indian culture is to be found in "Background Casually." He wants to feel India as his home and realizes:

> to stay where I am,
> As others choose to give themselves
> In some remote and backward place,

My backward place is where I am. (*Collected Poems*, 18)

Ezekiel is very much stressed with his bond towards his country and has mixed feelings of love and hatred for his country.

A loved and troubled country which is my home and enemy.

In his poems "The Egoist's Prayers" Ezekiel establishes this strong bond of belongingness to his country and finds his identity with collective identity of India.

Confiscate my passport, lord
I don't want to go abroad
Let me find my song
Where I belong.

He accepts India totally as his home, with all its problems and paradoxes of life:

This is my place
Where I was born. I
Know it
Well. It is home
Which I recognize at last.

Ezekiel thus considered himself to be an Indian poet writing in English who always advocated the Hindu view of life. In a letter to V.A. Shahane, he writes: "I always veered the Hindu view of life, which I consider mystically, religiously and metaphorically right."

Ezekiel was very much aware of the religious sensibilities of India. In his poem 'Hymn to Darkness' he projects the Hindu concept of the Supreme power that controls the world and every person has the part of Divine person in him. Every person has three eyes, three ears instead of two.

He speaks with his own voice. He listens
With the third ear. He sees
With the eye
In the centre of his forehead.

Ezekiel was very much conscious about the Hindu way of doing 'Tapasaya' though mantra, meditation, release of kundalini and awakening of shakti. In his poem "The Hindu" he writes

> You need not change
> Your ways of life.
> Know your mantra, meditate
> Release your kundalini
> Get your shakti awaken,
> And float with the spirit
> To your destination.

Nissim Ezekiel was not only sensitive towards religious sentiments but also, towards the natural feelings. His concept of nation was like that of Gandhi. In his poem "The Patriot" he refers to this:

> I am standing for peace and non-violence
> Why world is fighting and fighting
> Why all people of the world
> Are not following Mahatma Gandhi.

Ezekiel was hurt by the terrorist activities in Kashmir which is reflected in his 'Poem of Separation':

> To judge by memory alone
> Our love was happy
> When the bombs burst in Kashmir.

Ezekiel advocated the Indian philosophy of love for mankind, brotherhood, tolerance and concept of Ram Rajya. He also stood for the sense of unity in diversity and attitude of tolerance. In his poem "Patriot" he writes:

> All men are brothers no?
> Gujaratis, Maharastrians, Hindiwalas.
> All brothers—
> Though some have funny habits
> Still, you tolerate me,
> I tolerate you.
> One day Ram Rajya is surely coming.

Ezekiel has presented the image of Indian women as those who usually stick to moral values:

The wives of India sit apart
They don't drink
They don't talk
Of course, they don't kiss.

But the scenario regarding the attitudes of modern women is gradually changing. The modern mother, at the time of her daughter's marriage, just pretends the gestures of crying, but actually enjoys every moment. Besides the daughter too is totally indifferent. We get the glimpse of that attitude in his poem entitled "Jewish Wedding in Bombay": "Her mother shed a tear or so but wasn't really crying. It was the thing to do, so she did it, enjoying every moment. The bride laughed, when I sympathized and said, don't be silly."

The artificial behaviour of the modern mother-in-law towards her daughter-in law and daughter-in-law's reactions against this, are quite evident, in his poem "Dead-end Story" he writes:

Typical Indian Mother- in-law
to the bride
returning from her honey-moon
"Don't worry dear,
I need no help in the kitchen.
Leave it to me, please."

To which said the modern bride:

I won't take it.
Either she lets me help her
In the kitchen or she mustn't complain
That I don't help her in the kitchen.

The ethos of Indian Muslim family is presented in his poem "How the English Lesson Ended":

My Muslim neighbour's daughter
Getting on nineteen
But not yet matriculate,

Wears a burka, when she leaves for school
A hundred yards away.

Ezekiel was sensitive towards the pathetic conditions of Indian people. People have to sleep on pavements, poor people live in hutments and slums, virgins are not safe and mothers are burnt out.

Always in the sun's eye,
Here among the beggars,
Hawkers, pavement sleepers,
Hutment dwellers, slums
Dead souls of men and gods
Burnt out mothers, frightened
Virgins, wasted child
And tortured animal.
All in noisy silence
Suffering the place and time.

Ezekiel was quite distressed at the maladies of modern India. He is filled with agony, on the corruption and moral decline that has gripped India. Corruption has infected the whole society to the core. "The Railway Clerk" is very much interested in taking bribe, so as to fulfill the demands of his wife:

My wife is always asking for more money,
Money, money where to get money
My job is such, no one is giving bribe.

Ezekiel has not only presented Indian sensibility but also pictured the minute details of the street scenes of India, in poems like "Entertainment" or "Bellias Road." The poem "Entertainment" presents his insight into the psychology of rural people, who disappear after the monkey-show, for the fear of payment:

Anticipating time for payment,
the crowd dissolves,
Some, in shame, part
With the smallest coin they have,
The show moves on.

Similarly the common Indian superstitions find expression in the poems of Ezekiel. "The Visitor" projects the common Indian belief that cawing of a crow foretells someone's arrival:

> All day I waited, as befits
> The folk belief that following
> The crow a visitor would come.

Ezekiel's feelings towards the political reality of post-Independence India are reported in the poems like "The Truth about the Floods" or "Ganga." The poem "Ganga" gives the true account of a domestic servant who gets a cup of tea and a stale chapati, an old sari a year and a blouse. She borrows a coin for "pan" or sweet for her child and

> She brings a smell with her,
> and leaves it behind her.

The absurd conjunctions of the cosmopolitan cities found expression in poems like "Five children local family staring out one-child American family" and "Hangover."

Though Ezekiel has made English the medium of expression, yet it is replete with words having Indian connotations. His Indian sensibility lies in his style, diction as well. Words like cinema, jungle, lassi, smoky and stove show this. There are references to Indian personalities like George Fernandes, Satish Gujral, A.K. Ramanujan. Even ordinary Indian names like Pushpa, Ganga and Dhanya are used in the poems of Ezekiel. By way of summing up it may be said that Ezekiel is a poet of Indian sensibilities. His poetry projects the Indian consciousness and Indian culture and different features of Indianness.

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The Poetry of Kabir and Tagore: A Spiritual Quest

SAVITRI TRIPATHI

The lord is in me, the lord is in
you as life is in every seed. O
servant! Put false pride away,
and seek for Him within you.

Kabir

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

Tagore

The great driving force in the poetry of Kabir and Tagore is the quest for personal enrichment at the spiritual level. Their works and activities reveal their ceaseless striving for self-realization through manifold contact with the world and life. Both Tagore and Kabir reveal the same truth that God is all pervasive and immanent in nature and in the life of man. Their songs proclaim the divine influence. Tagore sings:

Have you not heard his silent steps?
He comes, comes, ever comes.
Every moment and every age, every day
and every night he comes, comes, ever comes.[1]

To realize Him we should break down the barrier of individual and relax the interference of the senses; our ignorance will then be removed. As Dr. Radhakrishnan rightly says, "To the finite consciousness God is far away; to the religious soul He is quite near. God is present, yet absent. In the same way *The Bhagavadgita* asserts, "Near and far away is That." *The Ishavasyopnishad* also says, "He is far and also near." "When you think

that He is not here, then you wander farther and farther away, and seek Him in vain with tears."[2]

Both Tagore and Kabir stand for making struggle against evil within and without; they are mystic seers and sages and say that God is truth. He is 'Satyam,' 'Shivam,' 'Sundaram' and illuminates the mind of man with knowledge and wisdom. He is enshrined in the temple of man's heart. As Kabir sings:

> O servant, where dost thou seek me?
> Lo! I am beside thee.
> I am neither in temple nor in mosque:
> I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash:
> Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in
> Yoga and renunciation.
> If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once
> see Me: thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time.

Kabir says, 'O Sadhu! God is the breath of all breath.'[3] The message which Tagore sends is not altogether, different. Tagore sings:

> On the day when lotus bloomed, alas,
> my mind was straying, and I knew it not.
> My basket was empty and the flower
> remained unheeded. . . .
> I knew not then that it was so near,
> that it was mine, and that this perfect
> sweetness had blossomed in the depth of
> my own heart. (*Gitanjali*, 20)

In *Fruit Gathering* also, he shares the same idea:

> You were in the centre of my
> heart, therefore when my heart
> wandered she never found you.[4]

Thus the messages of Tagore and Kabir are almost identical. We move from place to place in search of God. We are reminded of the lines of Kabir in which he sings that a deer feels sweet fragrance coming to him from wind but wanders here and there and does not know that he himself is the source of that fragrance be-

cause Kasturi (Musk) is within the deer. Man moves here and there to find God. Kabir says:

> The lord is in me, the Lord is in you, as life's in every seed.
> O servant! Put false pride away,
> and seek for Him within you. (Kabir's Poems, XCVII)

As already noted Tagore and Kabir are mystics. Mysticism is a personal experience with God. Tagore and Kabir share the same experience with God. For both there is no borderline between natural and supernatural. The relationship of God and man has been described as relationship of lover and beloved, an analogy employed by the mystics the world over. Their poems express yearning of the devotee to merge with God. Tagore writes:

> The woodlands have hushed their songs,
> and doors are all shut at every house.
> Thou art the solitary wayfarer in this
> deserted street. Oh my only friend, my
> best beloved, the gates are open in my
> house—do not pass by like a dream. (*Gitanjali*, 22)

Similarly, Kabir writes that the poet-beloved is waiting very eagerly for the Divine-lover. God comes to the devotee when the storms and misfortunes hover over him. God is the supreme object of love, the soul's comrade, teacher and bridegroom. The relationship of bride and bridegroom has been very frequently used in Kabir's poems. Kabir sings:

> My body and my mind are grieved for the want of Thee;
> O my Beloved! Come to my house.
> When people say I am Thy bride, I am
> ashamed; for I have not touched Thy
> heart with my heart. (Kabir's Poems, XXXV)

At another place in his poems he says that he is very eager to meet the divine:

> When I am parted from my Beloved,
> my heart is full of misery:
> I have no comfort in the day,
> I have no sleep in the night.

To whom shall I tell my sorrow?
The night is dark; the hours slip by.
Because my Lord is absent,
I start up and tremble
with fear. (Kabir's Poems, LII)

Tagore echoes the same idea when he says that the poet-beloved is waiting very eagerly to meet the divine-lover. He has kept his door open. The night is stormy and dark, the sky roars and thunders like someone in pain, "I have no sleep tonight. Ever and again I open my door and look out on the darkness, my friend!" (*Gitanjali*, 23) Almighty does not stand aloof, he is in search of man. Tagore follows the footsteps of Vaishnav tradition when he describes God as his companion and friend. In *Gitanjali*, the poet does not merely sing but he pours out his heart as if it were a rose and the songs of *Gitanjali* its petals, each with a message, the message of faith, of devotion, of soul's purity, of soul's yearning to merge with God. Tagore sings, "In the depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry: 'I want thee, only thee.' (*Gitanjali*, 38) In *Crossing* also he writes, "Accept me, my lord, accept me for this while. Let those orphaned days that passed without thee be forgotten." (5)

Kabir was a great social reformer His poems make an eternal appeal to our hearts. In his poems there is otherworldly passion and a wide range of mystical experiences. He has drawn homely atmosphere and religious symbols differently from Hindu, and Mohammedan faiths because he calls himself the child of Allah and Ram. He criticizes both the Hindus and the Muslims. He speaks the truth because he was against ignorance in general not against any religion in particular. He speaks about Mullahs and Pandits truly and accurately without any malice against anyone. He sings:

If God be within the mosque,
then to whom does this world belong?
If Ram be within the image which you find
upon your pilgrimage, then who is there
to know what happens without?
Hari is in the East: Allah is in the West.

> Look within your heart, for there you will find
> both Karim and Ram;
> All the men and women of the world are His living forms.
> Kabir is the child of Allah and of Ram: He
> is my Guru, He is my Pir. (Kabir's Poems, LXIX)

Tagore also condemns the ascetic way of life and makes a forceful plea for the participation in daily activities of humble humanity. He says that to work we must live, to live we must work, that life and activity are inseparably connected. Tagore writes in *Sadhana*:

> The writer has been brought up in a family where texts of the Upanishads are used in daily worship; and he has had before him the example of his father, who lived his long life in the closest communion with God, while not neglecting his duties to the world.[6]

Rabindranath Tagore from his very childhood was taught to chant he shlokas of the Upanishads arranged by his father Maharishi Devendranath. All these left a deep impact on Tagore and every route led him to the Divine. Tagore is an ascetic who is against Avidya. So advising the priest he writes:

> Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!
> Whom dost thou worship
> in this lonely dark corner of a temple with
> doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see
> thy God is not before thee! (*Gitanjali*, 11)

Both Tagore and Kabir have drawn for their poetry the best feeling of Indian culture in the tradition. Their position while holding the faith is not at all dogmatic. Their poems give comfort to many a troubled soul. Tagore's *Gitanjali* is a blend of the *Bhagavad Gita* on the one hand, and *Psalms of Old Testament* on the other. There is synthesis of all that is best in the Indian and Western traditions. They both condemn egotism, pride and worldly power. Avidya makes us blind. Kabir sings:

> O man, if thou dost not know thine own Lord,
> Whereof art thou so proud?
> Put thy cleverness away: mere words shall

> never unite thee to Him.
> Do not deceive thyself with the witness of the
> scriptures: (Kabir's Poems, LIX)

Tagore also sings in a similar strain:

> I came out alone on my way to my tryst.
> But who is this that follows me in the silent dark?
> I move aside to avoid his presence but
> I escape him not. . . .
> He is my own little self, my lord, he
> knows no shame; but I am ashamed to
> come to thy door in his company. (*Gitanjali*, 30)

In order to find him one should be free from 'Avidya.' The root-cause of everything that binds a man is his ego. It is this that gives one the feeling of 'I' and 'Mine.' The ignorant who live in the midst of darkness but fancy themselves as wise and learned are like a blind man led by another blind on a rough and uneven road. *Kathopanishad* says: "They are foolish but think themselves, intelligent and well versed in shastras. For them this is the only world; there is no other. They are tossed hither and thither like a straw in the wind."[7] Kabir also makes it clear when he says:

> The Yogi dyes his garments, instead of dyeing
> his mind in the colours of love. . . .
> He shaves his head and dyes his garments;
> he reads the Gita and becomes a mighty talker.

Kabir says:

> You are going to the doors of
> death, bound hand and foot! (Kabir's Poems, LXVI)

Our soul when detached and imprisoned within the narrow limits of a self, loses its significance. So in order to find him we should embrace all:

> All our egoistic impulses, our selfish desires, obscure our true vision of the soul. For they only indicate our own narrow self. When we are conscious of our soul, we perceive the inner being that transcends our ego and has its deeper affinity with the All. (*Sadhana*, 22)

Tagore believes that death is a gateway to the sea of eternity. Life and death are the two breasts of the divine mother Tagore sings, "The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation." (*Gitanjali*, 95) The poet is not afraid of death. He is very optimistic. He is very eager to welcome death as honoured guest because he knows that death is a release from the bondage of the body. It is a fulfillment. So he sings:

> The flowers have been woven and the
> garland is ready for the bridegroom. After
> the wedding the bride shall leave her home
> and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night. (*Gitanjali*, 91)

The message which Kabir sends is not altogether different. He sings:

> The palanquin came to take me away to my husband's home,
> and it sent through my heart a thrill of joy. . . .
> The servant Kabir sings;
> O Sadhu! Finish your buying and selling,
> have done with your good and your bad:
> for there are no markets and no shops
> in the land to which you go. (Kabir's Poems, LXXIII)

The mystic makes God sometimes the All, sometimes the nothing and it runs through all mystic literature. Tagore's poems are full of it. In some pages the absolute is an abstract, formless, fearless unity, not a God who deserves to be adored and worshipped. Tagore calls God, 'the inscrutable without name and form.' (*Gitanjali*, 95) He again sings:

> But there, where spreads the infinite
> sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns
> the stainless white radiance. There is no
> day nor night, nor form nor colour, and
> never, never a word. (*Gitanjali*, 67).

In the same poem he also says, "Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well." (*Gitanjali*, 67) He says that the whole universe is manifestation of God. Similarly Kabir sings, "O how can I say He is not like this, and He is like that? . . . He is neither manifest

nor hidden, He is neither revealed nor unrevealed. There are no words to tell that which He is." (Kabir's Poems, IX)

Therefore, one may conclude that both Kabir and Tagore reveal the same truth and same philosophy. They both are mystics and lay emphasis on making sacrifice for others and condemn selfishness. They are against dogmas and make forceful plea for participation in daily activities of life. There is a spiritual quest in their poetry. One may conclude with Tagore's views:

> God-man (nara-narayana) is thy definition, it is not a delusion but truth. In thee the infinite seeks the finite, the perfect knowledge seeks love, and when the form and the formless (the individual and the universal) are united love is fulfilled in devotion.[8]

NOTES

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (Macmillan India, 1985), verse 45.
2. S. Radhakrishanan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (Baroda: Good Companions, 1961), p. 27.
3. Rabindranath Tagore, *Poems of Kabir* (Macmillan India, 1985), Song I.
4. Rabindranath Tagore, *Collected Poems and Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 211.
5. Rabindranath Tagore, *Lovers Gift and Crossing* (Macmillan India 1985). *Crossing*, Song IV.
6. Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana* (Macmillan India, 1988). Preface, p. 7.
7. *Kathopanishad*, Chapter I Valli II and Shloka No. 6.
8. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man* (London: Unwin, 1988), p. 70.

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Anantha Murthy's *Samskara*: A Critique of Hinduism

MADHUMITA GANGULI

'Dharma' imposes rules of moral action in the form of categorical imperatives or simply presents certain examples of virtue that in turn guide the formulation of the rules of action and Karma. In this context let us define 'Dharma,' morality and virtue vis-a-vis moral conduct and misconduct, some key issues taken up in Anantha Murthy's *Samskara.* The centrality of the concept of "Dharma" in the ethical religious and social sense as present in India, stands in the relation to character, as Bimal Matilal suggests that the world is 'the field where the seeds of moral merit / demerit are sown in order to bring forth the harvest of Karma or just a moral desert.'[1] The broad implication of this suggestion seems to be that question of moral 'rightness' or 'wrongness' which is encompassed in the complex notion of 'Dharma.' Granting centrality to "Dharma" in Indian tradition, this concept eludes any ready interpretation in terms of prevailing criteria of ethical theory. It generally sets itself the task of coming up with codes consisting of universal rules or principles. These rules or principles amount to a decision procedure for determining what is the right action in any particular case. This is the problem which Praneshacharya confronts in *Samskara*.

The morality of 'Dharma' is derived from the conduct of virtuous people and the idea of being a virtuous person, whose conduct is governed by "prajna" (practical wisdom) which is embodied in Mahajana (good conduct). The virtue of 'Dharma' cannot be equated merely with a set of universal moral rules for the application in actual contexts of practical life. Appreciating the meaning of 'Dharma' in terms of its situation in a 'higher'

order and therefore its 'reigning from above' over the phenomenal order of practical life, helps to explain the difference which exists between 'Dharma' and moral rules. While moral rules are directly applied to particular contexts of actual life, these rules depend for their normative content on ideals and truths of abstract and general nature. The embodiment of these ideals and truths constitute virtues, and one might say that an idealized image of virtuous personhood is what is depicted as 'Dharma.' It is in this sense, that 'Dharma' 'proposes' from higher, transcendental order the ideal norms that are adopted and shaped into codifiable moral rules for the purpose of their application in the living contexts of life. In essence, the claim might be that moral rules are abstractions from the density and depth of virtues laid out in the 'dharmic' order.

One of the major sources of knowledge about 'dharmic' order is in the ancient scriptures which are viewed as the repository of practical wisdom or 'prajna.' The great epics and legends and mythologies portray different aspects of 'dharmic' reality and practical wisdom. It would seem from this that the quality of being virtuous in the actual course of human life is measured by the degree to which our mortal life tends to approximate the image of perfection. A majority of Indians believe in this doctrine, and the concomitant doctrine of Karma, that man is reborn in happy or unhappy conditions according to his actions. His evil actions will result in inevitable suffering. In priestly codes there is a tendency to confuse virtue with ceremonial purity, to kill a man is bad, but to touch his corpse is worse. The great scriptures disregard technical morality and insist on the spirit of self-control and love of humanity. To be able to fulfill the obligations expected of man he must exercise self-control. Not only what we accept but what we renounce contributes to our making. Threefold is the gate to hell that destroys the self: lust, anger and greed. We must fight against these with the weapons of the spirit, favouring chastity to lust, love to anger, and generosity to greed. The *Mahabharata* says, 'The rules of 'Dharma' or virtuous conduct taught by the great sages, each of whom relied on his own illumination, are manifold. The highest among them all

is self-control.' (*Santiparva*, Cl iv, 6) It is for developing self-control that austerities and asceticism are practised, but when real self-control is attained these rigorous practices are unnecessary. Insistence on discipline or self-control avoids the two extremes of self-indulgence and asceticism.

Discipline of the soul does not mean either the starving of the senses or the indulgence of them (*Bhagawat Gita*, vi, 16-18). The world is not only spiritual but also moral. Life is an education. In the moral sphere whatever man 'soweth that shall he reap.' The law of morality is fundamental to the cosmic order. 'Our own deeds bring to us their fruits' (Garuda Purana). The law of karma holds that man can create his future by creating in the present what will produce the desired effect. Man is the sole master of his fate. But so long as he is the victim of his desires and allows his activities to be governed by automatic attractions and repulsions he is not exercising his freedom. If chains fetter us, they are of our own forging and we ourselves may rend them asunder. God works by persuasion rather than by force. Right and wrong is not the same thing and the choice we make is a real one. All the battles of tradition and defiance, asceticism and sensuality, the meaning and meaninglessness of ritual, 'Dharma' as nature and law, desire (kama) and salvation (Moksha) become internalized in the soul of Praneshacharya. The conflict lies in the body and the spirit of the protagonist, seeking an answer. Praneshacharya's Brahminism questions itself in a modern existential mode. In search of an answer he treads into the world of Chandri, Naranappa and Putta. He comes to know of such experiences, which he had never known earlier, which gives him a wholeness or completeness of experience, in the end he has gained knowledge hitherto unknown to him.

The problem of good and evil, sin, suffering and sorrow is perhaps the oldest question in the history of human kind. This issue has been argued and discussed by philosophers and thinkers without reaching satisfactory conclusion, ever since the concepts of moral values and ideals came into being, and it remains incomprehensible and unanswerable even to the present day. Anantha Murthy's award winning novel *Samskara* explores this

eternal question seeking an answer, which causes existential crisis and moral dilemma in the mind of the protagonist. Set in the early twentieth century India, the book depicts how thin the demarcating line is between the so-called conflicting values as defined and viewed by society. Durvasapura lends a microcosmic view of Hinduism as practised in India. The Brahmin orthodoxies are repeatedly questioned in the reformist climate of the 1930s and 40s with Gandhi's teaching and the ideas of secularism becoming prevalent. Vedantic thought and Hinduism needed to be changed to fit the present needs. The Brahmin, as the highest in the social ranking, must at all times be ritually pure since he was the priest and the spokesman of the community, he intercedes with the gods, so he must remain pure. The Brahmin was the keeper of the sacred traditions and the Vedas, which he had, for two thousand years, preserved, interpreted and transmitted. As the keeper of the Hindu traditions, the Brahmins once upon a time wielded great powers and were looked up to by the other castes, but as time progressed and with modernization the Brahmin power dwindled. *Samskara* shows the general denuding of values and morality among the Brahmins.

The novel is set against the backdrop of death. An attack of plague ravages Durvasapura and Shivamogge. The atmosphere is filled with stench of rotting flesh and vultures preying on dead rats. The novel begins with the news of the death of a rebelling member of an orthodox clan of Brahmins, who lived in the 'agraharam' of Durvasapura. He dies of plague. Naranappa is the black sheep of the 'agrahara': he scandalizes the entire community by indulging openly in meat eating, wine and women and dies issueless. None of the Brahmins of the 'agrahara' come forward to perform his last rites as they considered it against Hindu scriptures to cremate a man who had sullied Brahminism and stepped out of it. They seek the advice of Praneshacharya, the most respected person, and the spiritual guide of the inhabitants of the 'agrahara.' Naranappa advocates hedonistic ways of life. He does not believe in practising the rituals, which a normal Brahmin was expected to do. He went against Brahminism and turned into a heretic. He treated Brahmins with contempt and

preferred to keep the company of Muslims, he says, "All your Brahmin respectability, I'll roll it up and throw it away for a little bit of pleasure with one female." (21) He defies every Brahminic rule, he abandoned his Brahmin wife "who in the world can live with a girl who gives no pleasure" (20) and started living with an outcaste woman Chandri, who he had brought from Kundapura. He ate and drank 'forbidden things' (7)—meat, fish, liquor, he flung the holy stone, sacred to Vishnu, and worshipped by the Brahmins, into the Tunga River and spat on it. He caught the fish in the sacred tank of the temple with his Muslim friends. He could not be excommunicated because he threatened to become a Muslim. If he had really become a Muslim, the Brahmins of Durvasapura would have had no option, but to leave the 'agraharam,' to escape pollution. Lakshmanacharya says: "If he had really become a Muslim, no law could have thrown him out of the Brahmin agraharam. We would have to leave." (11)

Even in death Naranappa becomes an enemy of the Brahmins. His plague-infested body rots and evinces a stench since none of the Brahmins would come forward to perform his last rites for fear of sullying their caste. The entire 'agraharam' is threatened by the epidemic which Naranappa contracted in Shivamogge, ultimately a Muslim cremates his body at the request of Chandri. It was considered a sin for a Brahmin to be cremated by any one other than a Brahmin, if he died without an offspring. Even though she offered her gold ornaments none of the Brahmins came forward to cremate the body. Praneshacharya failed to give a decision in this case.

Praneshacharya 'the Crest-Jewel of Vedic Learning' was unable to come up with a solution about how to dispose the corpse of Naranappa. Neither the scriptures nor the Maruti idol in the temple where he prayed for an answer offered any solution. When he came out of the temple in utter despair, unable to take a decision and was walking home, he encountered Chandri, the low-caste mistress of Naranappa in the forest. In a moment of weakness his flesh gave in to Chandri. This episode changed his life, and marked a turning point in the story and in his character.

The protagonist faces two situations of a possible radical existential crisis. The first occurs in his youth when, studying in Benaras, he had encountered Mahabala, who had been his friend and classmate and was a promising student. Later he found him living his life with a prostitute, and changing his course of life altogether, giving up priesthood. Later, as a priest, Praneshacharya also met Naranappa, a reckless, dissolute person to whom "Dharma", virtue, morality meant nothing, who had always believed in materialistic hedonistic pleasures of the world with no fears of the hereafter. His encounter with Mahabala earlier had driven Pranesh to a deeper religious orthodoxy. He married an invalid woman Bhagirathi, and lived a life of celibacy and asceticism. Thus far in his life he had made conscious choices in order to be a firm representative of high religious ideals and orthodox Hinduism. Praneshacharya's fruitless search for an answer in the scriptures, and in the ritualistic and superstitious prayers to lord Maruti in the temple, for a miraculous solution to his problem, failing in both he lost control, he lost his 'prajna' and 'mahajana' and stepped into the dark world of sin. He is haunted by sin trying to run away from himself. The question that arises here is, is merely moral conduct Dharma? A sincere repentance could be the atonement of sin. His meeting and fulfillment of his repressed desires, which an invalid wife could never give him, gives a new angle to his life and to the narrative. His morality is wiped away in a moment as he falls prey to his pent-up desires, "Orthodox Brahminism is virtually presented in Praneshacharya's fruitless search for an answer from the scriptures, and it is made even more simple mindedly ritualistic and superstitious by his prayers to Lord Maruti for divine intervention." (177) Praneshacharya goes through a crisis in his life at this juncture. Chandri after having cremated Naranappa with the help of Ahmad Bari goes away to Kundapura. She makes an exit and does not appear in the novel again. She leaves behind her a devastated man whose entire life changes and enters into a new phase. His soul becomes an arena of conflict and search for an answer. Praneshacharya who so far had embodied balance, restraint, thoughtfulness and universality grounded in Vedantic

thoughts and practice, all these virtues are thrown into disarray in a moment when he experiences Chandri, just after his fruitless struggle to find an answer. Other Brahmins of the 'agrahara' are greedy, selfish and corrupt. Naranappa was reckless, defiant, he consorted with low caste men and women, and lived with a prostitute with no pangs of conscience. He was married to the sister of Lakshmanacharya's wife who got hysterical and died because of Naranappa's misbehaviour.

Irresolution is central to the novel, there is a dualism, which seems existential in nature. Praneshcharya goes through a crisis in his life, when he commits a moral transgression which results in his abasement and loss of 'self.' He does not remain the same man, proud of his asceticism the 'Crest-Jewel of Vedantic Learning.' He fell prey to his passion momentarily, but the guilt haunts him. Then Putta comes in his life when he is crumbling in a 'trishanku' state under the weight of moral crisis, and takes him to Padmavati, another attractive low-caste woman who reminds him of Matsyagandhi who had caste a spell on Rishi Parashara and out of the illicit liaison was born Vyas, the creator of the *Mahabharata*.

This facinating novel has for its background the darkness of death looming large with vultures preying on dead rats, people dying of plague. This valley of death represents the world. In it there are men of all kinds, men who suffer the fruits of their Karma. Anantha Murthy brings in the thoughts of Charvaka, represented by Naranappa, and the Yoga School of thought represented by Praneshacharya, and the concept of Sankhya of Purush and Prakriti believed by the Madhva sect. There is a search for wholeness for a complete experience of the desires and its fulfillment. Celibacy and ascetism do not give completeness to the life of Praneshacharya. Putta shows him the darker side of life, good and evil together constitute the fullest experience of life. Pranesh had not experienced an important part of life, he was incomplete till Chandri showed him the passions which he had never experienced before, which after experiencing he had to conquer like the sages, Vishwamitra and Parashara. Prane-

shacharya's journey, is a journey towards self-realization, a complete knowledge of the world of good and evil.

The novel also delves into the complexities of 'Dharma,' virtue and morality, vis-à-vis sin and evil. Sages like Shankara, Durvasa and Vishwamitra had conquered the 'self.' They had sucked the honey of life, yet obtained the state of Sthitipragya. The soul journeys from 'prajna' (practical wisdom) to Mahajana (complete wisdom of good conduct) ultimately achieves 'moksha,' freedom from all bondage. Pranesh's journey is like the journey which Gautam Buddha had taken and seen the suffering in life which made him renounce the world. Whatever Praneshacharya did was not of his own choice, it happened to him unintentionally, or was compelled by forces outside him. The novel is a complex novel with a deep touch of Indian ethics which holds the key to the problem of Pranesh: 'Even if I leave everything behind, the community clings to me, asking me to fulfill duties the Brahmin is born to do. It is not easy to free one's self of this.' 'Shall I tell him I have sinned and lost the chance of penance?' 'I'm absolutely not responsible for making love to her. Not responsible for that moment. But the moment altered me—Why?' But he yearns for the touch again. 'Now if I go in search of her, and enjoyed her, I would be fully responsible for my act, wouldn't I?' He couldn't return to the 'agrahara' because of fear, he could not live with a lie. Naranappa had 'kicked away at Brahminism,' lived a life of sin and died. Now his corpse lay facing a crisis whether any Brahmin was entitled to perform his death rite since he was issueless, and lead an unbrahminical life. No Brahmin would pollute himself by performing his death rite. Second problem was, then who would do it since he had not been excommunicated, and a Brahmin was 'twice-born,' so it was essential to give him a proper cremation or his soul would become a 'brahma daitya' and this would to do more harm to the community, which was a superstition the Brahmins believed in.

The problem taken up in this novel is moral transgression and sin. The novelist tries to analyze the eternal problems of sin, morality virtues and 'Dharma,' by various illustrations from the

epics and the lives of the sages, Vishwamitra was seduced by Maneka, Parashara by Matsyagadhi, but they did not face a moral dilemma like Pranesh. Shankara was challenged by a woman philosopher, so he experienced sex within a king's body which he had entered. Pranesh deviates from the path of morality. Naranappa violates morality and the rest of the Brahmins of the agrahara had fallen into evil ways of greed yet adhered to the superstitions and rituals. Pranesh was morally conscious of his guilt, and did not know how to resolve it, thus the struggle between 'Dharma' and 'Karma,' the latter overcomes the former and takes possession of Praneshacharya.

After Chandri's departure Praneshacharya's initiation to the materialistic world is taken up by Putta, the simple villager, who goes all out to help him on the way, by selling his silver coin, taking him to the temple fair to watch the cock fight, and from there to the prostitute Padmavati. Putta takes him to eat at the temple feast. Pranshacharya felt guilty, as he should not be eating within the temple, at the festival when he was in the polluted state, after the death of his wife. He should not have sat with other Brahmins knowing it was ritualistically wrong to eat in the temple. When the man who was serving food recognized him, he got up and fled in fear of discovery. His guilt haunted him everywhere. He could not be like Mahabala who was bold enough to give up his priesthood and live with a prostitute. He could not be like Naranappa who lived in sin till death. He measured himself against the sages of yore who gave in to the passions, and yet were above it, and men like Mahabala and Naranappa, who did not experience a duality nor pangs of conscience. Praneshacharya goes back to Durvasapura, on a cart with a rich man with a heavy heart and conscience to face the other Brahmins of Durvasapura. But he would neither confess, nor atone for his sins, he would merely tell them the truth. The novelist ends with an underlying question, as to what then could be the path that leads to morality, virtue and 'Dharma.'

NOTES

1. U.R. Anantha Murthy, *Samskara*, trans. A.K. Ramanujan (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).
2. See A.K. Ramanujan, "Afterword," *Samskara*, pp. 145-46
3. A.L. Bashiam, *A Cultural History of India* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 1975), pp. 114-23.
4. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Hinduism a Religion to Live By* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 198-200.
5. Barbara Stoler Miller, ed., *Masterpieces of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective* (New York: M.E. Sharpe), pp. 189-200.

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Tradition and Modernity in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers*

L.M. JOSHI and HARI PRIYA PATHAK

The fusion of tradition and modernity is a very important aspect of Bhabani Bhattacharya's writings. The idea of integration of approaches and blending of the traditions is by far the most significant idea that Bhattacharya conveys through his novels. In his first novel *So Many Hungers* (1947), the novelist synthesizes tradition and modernity through different sets of characters and episodes. The stories of Basu in Calcutta and Kajol's family in Baruni project his belief that life can't run without compromise, but there can, nevertheless, be unity in diversity.

The novel is a story of two families, which represent tradition, and modernity of life. The Basu family lives is Calcutta. It has six members in all. The eldest member of the family is Davesh Basu. He is great patriot and lover of traditional values of his country. He is an earnest Gandhiite. Samarendra Basu, son of Davesh Basu, is a lawyer. He is living in Calcutta. He is greedy and unscrupulous where money is concerned. Having suffered privation in his younger days, his main aim is to amass wealth for himself and his family. He is devoid of any feeling of patriotism. All that he desires is financial security and thereby respectability. When the Second World War starts, he cleverly makes use of the opportunity to multiply his wealth by speculation in shares.

> Samarendru Basu had played his cards well. His firm faith in Empire's armed might had helped. The stock market was divided against itself. The Soviets had marched into Poland before the Nazi python could swallow it altogether. Some thought that the Soviets had thrown a challenge to the Allies: Others thought that it was a

> check to blitzkrieg. The stock market was concerned only with the military implication. Would not the Allies come into conflict with Russia? They would, and nervous speculators unloaded\ their holdings. (28-29)

Davesh Basu is an old man of about seventy years. He is great social worker of his village. The villagers have great respect and love for him. The villagers of Saveeni call him 'Devata'; they regard him as a pious man, who has led a disciplined life right from his childhood.

Samarendra Basu is very hostile to his father,. Davesh Basu, because of his involvement in national struggle in freedom. He is the most practical man and hard-core realist. He has earned money by illegal means and wants the same life for his sons—Rahoul and Kunal.

Rahoul is a staunch nationalist and cannot forget the hypocrisy of foreign rulers who do not want to grant India freedom:

> Rahoul was completely self-focused. Somewhere on the long winding path of the years, he had shed his fear of suffering and loneliness. What happened to him as an individual did not matter. It only mattered what happened to his people, he was indifferent, too, toward his captors, and his mind was without hate, without anger, in nirvana of painlessness. (204)

He is a great scientist and like his grandfather he has a deep faith in moral values of human life. During the Bengal famine he helps the volunteers in running a free kitchen for destitutes. Unlike his father, he has full sympathy for the freedom fighters. Without caring for his scientific research he wishes to participate in freedom struggle. His passionate speeches addressed to the students show his great, nationalistic feelings. Kunal, the younger brother of Rahoul, is a realist. He has no inclination towards patriotic fervor. He joins the army as a junior officer. He leaves home for service in North Africa and Italy.

There are two important members in the family namely Rahoul's mother and his wife Monju. Monju is a pure Indian woman and believes in the traditional values of her country but she also has faith in modern India. She is a synthesis of best

flowers of traditional Indian culture and the developing scientific modern ways of her country. Her mother-in-law believes in the traditional values of family system; she is not accustomed to accepting the modern open culture of today. She shows her worldly wisdom when she advises her family members to store the commodities of daily use.

Monju is a modern woman and is very co-operative with her husband but she is not a practical lady, as her mother-in-law is. She likes to visit hotels and restaurants with her husband. She is a great lover of dance: "She danced with easy grace of movement, and looking in her eyes, black and large and edged with callyrism, he saw them brighten with jubilation. It was a dream fulfilled." (49)

The second story of the novel also deals with tradition and modernity. This is the story of a peasant family with a young girl Kajoli as principal character. The novel unfolds the tragic story of a largely man-made famine in which over a million people died of sheer hunger. The Bengal famine of 1943 was the tragic calamity in Indian history. The novelist has described this horrible scene in the following words:

> Corpuses lay by the road, huddled together, picked to the bones, with cycles cavern of sockets, bit of skin and flesh rotting on the nose and chin and ribs, the skulls packed open, only the hair uneaten. (187)

The story of Kajoli is the story of the hunger of a peasant girl. She is the heroine of the novel. She illustrates the cruel fate of the rural population of the Bengal at the time when India faced the Japanese peril in east and an unprecedented rice famine created unscrupulous capitalists. She is an innocent girl of fourteen who lives in her ancestral mud and thatch house along with her mother who remains unnamed throughout the novel. The father who has no name in the story and elder brother Kanu, are in a prison for having taken part in the civil disobedience movement. The novelist has described the heroine's background in the following words:

> She is well bred peasant girl. She has a legacy of manners as old as India. How could she give up her manners and proprieties to suit your new-fangled city ideas? You are a respected visitor in the house. (92)

The family has limited members who lead their hard life on account of their financial helplessness. She is married to Kishore, a city youth. All the family members of this peasant girl are crushed under the wheel of two mighty monsters: The Japanese and the inhuman rice famine. Davesh Basu appreciates her and praises her to Rahoul. Kishore takes part in the national freedom movement and like Kajoli's father, he is also imprisoned. Kajoli's innocent family is symptomatic of the devastation that affect all Bengal. Kajoli has a brief spell of happiness after she is married to Kishore. The condition in the village had deteriorated, her father and husband were in jail. When they find it impossible to live in the village, they proceed to Calcutta.

Kajoli has painful experiences on the way. She meets an Indian soldier and begs him food. He gives her a portion from his Kit-Bag. She devours it rapidly without thinking of her mother and brother. The soldier offers her some more and rapes her. In a few hours, Kajoli becomes a patient in a Calcutta hospital. After that she comes in contact with a woman who sells betel-leaves and also runs a brothel; she offers her sixty or even eighty rupees, if she agrees to become a prostitute. She spurns the offer.

> So, Kajoli started her new life as a destitute of city. The betel woman hailed her in the evening as she came out of the alley. She offered the girl a seat in the stall. (179)

One day on the way Kajoli hears some boys selling newspapers shouting the important news of hunger strike launched by 'Devata' in Dehradun jail. She sees an image of the revered old man before her mind and his pointed advice given to people of Baruni echoes in her ears: "Be strong, be true, be deathless." Kajoli realizes a pang of remorse and disposes herself and he is caught by the idea of selling newspapers quickly. She buys three dozen copies and tells the woman that she has changed her mind and will return her money. The woman was amazed, but Kajoli

calls her a jackal-woman, slaps her on the face. This is Kajoli's exit from the story.

In spite of all her sufferings and self-mortification, Kajoli does not shun traditional values, she sells her body out of necessity but not her soul. She has "a legacy of manners as old as India." (5)

Kajoli is the central character who combines the traditional and modern elements of life through two male characters, Davesh Basu (Devata) and Kishore, the mix of tradition and modernity. A destitute girl bares herself in order to save not only herself but also a number of other destitutes. The novel is a synthesis of traditional and modern values of India.

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Self-Expression and Narcissism in the Poetry of Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath

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No one can deny that poetry is the expression of creative artist's aesthetic experiences emerging from the depth of his emotions and feelings. Poetry expresses one's very personal emotions whether the poetry is personal or impersonal. The poetry of Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath is explicitly personal. Their self-expression so often turns into confession, which makes their poetry intimately personal. Apart from this, their poetic diction, select English idiom and mould make their poems obscure and complex. Their confessional mould demolishes the thin wall which stands between the poet's self and the poetry. Thus, the text of their poetry cannot be understood by stripping off from them the poet's personality.

Wordsworth and Keats in their very subjective poems communicate to readers their ideas and feelings. Wordsworth's 'Solitary Reaper' can be understood without having the context of Wilkinson's account of "the female who was reaping alone" and who sang in ease. 'the sweetest voice that Wordsworth had ever heard."[1] Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' can be understood without knowing that Keats was inspired by the song of a nightingale which he heard in the garden of a house in Hempstead, where he was staying in the summer of 1819. A poem has a life of its own without the history of the poet and the other related contexts. 'Solitary Reaper' and 'Ode to a Nightingale' are such romantic classics which may be enjoyed any time by the scholars of English and common men alike. Can we understand Kamala Das's 'An Introduction' or Sylvia Plath's 'Daddy' without having the proper context or history of the poet? It will be debatable

if we put a question—Is it a merit or a demerit in a poet of stature?

Poetry emotional or intentional, subjective or objective must not be a direct reflection of a poet's mind and heart. Poems emerging from the direct heat of emotions or overflowing of emotions can hardly have the lasting impact on reader's mind. They violate the classical code. Even Wordsworth, in his definition of poetry, emphasizes on the relevance of 'recollection in tranquillity.' T.S. Eliot also says "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotions but an escape from emotion, it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality."[2] Moreover, Eliot has said it again and again that one should appreciate the emotion of a poem and not the history of the poet. He believes in the depersonalization of poem and submerging the poet's personality in the process of poetic expression.

In studying Sylvia Plath one has to sweat in order to deduce meaning from her poems. Kamala Das's poems, to some extent, also suffer from the problem of obscurity. Not only that they have found poetry as the expression of their feelings but the unfulfilled desires lying dormant in the unconscious mind also partake in the process of poetic composition. The common features in Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath are love of the self, incompatibility with the inadequacies of life, frustration and gender complex. The dominance of their self—inner and outer—and the gender complex have influenced their poetic output the most.

It is in this context that I would like to add that the poetry of Kamala Das is the outcome of her powerful instinct of self-assertion. A great psychologist McDougall calls it "an inherited or innate psychophysical disposition to objects, of a certain class, and to act in regard to it in a particular manner or at least to experience an impulse to such an action."[3]

Kamala Das's self assertion even in her poetic expression is certainly a climax of her self-love. It is her self-love and the inadequacies of her life have made her viewpoint narrow, gender-biased and self-centred. This self-love, which has turned to confession also, has led to Narcissism. It is in this light that we will examine some of the poems of Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath.

In the poem "An Introduction," which is no less than a poetic manifesto, Kamala Das registers the graph of her growth and consciousness, love and despair and her satisfaction expressing herself in an alien language along with her mother tongue:

> I am Indian, very brown, born in
> Malabar, I speak three languages . . .
> It voices my joys, my longings my
> Hopes, and it is useful to me as cowing
> to crows or roaring to lions.[4]

Kamala Das uses exquisite imagery for her employment of poetic mode for the expression of her self:

> On this paper so bridal white, write of
> life's purity, of life's betrayals. . . .
> A pause, don't search for pretty words
> Which dilute the truth, but write in haste of
> Everything perceived and known and lived.[5]

In Kamala Das, poetry her repulsion for physical love and lack of sincere love occupy a very significant place. She abhors the male body. In "An Introduction" she tells about her marriage and her initiation in sex.

> I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
> For he drew a youth of sixteen in to the
> Bed room and closed the door, He did not beat me
> But my woman body felt so beaten
> The weight of my breasts and wombs crushed me.[6]

In her poems dealing with man's lust, we notice her hatred and rejection of male body.

> He talks, turning a stained
> Cheek to me, his mouth a dark
> Cavern where stalactites of
> uneven teeth gleams, his right
> Hand on my knee, while our minds
> Are willed to race towards love.[7]

In such a situation, a woman has nothing to do except surrendering her body to a hungry hawk that is what she expresses in 'The Looking Glass.'

> Gift him all
> Gift him what makes you woman the scent of
> Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts
> The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
> Endless female hunger.[8]

Apparently there is no such negative mechanism in the behaviour of Das as far as love is concerned which we find in Sylvia Plath. Kamala Das has a longing for a lover and in absence of it she finally epitomizes her love in the form of divine love of Mira for Lord Krishna:

> Vrindaban lives on in every woman's mind
> and the flute luring her
> from home and her husband.[9]

In her poetry, there exists a situation of tension in which she discards the earthly love and longs for divine love. But we don't see any solution to the ongoing conflict in her poems. Suresh Kohli says: "It is difficult to say whether Kamala Das succeeds in resolving her tension between physical and spiritual aspect of love."[10]

Kamala Das's poetic work which manifests feminine sensibility again and again projects Indian woman as a weak, servile and inferior creature. Her sympathy towards the other suppressed women, eunuchs, prostitutes etc. are like small eddies in the vast ocean of her own self. She has tried to universalize her frustration, lack of love, anguish and gender complex through different idioms and images but has not met with desired success. In every poem it is Kamala Das who appears, speaks and acts. Her use of the word 'I' is unlike Walt Whitman who encompassed all humanity. There is no desire to reconcile with the odds of the world and Kamala Das's 'I' is visible all over her poetry like an umbrella sheltering her from sun and rain.

In Kamala Das's poetry Death and Pain recur again and again. In one of her poems, she prefers death to the love denied.

If love is not to be had
I want to be dead, just dead.[11]

Kamala Das's self-love does not lead to a positive feeling of self-assertion. On the mental plane a negative approach is certainly visible. There the element of Narcissism is present in Kamala Das which is neither healthy nor desirable in life and art both. Kamala Das presents the image of Narcissism in one of her poems:

he serves his love in lethal doses
For love is Narcissism at the water's edge haunted
By its own lovely face[12]

But at the end of the poem she shatters the image of Narcissism, There are good number of poems, particularly in "The Old Playhouse and Other Poems," which describe death and decay. Kamala Das's poetic journey from *Summer in Calcutta* (1965) to *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973) begins with poet's longing for genuine love and ends with loneliness, vacuity and death-wish. The poem 'After Illness' deals with death and decay; "The Testing of Sirens" describes loneliness and disillusionment; 'The Invitation' presents poet's death-wish; Gino imagines poet's sepulchral journey on the hospital trolley. The following words of K.R.S. Iyengar aptly sum up Kamala Das's poetic self: "Kamala Das's fiercely feminine sensibility that dares without inhibitions to articulate the hurts it has received in an intensive largely man-made world.[13]

Sylvia Plath (1932-63), the Anglo-American poetess, bears some analogy to Kamala Das as poetess in respect to self-assertion, hatred against male chauvinism and longing for genuine love. In life as well as in death Sylvia Plath remained glamorous. Her poetic career was brief but full of upheavals. Her marriage to Ted Hughes, launching of her poetic career and her suicide were the historical events in the literary world. Her frustration, anguish, anger, suffering, pain and death-wish have secured a place in the bulk of her poetry. Poetry was a very powerful medium for Sylvia Plath which filled the vacuum of her life. She felt a great urge as she wrote:

I write only because
There is a voice within me
That will not be still.[14]

P. Rajani in his commendable work *The Poetry of Sylvia Plath*, finds poetry her compulsion to write: "Sylvia Plath considered writing a way of life an expression of being alive, writing was at once an expression of her personality, a preservation of sanity."[15] After the marriage to Ted Hughes she plunged in to writing. She herself said "I will write until I begin to speak my deep self."[16] And after her separation from Ted Hughes. She wrote to her mother: "It is hurtful to be ditched but thank God I have my own work."[17] The significant thing to observe in her poetry is her own self. "I shall perish, If I can write about no one but myself."[18]

In the poetry of Kamala Das, we find her anger, frustration, depression and death-wish as prominent subjects. But in Sylvia Plath in addition to the above, we observe a sense of doom also. In an early poem "Admonitions" for instance, she warns: "never try to know more than you should / For deadly secrets strike when understood."[19] This sense of fear, despair and death gained intensity and depth in her later poems. A well-known critic Caroline King Barnard acknowledges the fact in the following words: "We find in this early work the sense of doom, the fascination with disintegration and death so central to the later poems."[20]

A sense of foreboding doom lies so deep in her psyche that in a number of her poems she imagines her death or suicide. The poems 'Lorelei,' 'Full Fathom Five,' 'All the Dear Deads' and 'Lady Lazarus' manifest her death-wish. Eileen M. Aird has made a very apt remark: "They become vehicles for the expression of the complex, fearful fascination with death, which is a recurrent motive in Sylvia Plath work."

In the treatment of death, she is closer to Emily Dickinson than Kamala Das. In Kamala Das it is not the sense of doom or the preoccupation of death that matters but death as an ultimate and a means of salvation or a fact of life.

Sylvia Plath has also given expression to her emotions of love and sex. The feeling of love and sex move parallel to

Sylvia's movement towards love and sex in her real life. First it has a forward movement, then it has a retrograde movement. 'Pursuit,' 'Ode for Ted,' Wreath for a Bridal' and 'The Glutton' are manifestations of different shades of love. Her love poems are full of passion. In one of her earliest poems "Pursuit," she is pursued by man's lust:

> There is a panther stalks me down:
> One day I'll have my death of him,
> His prowls more lordly than the sun.[22]

and in the same poem she surrenders to the panther of lust:

> I hurl my heart to halt his pace
> To quench his thirst I squander blood.[23]

In a poem 'A Secret' she serves sex openly:

> An illegitimate baby
> That big blue head
> How it breathes in the bureau drawer
> Is that lingerie, pet.[24]

In 'The Applicant' she ironically presents a suitor. But in 'Street Song,' Plath tries to emphasize the pains instead of pleasures of love. We observe in her love poems as P. Rajani says "a steady movement in the direction of disillusionment." A.K. Oberg also observes: "in later poems . . . these figures are transformed from potentially Romantic Trapping in to loveless women move tellingly related to the poet herself." (67)

Sylvia Plath also shares with Kamala Das a general inimical attitude towards menfolk. She believes in an independent existence of women. She criticizes herself for being under the influence of her father. She utters in 'Daddy'

> You do not do, you do not do
> Any move black shoe
> In which I have lived like a foot.[25]

Sylvia Plath is opposed to patriarchal society. She tries to make up all this by love. But her marriage with Ted Hughes which failed, derailed all her dreams and desires. Therefore, in later po-

ems she presents man as violent and aggressive, 'Zookeeper's Wife' and 'Early Leaving' are such poems in which man presents himself as an exploiter and he has not been presented by woman as narrator Margaret Uroff finds a physical revulsion

Sylvia Plath in her poetry describes her self-love's betrayal and the thought of death. Kamala Das is also preoccupied with love marriage and death. Her reasons are social conditions and society. But Sylvia Plath is in conflict with her own self. She suffered from the problem of double. She was a split personality. Her suicide was for the satisfaction of her ego. In poetry as well as in life, she failed to resolve the conflict. Her life remains an enigma to us, so is her poetry.

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16. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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19. Sylvia Plath, *Collected Poems*, ed. Ted Hughes (Faber and Faber, London, 1981), p. 319.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
21. Sylvia Plath, *Collected Poems*, p. 29.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
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The volume offers a detailed analysis of Deshpande's Sahitya Akademi award winning novel *That Long Silence*. It discusses man-woman relationship in context of the contemporary social milieu.

Reena Mitra (Christ Church College, Kanpur). *Critical Responses to Literatures in English*. Atlantic, New Delhi, 2005.
The book contains a varied selection of essays on texts that are relevant in the existent literary context. The works chosen for analysis represent the literatures in English of various countries including the hitherto marginalized ones that have now begun to assert themselves aggressively through their literary works. Most of the authors taken up for study in the book are those that belong to the fraternity of Indian English writers namely Mulk Raj Anand, Shashi Deshpande, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Mahesh Dattani and Manju Kapur.

Amar Nath Prasad (Jagdam College, Chapra). *New Lights on Indian Women Novelists in English*. Sarup and Sons, New Delhi, 2005.
The book evaluates works of Indian women novelists with new perspectives. It contains scholarly research papers on Jhabvala,

Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy and Taslima Nasreen.

Basavaraj Naikar (Karnatak University, Dharwad). *Perspectives on Commonwealth Literature*, Book Enclave, Jaipur 2005.
The anthology contains articles on the major Commonwealth writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, Obotunde Ijimire, Nadine Gordimer, Margaret Laurence, Patrick White, Tom Gibson, Norman Partington, Semon Harvester, Taya Zinkin, G.V. Desani, Gurucharan Das, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal and Rabindranath Tagore. The approach is exploratory; the volume makes a rich contribution to the fast-expanding area of new literatures.

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It is a philosophical novel about a Kannada saint called Sharif Saheb of Shishunala. This is yet another creative work from eminent academic and a versatile scholar.

Jyotsna Sahoo (Bhubaneswar). *Sex and Violence in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya*, Prestige Books, New Delhi, 2006.
Kamala Markandaya is commonly regarded as a traditional novelist who depicts the poor and rustics of rural India. Here is a book that absolutely demolishes this view. It reveals that Markandaya is at best in her depiction of sex and violence and is precursor of modern Indian novel.

Ramesh K. Srivastava (Jhansi). *Ten Indian English Writers*. Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 2005.
A collection of thirty research papers, including interviews, on Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Arun Joshi, Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy, the book deals with some of the unexplored literary problems and provides a rich, in-

depth study and evaluation of several representative works of these authors.

Jaydeep Sarangi and G.S. Jha, ed. *The Indian Imagination of Jayanta Mahapatra*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2005.
It is the first critical anthology on the complete (Prose and Poetry in English and Oriya) works of Jayanta Mahapatra. The anthology also contains an interview with the poet.

P.K. Kush (D.S. College, Aligarh) *An Approach to the Poetic Persona of Rabindranath Tagore*. Anu Publications, Aligarh.
The book studies the life and works of Rabindranath Tagore with a focus on the quest for transcendental self, the unity of mutual modification, the alchemy of synthesis and the discovery of a medium.

CREATIVE WRITING

Confession

When I am in a deathbed mood
I prepare to make confession
To clear the breath that must breathe out
And summon the powers lodged within

Life at once turns into
A land devoid of warmth
Where lurid lights glower
From beneath the ground.

I feel my feet tottering
And hands withdrawing a shake
The mouth swallowing its own words
And pulses beating in stealth.

Then I confess that I have
No courage to confess at all
The vultures continue to gnaw
And all defences tend to fall.

R.S. Sharma (Varanasi)

Seeking Life in Death

Morn is not always refreshing,
it also initiates the drudgery of day;
words too are not always caressing,
they may contain curse and bray.

Years are made of joys and sorrows,
my share of the latter seems more;
yet I have other options open,
exhausted though, I do not feel sore.

I am wont to hunt out life,
where there is only bitter strife;
wound and blood and death spread,
I share your joy amid my dread.

I have already burnt my boat,
I do not have a life of my own;
yet I live with hundred smiles
and thousand tears when I am gone.

Pashupati Jha (Roorkee)

An Old Cycle Repairing Shop

At the weird end of the street corner
overlooking a paan-stained lane
against walls like corpses
a signboard half-smiling read:
MAA KALI CYCLE REPAIRING.

Cocoons of death clawed the too-real-world
of hammers, screw-drivers, nuts, bolts
in their fluid colours
making many forgotten rivers flow
with tender, strange nuances
through pastures not flashed.

You try with high voltage lines of fear
to know of these small niggers
huddled like small sand beds
on the floor matted, rugged
consistently on to pull out a career
from the everyday slump.

At the shop's faint, iron-grey entrance
the sandy-haired man with smiles of youth washes
the hearts of men in angry gestures
haggling over the right fare
bellowing over the misdoings
as the sickening whine of the tyres continues.

Krishna Bose (Kolkata)

Didacticism

I wallow in pain
When I hear
'Don't buy this, as I have none'
'I've found a job, done this for you
And that
Don't you ask for any detail'
'I never spend more than this
Ah! but you must learn
To survive'.
Threatening and didactic
Harsh and crude
They prolong
In that dreadful drone.
Others' homes, others' kids,
And all their lives
They love to run
Where do they get time
For their own?
In madness and anger I lash out
When they hold the rest in doubt.
They claim all lie
Knowing how much they do it
Continuously on the sly.
Eyes blurred
Confidence and hopes
Shattered.
Deflated tyres
Are my desires
Writhing in pain
I gasp for breath.
My bogged mind

Turns into a frenzy.
I seek liberty.
Why not break off
From those who spread
Only wildfire?
I will try
Now to please this desire.
I've done it at last
I cut off
I broke off
Ah! Such a joy
This revolt!

H.A. Singh (Delhi)

The Continuity Unbroken

I

In between the sterner and the fair,
We claim a Great Divide.
Why do we forget the Hermaphrodite?
We have party
On beauty and obscenity,
Could we reach ever
At the same altitude?
Don't we think
It is a matter of
Perception or attitude?
And that's why
We have the concept of
'Nagnika' and Negritude.

II

Which one is a real angle?
A couple or an eternal triangle,
Marriage or singleblessedness,
Family or familylessness.
Can we search the truth
From this cultural mess?
Is there an urgency
To take the either side of
Cultural emergence,
Or cultural emergency?
If sex is a psychic one,
Who is monk and who is nun?
If sex is only somatic
Why we have 'Another Being'
Of gay and lesbian?
Let us pray to Solomon

Who can ensure the division
Between the 'Fire' and Mire.

III

A majority decision
Is only a way of solution,
Not a symbol of perfection.
A minority decision
May be the lamp post
Of the coming generation.

Today's Hussain and Nasreen
Whose eyes in our view
May be 'Yellow' and 'Green'
Let us provide them
The 'Freedom' of 'Bedi's prison';
So that they may not settle
In the 'Nagpur' or 'Kabul' region.

Shiv Kumar Yadav (Begusarai)

Diminution

for Professor C.D.Narasimhaiah

Divisiveness
devilishly displayed,
disparities
glaringly glamourized,
detested, deprecated by thee—
Dharmatma! Let thy Dharma prevail!!

Love for values,
brightens blighted pathways—
as blind folded fools forge ahead,
saddened spirit levels undulations—
Punya murthy!
shade avenues sublime for the pathless!!

Buoyant Bhishma!
thy endeavours ensured
fusion of cultures,
merger of margins—
hold aloft candle of wisdom,
we are in dark.

Deprived of thy presence
the world is devastated—
diminution
debilitates, decimates!!

Sai Chandra Mouli (Hyderabad)

Mister Tiger in the Cage

Mister tiger in the cage
White his teeth and white his rage
Roaring day and roaring night
Big his awe and big his fight.

Mister Tiger in the cage
Black the sky and black his time
Tearing bars and tearing page
Lost his stop and lost his rime.

Mister Tiger in the cage
Pools of rine and beds of bones
Eating grass and drinking sweat
Here the flies and there his eyes.

Mister Tiger in the cage
Cage so large and small his legs
Legs so weak and world so big
Big and high the nail and sharp.

Mister Tiger call it day
Choose your death and take your way
Be a brave and take the grave
Be a brave and take the grave.

S.K.Vasistha (Hisar)

Exchange

I borrowed
Your pen
And wrote poems
You stole away
My pain
And painted it
On a canvas.

Did You Hear Me

That eveining
I could not sleep,
And read poems—
Hours together.
It was like
Talking to you.
Did you hear me
That evening?

Hemendra Singh Chandalia (Udaipur)

The Indian *Suhagin*

'Ergo cogito sum'

The vermillion[1] glows
In my hair parting
Speaking aloud, I am on your forehead
The signature of you, my wedded half
(As the saffron warm-?)
Therefore I exist.

Descartes existence eh!

Exist: I do . . . but in limitations confined . . .

I need to see my glow . . . in someone's eyes
To make me feel alive . . . for with Hegel I doth agree . . .
I do not exist . . . unless you tell me so
When thine eyes sparkle . . . with my flaming glow
They share a language, of shared times, of bliss, and togetherness
So transient, so lasting and yet so short lived!

Kumkum Ray

Books

Through the glass
of the closed almirah
books peep at me
longingly.

These days we don't meet for months.
The evenings I spent
in their warm company
now usually pass by
before the computer screen.

Sad and restless
the books often cast a languishing look.
They seem as though
they have got into a habit
of sleep-walking.

The values the books taught me
the cells of which never die,
I was told—
are missing at homes.
The relationship they talked of
now stand ruptured.

As I turn the pages
I can hear a sigh.

Many a word has lost its meaning
and many others look like
a dry, leafless tree on which
no meaning will sprout.

A great many phrases lie
scattered about the pages
like earthen cups
made unwanted by glass tumblers.

There was a time
when turning the pages
brought a strange flavour
to my tongue.
Now the click of a finger
causes a flitting blink and
a lot many things open up on the screen.
But the bond I once had with books—
well, all that is past now.

Sometimes I would lie down
with the book on my chest,
sometimes I would place it
fondly on my lap,
and yet some other time
I would make my knee
a stand for scripture
and bow as in prayer
and read.

Knowledge will keep coming
in some way or other.
But the withered flower and the scented note
between the pages,
the relationship that sometimes grew
on the pretexts of borrowing,
dropping and picking up a book—
what'll happen to them?
Perhaps onewon't have them
again.

Gulzar, trans. Gopa Ranjan Mishra (Bhubaneswar)

Forgiveness

You want to avenge; forgive him;
Forgiveness is the best
Revenge, attribue, not a whim
Of the strong, the wisest.

'To err is human,' yesterday
Was taught. 'To blame others
Is more human,' we learn today.
'Forgiveness' none bothers.

It's cruelty activity
To be dubb'd achievement:
Love not only gives, it forgives
Too, noble sentiment.

The mosquito that buzzes most
Gets swatted first, so was
He expell'd for trying utmost
To stall work for no cause.

Kedar Sharma (Gurgaon)

42 2004-2005

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CONTENTS

R.K. Dhawan: *Editorial*; **O.P. Mathur**: 'A Beautiful Mind': The Substratum of Values in English Studies; **Sumati and Pashupati Jha**: Eager to be Women of Their Own: Assertive Heroines of Bharati Mukherjee; **Rashmi Gaur**: Female Sexuality and Introspection in Shashi Deshpande's *Moving On*; **Sadhana Agrawal**: A Spiritual Search in Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca*; **Shubha Tiwari**: Shades of Life in Usha K.R.'s *The Chosen*; **Manju Roy**: Being and Nothingness of Akhila in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*; **R.S. Sharma**: Language Literature and Metaphor: A Study in Centrality; **Melva Pope**: Tagore's Woman: The Reality behind the Illusion; **A.K. Bachchan**: Symbolism in *A Farewell to Arms*; **Sushila Singh**: The "Anti-Feminist" Feminist Thought: A Current Perspective; **Sanjay Kumar**: Translation as a Site of Politics: Missionary Discourses in the Late 18th Century and Early 19th Century; **Jyotsna Sahoo**: Depiction of Sex and Violence in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya; **A.K. Mukherjee:** Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*: A Postcolonial Text; **B.C. Tewari**: Yeats's 'A Coat': From Romanticism to Romanticism; **Amar Nath Prasad**: Jayanta Mahapatra: A Poet of Competent Craft; **Mithilesh Pandey**: Nissim Ezekiel's Quest for Values in *Latter-Day Psalms*; **A.A. Mutalik-Desai:** Norman Mailer at Fourscore and More; **Nibir K. Ghosh**: A Conversation with Angelyn Mitchell; **R.C. Tungaria**: The Philosophy of Aesthetic Pleasure in Bharata's Rasa Sidhanta and Aristotle's Theory of Catharsis; **Ranu Uniyal**: "Craving for intensity beyond intelligent survival": Women in the Novels of Ruchira Mukerjee and Manju Kapur; **Ramesh K. Srivastava**: Comic Imagination in the Works of Khushwant Singh; **D.K. Pabby**: Alienation versus Affirmation: The Novels of Anita Desai; **C.J. O'Brien**: The Realistic Novel and the Lost Dimension; **V.K. Singhal**: The Impact of the East and the West on W.S. Maugham; **Arun Kumar Mishra**: Language: A Weapon of Tyranny in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; **Aroonima Sinha**: Treatment of Faith and Survival in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*; **Anita Ghosh**: Seamus Heaney and His Irish Poetic Delight; **Sameeran Paul**: Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer: A Comparative Study of their Novels; **Anita Singh**: The Valorized World of Vishnu: Manil Suri's *The Death of Vishnu*; **Sangeeta Das**: Identity Crisis of Women in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*

Book Reviews: R.K. Raizada: S.K. Vasistha's *The Snake and the Grandpa and Other Poems*; **I.K. Sharma:** O.P. Mathur's *Indira Gandhi and the Emergency as Viewed in the Indian Novel*

Book Shelf: **Gajendra Kumar**: *Indian English Fiction: Readings and Perceptions*; **Siddharth Sharma**: *Arun Joshi's Novels: A Critical Study*; **Siddharth Sharma**: *Shashi Deshpande's Novels: A Feminist Study*; **Amar Nath Prasad**: *Indian Writing in English: Past and Present*; **K. Balachandran:** *Critical Responses to Canadian Literature*; **N.D.R. Chandra**: *Modern Indian Writings in English: Critical Perceptions*

Creative Writing: R.S. Sharma; Pashupati Jha; H.A. Singh; Kedar Nath Sharma; S.K. Vasishta; M.A. Nare; P.V. Laxmi Prasad; S.R. Khare; Gopa Ranjan Mishra