

THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

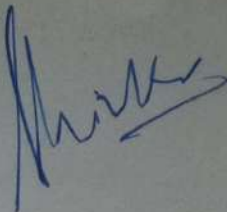
Vol. XLV

2008

FORTY-FIFTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION



THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ENGLISH STUDIES



THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES
VOL. XLV

2008

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The Indian Journal of English Studies, is the research journal of the Indian Association for English Studies (Established in 1940). It invites scholarly articles on World literatures in English, Teaching of English as a Second Language, Literary and Critical theories, Bhasha literatures and Indian Literature in English Translation. Articles submitted for publication must conform to the format prescribed by *M.L.A. Handbook* (Sixth Edition). The journal is published annually in December every year and it considers the papers read in the previous All India English Teachers' Conference for publication. However, articles can be submitted directly to the Chief Editor by the end of August every year. It is priced at Rs. 200/-.

Price : Rs. 200/-

Published by the Indian Association for English Studies
Printed at Bani Press, Nuapatna, Cuttack - 753 001, Ph. : (0671)2300034

Editorial :

Where do We go from here ?

The dichotomy between practising criticism and reading literature has become problematic with the advent of plethora of critical theories in the last half of the twentieth century. We make a commonplace remark when we say that literary texts like any other text possess meaning. The question is not whether literary texts possess meaning, but independent meaning, for they are built on language codes and literary systems. Writers do not only select words, idioms from the language but they also take plots, characters from their predecessors and often change them to suit their purpose. It is in this sense that literature becomes the common property of mankind. When we read new texts we move on to other texts to extract the meaning. Reading a literary text becomes an act of moving away from it, only to return to it with new meanings from other texts to illumine the text under reading. This kind of interpretation of a text in which the reader not merely concentrates on this particular text or textuality of it but seeks the meaning of it in other texts, is called intertextuality.

Reading of a literary text is two dimensional. One, what is the meaning of the text vis-a-vis other texts (i.e. textuality and intertextuality) and two, what the literary critics say about the text. Critics extend the meaning of the text in the same way as intertextuality illumines it. That is why the boundaries between literary theory and reading literature are getting blurred. We can't read

properly a literary text without applying literary theory (or theories) to it. What is involved in reading is not the text alone – the author, the text, the reader and the world – these four directly or obliquely come into play in course of reading a literary text.

If New Criticism in U.S.A. in the nineteen-forties shifted the emphasis from the author to the text, as a reaction against historical and biographical scholarship of the nineteenth century, structuralism which followed it announced the death of the author and emphasized that the author is not the sole arbitrator of the meaning of a text (“Language writes the Man”). Deconstruction, thereafter, made the text untenable by propagating the indeterminacy of meaning and advocating the free play of signifiers without a centre. Reader - Response criticism in the 1970s laid emphasis on readers’ response to the text at the cost of the latter. Marxist criticism, myth criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, cultural criticism and new historicism seek to evaluate literature on the basis of class, human belief, working of the human mind and the foregrounding of the text in culture, race and milieu. Feminist criticism took a different path by emphasizing the reading of texts on the basis of gender equations. Later on when gender yielded place to sexuality we found new theories of criticism such as gay and lesbian criticism and Queer Theory.

Postcolonial criticism seeks to study literature in terms of culture and imperialism (orientalism). Edward Said has made a significant statement, ‘Text is in the World and about the World, hence it’s Worldly’. Now we have come a long way from shifting the emphasis from the author to the text, then to the reader, and there after to the gender, and finally to the world. To race, class, gender now added a new concept - sexuality. It is the body that matters - gays and lesbians have taken to their wings.

Where do we go from here ? Have we reached the dead end - should we announce the death of theory ? In recent years a

number of books on critical theory with bewildering titles such as *In the Wake of Theory* (1992) by Paul Bove, *What's Left of Theory?* (2000) edited by Judith Butler, et al, *After Theory : Postmodernism / Postmarxism* (1990) by Thomas Docherty and *Reading after Theory* (2002) by Valentine Cunningham were published. These books apart from describing either the demise of theory or the triumph of theory, suggest how to read literary texts in different ways.

The question is what should we do in India ? Should we merely echo the west ? Can't we think of alternative ways of reading the text by going back to our roots ? Why can't we give Indian Poetics a chance ? I don't indulge in West bashing. We should know what they say about literary and critical theories but we should not stop at that. We can complement it with our knowledge of indigenous criticism and interpret text from our point of view. For instance, we should not be obsessed with protean terms like 'postcolonialism', 'postmodernism', even 'neo-colonialism' etc. For how long can we go on saying that we live postcolonial society after sixty-two years of independence ? What we need is intellectual courage to read literature in our own way without quoting western jargons all the time. The sooner we do it, is the better for us.

In this issue we have included scholarly papers on literary theory (Indian Poetics), English literature, Indian English literature, American literature, Postcolonial literature, Bhasha literature and English Language Teaching, Research Note, in addition to an interview with a distinguished poet and creative writer, Jayanta Mahapatra. Care has been taken to give due representation to the papers presented at the last AIETC held at Kolhapur in 2006 and the papers received from the Life Members of the Association (IAES) in time. We have also included here the presidential address of Prof. C. D. Narasimhaiah delivered at the thirty-eighth session of All India English Teachers' Conference held at Andhra University,

Vishakhapatnam, on 27-29 December 1989. That is because, we want to publish the illuminating lectures of some of the past Presidents of All India English Teachers' Conferences for the benefit of our young scholars.

I am sure, in our collective endeavour for improving English Studies in our country, we shall overcome our deficiencies in near future. Some of our creative writers (poets and novelists) have gained acceptance in the west. I look forward to seeing our critics and scholars being treated as equals with their counterparts in the west.

BIJAY KUMAR DAS
Chief Editor

CONTENTS :

	Pages
EDITORIAL :	I
JASBIR JAIN	
Orality as a Dislocatory force in New Literatures	1
G. RAI	
Kiran Desai's <i>The Inheritance of Loss</i> : A Study in Postcolonial Perspective.	14
ANUPAMA CHOWDHURY	
Manju Kapur's <i>Home</i> : A Feminist Reading.	24
KHANDEKAR SURENDRA SAKHARAM	
Traditional, Mythical, Stylistic and Textual Approach in Raja Rao's <i>Kanthapura</i>	37
P. M. PATIL	
Image of Gandhi in Chaman Nahal's <i>The Gandhi Quartet</i> .	47
PASHUPATI JHA	
History, Fact and Fiction with Special Reference to <i>Train to Pakistan</i> .	56
SAVITA DEWANGAN & G. A. GHANSHYAM	
No Room for Individualism in Ruskin Bond's <i>The Room on the Roof</i> .	64
J. A. SHINDE & PRADNYA V. GHORPADE	
The African Nationalism in Nadine Gordimer's Major Novels.	71

**PROTIBHA MUKHERJEE SAHUKAR &
B. K. PATEL**

“But I am not a woman any more” : The Perils of
Motherhood in Buchi Emecheta’s
The Joys of Motherhood.

84

GAJENDRA KUMAR

V. S. Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas* :
An Existential Approach.

92

BHAMBAR S. B.

Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha* :
A Novel of Spiritual Quest.

104

BASAVARAJ NAIKAR

The Theme of Love and Death in *Henceforth.*

114

HALADHAR PANDA

Language and Meaning in Indian Poetics

135

BINOD MISHRA

Eco-centric vision of S.T. Coleridge
in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.*

153

ANGSHUMAN KAR

“Dress”, “Dressing” and “Clothing”:
Interfacing Barthes and *King Lear.*

167

MANISH SOLANKI

Pinter and Politics.

175

B.M. LADGAONKAR

Colonial Consciousness in Edward Thompson’s
A Farewell to India.

182

SANJAY KUMAR

The Problem of Sin in *The Scarlet Letter.*

191

	Pages
SARYUG YADAV	
Communication Skill and Teacher Empowerment : A Linguistic Prespective.	201
MADHURI GOKHALE	
The Use of the Perfective in Indian English : Implications for Language Teaching.	216
MALATI PANGA	
Critique of Possession and Ownership : A Feminist Analysis of the Movie, <i>Matrubhoomi</i> - A Nation without Women	222
RESEARCH NOTE	
M. S. KUSHWAHA	
On the Darkling Plain : Rethinking Indian Research in English Studies	228
C. D. NARASIMHAIAH	
Notes for an Address	234
JAYANTA MAHAPATRA	
Jayanta Mahapatra in Conversation with Bijay Kumar Das	263
BOOK REVIEW	
SUNNY SINGH	
<i>With Krishna's Eyes</i>	274
SURESH SHUKLA	
<i>The Wobbling World of Kingsley Amis : A Critical Study</i>	276
AMAR NATH PRASAD AND NAGENDRA KUMAR	
<i>Indian Fiction in English : Roots and Blooms. Vol. II.</i>	280

	Pages
NIKITA LALWANI	
<i>Gifted</i>	286
CREATIVE WRITING	
R. PARTHASARATHY	290
the killing of innocents	
Thar Express	
Pillow Talk	
KEKI N. DARUWALLA	293
Defining a Sufi	
R. K. SINGH	295
Five Tanka Poems	
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	296



ORALITY AS A DISLOCATIONARY FORCE IN NEW LITERATURES

Jasbir Jain

The 'newness' of the 'new' is a debatable issue : what is it that defines new literatures ? Power, visibility or simply newness ? Who recognizes the 'new' ? In terms of time and history, most literatures that are termed new have long histories – they may have lacked power and visibility, or else they may have been part of alternative traditions.

New literatures are categorized as such because they have risen from socio-geographical and political peripheries and suddenly, over the last half-a-century or more, they have impacted the normative patterns of framing and interpreting the accepted canon. The term came into use perhaps in the 60s, they got lost in the larger term postcolonial, but has now resurfaced and shifts attention to literatures not written originally in English, as the writing by dalits, aborgines, tribals and other marginalized categories. Thus it is our consciousness of them that currently defines the new.

Over and above the shift in political power, newness comes in through resistance and a search for identity. It has a strange habit of creeping gradually on one's sensibility. When Raja Rao turned to the *sthala-purana* as a narrative structure in his 1938 novel *Kanthapura* it was both a resistance to the western narrative and political hegemony and a search for an authentic voice.¹ 'Once upon a time' and 'Long, long ago' have an immediate trick of disconnecting

★ An abridged version of this paper was presented at the International Seminar on "New Urgings in New Literatures" at M.D. University, Rohtak, 4-6 September, 2007.

from fixity. At once they disturb the one-to-one equation between reality and representation.

A slightly older contemporary on the other side of the world was, for entirely different reasons, blurring the boundaries of history, time and identity. My reference is to Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) an Argentinean. He wrote fables, poems, dreamscapes, fathomed the ambiguities of existence and began his narratives through dismantling contexts, or proceeded to dismantle them in the course of the narrative. For example, he begins a story in the following manner: "I am a woodcutter. My name does not matter. The hut where I was born and where I shall probably soon die stands at the edge of the Forest ("The disk" *The Book of Sand* p. 84).² Working with 'edges', anonymity and erasures he takes both life and death in his stride. Very often two different notions of time and reality inhabit the same world as in "The Other" which takes up the main trope of his writing.

"The Other" is about a meeting with the self – a self which does not belong to time and which speaks in the same voice and whistles the same tune making mockery of reality. The two selves are caught up in a dream and strive to connect the lived past with the unknown future. How do these two selves – one twenty and the other seventy – relate? Through literary masters – Conrad, Dostoevsky, Whitman, Victor Hugo – they link with the world of ideas and words. Both memory and amnesia are at play; in some ways there is a refusal to take cognizance of recorded and material reality, instead there is a desire to explore the unreliability of memory by a process of exchange.³

Borges also explores the nature of creativity and the meaning of the word in another tale "The mirror and the mask". It is about the move from description to a happening, about inhabiting a fable rather than narrating from the outside. The narrator's double location is a feature of orality. Arshia Shattar in her Introduction of *Kathasaritsagara* comments on the ancient Indian authors as both narrators / redactors and characters in the stories they tell (xxiv).⁴ Another feature which Borges exploits is the decontextualization and universality of the experiences he narrates.

The debates in both “The Other” and “The mirror and the mask” are the debates between writing and orality. The poet in “The Mirror and the mask” is a bard. His successive versions – actually retellings – define the nature of memory, emphasize the fluidity of the narrative and finally the economy to which it can be reduced. The King sends him back on the first two occasions and invites him to return once again after a year. His first recital is completely oral; the second is recited with constant reference to the script while the third consists of a single line recited to an audience of one like a “secret prayer or a blasphemy” (*Book of Sand* 56). The journey of the narrative is both circuitous and enigmatic. His orality blossoms, writing controls it, and finally, freed from writing, he has unearthed the secret knowledge but forgotten the art of recital. His audience is now an audience of one.

The ending recognizes the bounds of human knowledge and proceeds to disassociate real knowledge from both rhetoric and reality; it recognises the strength of the fabulous. For Borges, newness stemmed from the *modernisme* “that enormous liberation that gave new life to the many literatures that use the Castilian language...” (*Book of Sand* 97-98).

Walter Ong in his remarkable work *Orality and Literacy* define orality at two levels – primary, the one that exists in preliterate societies and secondary – the kind being supported by high technology and sustained by telephone, radio, television and other electronic devices (11). But orality refuses to be confined by these two categories. It exists in other ways through the continuity of myths and legendary histories, through folk versions and countless retellings, often functioning as a counter-discourse. Orality can inhabit a world between illiteracy and literacy and be used for projecting cultural specificity. This is the orality that emerges from the socio-geographical margins of caste, language, location and gender. This is the orality of marginal identities as they contest censorship and hegemony and the imperialism of the written word.⁵

In *Orality and Literacy* Ong does make a reference to the Vedas but that is about all of India and Eastern traditions. Commenting on the residue which writing has, he writes – “When an oft-told oral story is not actually being told, all that exists of it is the potential in certain human beings to tell it” (11). But “telling” and “retelling” both need to be defined – are they repetitions, reworkings, reinterpretation or interactive? Further what position do they occupy – oppositional or interpenetrative – a fixed singularity or multivalent accommodation. All these are of significance. Orality is associative, it is not a matter of reproduction by rote; it has a flexibility and an inbuilt newness.

I draw attention to the practice of recitation of religious discourses, specially in India. The *Ramayana*, *Bhagvad Gita*, *Satyanarayan ki Katha* and the various *vrata-kathas* – they are constantly being repeated day in and day out. Not merely repeated but retold, reinterpreted and refashioned. The many versions of the *Ramayana* have come out of these retellings including the women’s *Ramayana* in Telugu which consists of women-centered songs which clearly distinguish between both gender and class⁶.

Ambedkar is once believed to have said :

The Hindus wanted the Vedas and they sent for Vyasa
who was not a caste Hindu.

The Hindus wanted an Epic and they sent for Valmiki
who was an Untouchable.

The Hindus wanted a Constitution, and they sent for me.⁷

The margins have continued to nurture and sustain a living oral tradition. Another example is the experience – sharing awareness workshops, field interviews and oral histories. Sukhubai, a field worker, when interviewed by the Sparrow group, kept on talking to them while sowing the seeds in the field and prefaced each new memory with a folktale. I recall one about a mouse who through native shrewdness and bartering system upset the power equation and ends up by getting a wife in return. The story has several lessons

– one, that power rotates, two, that manipulation pays and three, that woman is easily targeted as a commodity of exchange.⁸

I give these examples because they temporarily dislocate the boundaries between the written and the oral. Also because they lead us to experiential literatures – a category into which a great deal of tribal and dalit writing falls, where writing is incidental to the telling of the tale; it is this telling which is of importance to the making of the self. The spate of dalit autobiographies bridge the gap between orality and literacy in several ways. They work with experience, use dialects or spoken speech, fall easily into folk tale methods and literally have no plot or cause and effect linking the events together, even character is primarily of an observer - participant. It is surprising that very few dalit autobiographies work on the oppression theme. They have a high degree of objectivity – plain narration of fact – as for example Baby Kamble and Kaushalya Baisantri. Women writers proceed to subjugate their selves to a secondary status – in some way replicating the subordination of gender but strongly enough also adopting the role of the oral narrator who is not obtrusive in his participation. These autobiographies a rich source for both the anthropologist and the social historian, are simultaneously statements of feminine rebellion as they describe ugliness and filth. Amidst this bleakness, descriptions of women being possessed, of trances, frenzied dances and dislocations of power follow. Possessed, the women “become oblivious of all else, run blindly like buffaloes towards the square where the *potraja* would be beating the drum.....” (*Jeevan Hamara* 31–33).

The ritualized performance destroys all inhibitions : it is truly a liberating experience. And rituals contain within them a non-verbalized desire for the unknown. One is compelled to consider the nature of this orality afresh – primarily because it seeks to redefine both realism and representation. It does not adopt a fabulist framework like major narratives of oral tradition or writers who reach out from their literate world. Further it does not place graphic description within a narrative frame. Instead it allows it to flow and, in the absence of authorial comment, retain a close relationship with

the actual happening. Dalit writing is often a statement about a perception of reality and has no inclination to elaborate itself into a myth. This is a reflection on the nature of memory and on cultural alienation. By rejecting the mythical frames of upper caste mythology and religious belief, it makes an assertion of independence.¹⁰

The self is defined through orality – the stories that one's mother and grandmother tell one, the oral narration of holy stories and fables all leave an impression both on the conscious and the unconscious mind. Gandhi in his autobiography, *My Experiment's with Truth*, traces the formation of his moral self to his mother's storytelling and his nurse Ramba's recitations and goes on to record how at a tender age "I began repeating *Ramayana* to cure my fear of ghosts and spirits". He memorized *Ram Raksha* and every evening read out the *Ramayana* to his father (27), thus surrendering himself to the mnemonic quality of the word. Again, at a much later stage, while in South Africa he began to memorize verses from the *Gita* in search of truth (221).¹¹ Gandhi's innumerable discourses, his direct plain style, his daily prayer meetings all go to emphasize the orality that nurtures collective participation something that the written word does not necessarily achieve. The dialogicity may not be more powerful but it is different.

Commenting on primary orality, Ong is of the opinion that sounds in the spoken word "have no trace [...] not even a trajectory. They are occurrences, events" (31). In order to become a countersign of thought, it needs to have the possibility of retrieval and a reference point. He enlists several characteristics of orality, such as additive and aggregative, epithetic and often formulaic (36-39), but its strengths lie in its proximity to the human-world. It can tend to be agonistic in its exaggerations of human prowess (41-45).

As the two, writing and orality, function differently, their co-existence may also function at different cultures. The oral narrative acquires a timelessness and flexibility of its own as no two versions are likely to be the same.¹² The narrative responds to the context and to the audience and is thus responsive to the immediate present.

What happens when it fails to do so ? Or the change has a hostile reception. It is this point of antagonism which is important and asks the question how is newness created.

It is at this point that a radical revision takes place. Very often the radical element becomes acceptable primarily because the formulaic aspect is familiar. The Gandhi kathas in Rao's *Kanthapura* fall within the narrative requirements of *Hari-kathas* and as the telling takes place in the temple precincts, their holiness is a foregone conclusion. But *Kanthapura* is located in a rural society, giving rise to the question : is it possible for a literate society to accept a radical revision of an oral narrative ?

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's work is a remarkable illustration of reversals and revisions wrought in the oral narrative. *Innocent Erendira* uses the framework of a fairy tale but proceeds to reverse it at every step. The grandmother-grand-daughter relationship is reversed with the grand-daughter bathing the old woman, attending to the household chores, and singing the older woman to sleep. Again, innocence is substituted by exploitation both of the body and the mind. And finally the ending is a total reversal – rather than a fairy godmother, it is the pursuit of the lover Ullises that comes to her aid but whom she betrays in order to escape to an uncertain and unknown freedom. Framed within the announcement of incredibility, Erendira, trapped in her grandmother's clutches, finds the rescuing agent and as the wind blows across her destiny both positively and negatively, she escapes from her grandmother as well as her lover. The narrator steps momentarily into the story, rituals are performed almost religiously but the 'lived happily ever after' ending does not follow.¹³

Marquez's narrative constantly reverse and subvert the formulaic narrative even as it forms the base of his work. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* begins with the story of a tribe of about 300 people in an enclosed space, protected from outside intervention but gradually the outside enters it through conquest, ambition, power and conflict. Names are repeated, children are born, power changes hands but the division of time collapse as the narrative slips into a fable for all

mankind. Julio Ortega in his essay has commented upon Marquez's reversal of the 'Once upon a time' beginning. It is replaced by "Many years later" – a phrase which looks into the future (1) Similarly in *The Chronicle of a Death Foretold* the future is envisioned. And once the narrative is begun it goes on endlessly from generation to generation, to conflict, violence, outside interventions, war, shifting power equations – in fact a carnivalization is at work (5–6).¹⁴

It is a mistake to treat the oral tradition as contained and single stranded. In Ong's view oral societies "must invest great energy in saying over and over again what has been learned arduously over the ages..... This need establishes a highly traditionalist or conservative set of mind that with good reason inhibits intellectual experimentation" (41). The wisdom of the stories is time-tested. But newness enters this world when contexts of narration shift according to class and gender, and when opposing narratives are juxtaposed. The two Hindu epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, contest the same ground – the first through adherence to normative role models, the second through questioning, defying and stepping outside them. Societies impose a kind of censorship – but the deviations are always present. Devi, the protagonist of Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*, breaks the taboos and reads a page her father-in-law had not read out to her and Devi writes, "I read about a *kritya*, a ferocious woman who haunts and destroys the house in which women are insulted. She burns with anger. She spits fire. She sets the world ablaze like Kali shouting in anger. Each age has its *kritya*". (69-70), a *Kritya* who shatters all other sacrificial role models like Sati, Parvati, Haimavati, Gauri – all of them¹⁵.

When elements of orality enter narration they disrupt the conjunction between linearity and representation. There are several ways of doing this – (i) the unconscious childhood absorption of orality as in Gandhi's case, (ii) fabulation and magic realism as in Borges, Marquez and Rushdie and other postmodernistic text; (iii) through an observer-cum participant narrational role as in dalit or black auto-narratives, (iv) through embedded forms of storytelling and (v) deconstruction of myths and fables (vi) alternative histories

and realities. Almost all of these have been appropriated by postmodernist writers.

Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* has pointed out that "To reconstitute the discourse of cultural difference demands not simply a change of cultural contents and symbols... It requires a radical revision, of the social temporality in which emergent histories may be written, the rearticulation of the 'sign' in which cultural identities may be inscribed". He goes on to assert that it is non-canonical cultural forms that reshape critical strategies (171-172). I would like to add that non-canonical cultural forms also impact narratorial strategies as two different ways of conceptualizing and commenting, as two systems of semiotics, begin to overlap and flow into each other. Both in the East and West, contemporary writing has used orality – the use of Indian, Arabic and African music, dialects, storytelling, myths and fables, folk songs and folktales have intervened in the established canon in more ways than one.

Orality today in a post postmodernist world has caught up with us once again – not merely through secondary orality as defined by Ong but through its own capacity for openness, constant revision and radicalism; through the presence of a counter-meaning which can break through the fixity of writing. It has come to dwell in the word and to extend its boundaries as the unreliability of observer / narrator, reality and meaning itself is put under the scanner. Bhabha's view that the connections made between late capitalism and the "fragmentary, simulacral pastiche symptoms of postmodernity" (173), fail to account for the historical traditions of cultural contingency and textual indeterminacy" needs to be investigated more seriously from the point of view of living oral traditions that can accommodate deviations and cross boundaries as they travel across the waves of time.¹⁷

Notes and Reference

1. Raja Rao published his first novel *Kanthapura* in 1938, at the height of the nationalist movement. The preface he wrote to that novel has achieved the status of a classic statement. He

writes, "The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own [.....] We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us [.....] we, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move we move quickly". *Kanthapura* (New Delhi : Hind Pocket Books 1938), 1971. *Sthala - purana* means the story of the land. The Indian novel has progressed from the *katha*, the *kissa* and the *dastan* – forms which have a strong element of orality in them.

2. Refer *The Book of Sand* (1975). Translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni, 1977 (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1979).
3. "The Other", *the Book of Sand*. By the time this book came out Borges's had lost his eyesight. He calls them "blind man's exercises". Borges used the theme of the double time and again. Locating the story in Cambridge, in February 1969, he experiences the presence of the 'other'. The narrator is fifty years older and tells the younger man, "Don't you want to know something of my past, which is the future awaiting you?" (p.5). The story has two perspectives relating to each other, interacting across the passage of time.
4. Somadeva. *Tales From the Kathasaritsagara*. Translated from the Sanskrit by Arshia Shattar. New Delhi : Penguin, 1994. Somadeva is believed to have compiled them in the eleventh century around 1070 C.E.
5. See Walter. J. Ong, *Orality and Literary*. London and New York : Routledge (1982), 2005, p. 12. Ong writes, "Writing [.....] is a particularly pre-emptive and imperialist activity that tends to assimilate other things to itself even without the aid of etymologies."
6. See Velcheru Narayana Rao's essay "A Ramayana of Their Own : Women's Oral Tradition in Telugu," *Many Ramayanas : The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. Ed. Paula Richman. Delhi: OUP, 1994.

7. And quoted by M.O. Mattai, *Reminiscences of the Nehru Age*, 1978 and in the second instance by Eleanor Zelliott, "The Folklore of Pride," *Folk Culture, Folk Religion and Oral Traditions as a Component in Maharashtrian Culture*. Ed. Gunther - Dietz Sontheimer, New Delhi : Manohar, 1995 p. 63.
8. Sakhubai's dialogue, "Ropai Ke Mausam Mein Batiyate Huye Sakhubai" has been translated into Hindi from Marathi by Neera Nahta and included in a collection of similar interviews in a volume titled *Dehleez Ko Langhte Huye*, literally meaning *Crossing the Threshold*. Edited by Sudha Arora (Mumbai : Sparrow, 2003). Sparrow stands for 'Sound and Picture Archives for Research on Women.'
9. For a detailed interpretation of dalit autobiographies in terms of gender and aesthetics refer to chapter six of my work *Beyond Postcolonialism : Dreams and Realities of Nation*. The chapter entitled "Experiential versus Classical Aesthetics" goes into the questions raised in the present article. Baby Kamble's autobiography *Jeevan Hamara*, translated into Hindi from the original Marathi by Lalita Asthana has been published by Kitabghar, (New Delhi, 1995) and Kaushalya Baisantri's *Dohra Abhishaap* (Hindi) by Parmeshwari Prakashan : Delhi, 1999.
10. Refer for details to the essay "Classical versus Experiential Aesthetics", see note 9. above.
11. M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography : My Experiments with Truth*. Translated by Mahadev Desai. (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1927, 1997). Refer pp. 27-28 and p.221.
12. Refer *Rajasthan – an Oral History : Conversations with Komal Kothari* by Rustom Bharucha. (New Delhi : Penguin, 2003), for other definitions and characteristics of orality, especially chapters 1 and 4. Rustom Bharucha highlights the central act of listening (pp. 7-11), where he comments in his introduction on the artificiality of transmission that the microphone produces. Later the contemporariness of folklore is stressed and Bharucha recalls

- an essay by A. K. Ramanujan (1999), where rather than an oppositional, an interpenetrative role for orality is considered.
13. Refer Jasbir Jain, "Innocent Erendira : The Reversal of a Fairy Tale", *Garcia Marquez and Latin America*. Ed. Alok Bhalla, (New Delhi : Sterling, 1987). Also see *Innocent Erendira and Other Stories* (1979, London : Picador edition 1981).
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 15. Githa Hariharan, *The Thousand Faces of Night*. (New Delhi : Viking by Penguin Bks, FP 1992, 1993), pp. 69-70.
 16. *The Location of Culture*, (London and New York : Routledge, 1994).
 17. Migrants turn back to the past for definitions and redefinitions – not necessarily through written evidence but through the tales that have found their way to them. Refer Caryl Phillips account of racial exploitation and histories in *Crossing the River* (1993, London : Macmillan 1994) as the siblings are sold and geographically relocated in different continents, or Ramabai Espinet's fascination with the Kala Pani and her great grandmother's bhajans and folk songs in *Swinging Bridge* (New Delhi : Penguin, 2003), that allow her to interrogate the histories of women. Music again, is the strength on which the blacks assert their own culture in *Phillips Dancing in the Dark* (London : Vintage, 2006) – a biographical novel about a black performer of the early 20th century.

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KIRAN DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS* : A STUDY IN POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

G. Rai

Kiran Desai has come to occupy a prominent place in the history of Indian English fiction in recent years. She has two novels to her credit so far. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* published in 1998 is her first novel which treats a very common theme of Indian fiction i.e. holy man and the gullibility of the people. The theme received a more serious treatment in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954) and R. K. Narayan's *The Guide* (1958). *The Inheritance of Loss* published in 2006 is Kiran Desai's second novel which is remarkable in its treatment of every contemporary international issue : globalization, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. An attempt is made here to study the novel in postcolonial perspective.

The term postcolonialism is very comprehensive. It is ideologically an emancipatory concept.¹ It seeks to emancipate, the oppressed, depressed, the deprived and the down-trodden all over the world. The oppression could be political, economic, social or gender-based. The postcolonial condition can be traced in the two archives – coercion and retaliation – which arise from the subordinating power of European colonialism and the narrative resistance to colonialism. Postcolonialism returns to and remembers the colonial past. The process of returning to the colonial scene discloses a relationship of reciprocal antagonism and desire between the colonizer and the colonized. In *The Intimate Enemy* (1983) Ashish Nandi states two forms of colonization. One is the physical conquest

of territories. The other is the colonization of the minds, selves and cultures.² The first mode is violent, transparent in its self-interest and greed. The second mode is that of the rationalist, modernists and the liberals who claim to have the responsibility of civilizing the uncivilized world. Anti-colonial nationalism is a struggle to represent, create or recover a culture and a selfhood that had been systematically repressed and eroded during the colonial rule. Gandhi and Fanon are the two historical figures who opposed colonial civilizing mission. The two leaders tried in their own ways for creative autonomy from Europe. In Hegel's paradigm the slave must turn away from the master to forge his meaning in labour. The slave experiences envy and desire for respect of the master. The negro "wants to be like the master."³ In Gandhi, the problem is "we want the English without the English man."⁴ Fanon denounces European myth of progress. The two leaders point out the ethical inadequacy and undesirability of the colonial master.

Theories of colonial and anticolonial discourses are helpful in the development of postcolonialism. Colonialism expanded the contact between the European and the non-Europeans. Anti-colonial nationalism mobilized and organized the aspirations of the oppressed and the colonized the world over. It also paved the way for the emergence of a global community. The encounter resulted in post-nationalism which sought to bridge the old divide between the Westerner and the native. It served two objectives – (i) it transformed the colonizer as well as the colonized. Harish Trivedi aptly remarks : it is "an interactive dialogue, two-way process – a process involving complex negotiation and exchange,"⁵ (ii) it results in an inter-civilizational alliance against institutionalized suffering and oppression. Postcolonialism focuses on global mixing of cultures and identities. It employs a variety of conceptual terms and categories of analysis which examine subtle interactions between the colonizer and the colonized. The terms 'hybridity' and 'diaspora' stand out for their versatility and resilience. Postcolonial studies are preoccupied

with issues of hybridity, creolization, in-betweenness, diasporas and liminality, with the mobility and cross-overs of ideas and identities generated by colonialism. Phrases like 'cultural diversity, pluralism' and 'multiculturalism' are frequently used just to depict the western nations as location of tolerance where all cultural practices are happily accommodated. However, some critics believe that the representations of cultural diversity are convenient fictions which mask the continuing economic, political and social inequalities experienced by migrants and their descendants from the once-colonized countries. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* deals with the consequences of colonialism and global conflicts of religion, race and nationalism.

The novel opens with a teenage Indian girl, an orphan called Sai, living with her Cambridge - educated Anglophile grandfather, a retired judge, in the town of Kalimpong on the Indian side of the Himalayas. The judge is one of those "ridiculous Indians" who adopted English opinions and morals. He is just like Fanon's French educated colonials depicted in *Black Skin, White Masks*. He is one of the 'mimic men' who learnt to act English but did not look English nor were they accepted as such. As a student, isolated in racist England, the future judge feels "barely human at all" and leaps "when touched on the arm as if from an unbearable intimacy."⁶ On his return to India, he finds himself despising everything Indian. Living in a large decaying house the judge considers himself more British than Indian, far superior to hard-working but poverty-stricken people. The judge is obviously a specimen of those who were Indian in blood but English in manners and opinions. "The man with the white curly wig and dark face covered in powder, bringing down his hammer, always against the native, in a world that was still colonial." (205) In course of learning foreign ways and manners, the judge grows a stranger to himself and a butt or ridicule to others. "He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be

despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both" (119). His grand daughter Sai, in accent and manners, bears a close resemblance to him. She is a westernized Indian brought up by English nuns, an estranged Indian living in India. Gyan, the Nepali tutor, mimicks "Sai and her grandfather with the fake English accent and the face powdered pink and white over dark brown." (176) Gyan feels terribly irritated to see Sai celebrating Christmas : "you are like slaves, that's what you are, running after the West, embarrassing yourself. It's because of people like you we never get anywhere... It's clear all you want to do is copy. Can't think for yourself. Copycat, copycat. Don't you know, these people you copy like a copycat, THEY DON'T WANT YOU !!!" (163-164) Blind imitation of the west results in complete erosion of his autonomous individuality. On his return to India, he finds himself despising his apparently backward Indian wife :

He did not like his wife's face, searched for his hatred, found beauty, dismissed it. Once it had been a terrifying beckoning thing that had made his heart turn to water, but now it seemed beside the point. An Indian girl could never be as beautiful as an English one. (168)

A judge by profession who is supposed to be custodian of justice, runs away without doing anything for the boy who is "kicked and beaten behind the pub" (209) by a group of boys. The judge's Anglophilia is eventually transformed into self-hatred :

Now Jemubhai wondered if he had killed his wife for the sake of false ideals, stolen her dignity, shamed his family turned her into the embodiment of their humiliation. (308)

The Inheritance of Loss sheds light on the plight of Indians going abroad in search of fortune. Indian's contribution to the making of the Western world is often forgotten or overlooked. It is a well-known fact that Indian coolies and workers toiled on plantations, cleared forests, built roads and railways. Indian soldiers served ably

perishing in the battlefields. The blue collar workers helped rebuild Europe after World War II. More recently Indians have played vital role in science, technology, business and education. Lately they are playing crucial role in the creation of the cyber world. This invaluable contribution is quite often ignored or disregarded. Biju, the son of the judge's cook working in a series of ill-paid jobs, epitomizes the plight of the illegal immigrant who has no future in his own country and who endures deplorable conditions and semi-servitude working illegally, dodging the authorities in the United States. Exploring the hopes and aspirations of Biju and his father Nandu, the novel reveals the social and political history of India. The cook's expectations are raised when he learns that his son has been offered a full-time waiter position. He boasts to everyone he meets: "My son works in New York, He is the manager of a restaurant business... one day his son would accomplish all that Sai's parents had failed to do, the judge had failed to do." (84-85) As Biju is an illegal immigrant he has to work for very low wages. His appeal to Harish-Harry to sponsor him for green card is very pathetic :

'Without us living like pigs', said Biju, 'what business would you have ! This is how you make your money, paying us nothing because you know we can't do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal. Why don't you sponsor us for our green cards ?' (188)

In response to advertisements published in a local paper for waiters, vegetable choppers, toilet cleaners, a huge crowd of shabby people assemble for interview in a temporary office at a hotel. Looking at the crowd and waiting anxiously for his turn Biju comes to realize that Indians can bear all sorts of humiliation to get in U.S. "In this room it was a fact accepted by all that Indians were willing to undergo any kind of humiliation to get into the states. You could heap rubbish on their heads and yet they would be begging to come crawling in" (184)

The novel returns to the scene of anti-colonial movement. Gyan, Sai's math tutor, the descendant of a Nepali Gurkha mercenary, is a revolutionary nationalist. Though romantically involved with Sai, he feels irritated with her English accent and behaviour. Half-educated and uprooted Gyan is very keen to "get a proper job and leave that fussy pair Sai and her grandfather with the fake English accent and the face powdered pink and white over dark brown." (176) Gyan feels contempt for Sai who, like her grandfather, is attracted towards western style of living. He pours out his anger in these words : "Don't you have any pride ? Trying to be so Westernized. They don't want you 111 Go there and see if they will welcome you with open arms. You will be trying to clean their toilets and even then they won't want you," (174). He eventually recoils from her obvious privilege and falls in with a group of ethnic Nepalese insurgents. He joins what sounds like an ethnic nationalist movement largely as an opportunity to vent his anger and frustration. Gyan is involved with the Gorakha National Liberation Federation, a Nepalese independence movement which quickly becomes violent. Gyan's commitment to the insurgency offers an interesting contrast with "over a hundred years of family commitment" (142) to the colonial British army in earlier times. He remembers how Indian struggle for independence became a mass movement and "the British left granting India her freedom, granting Muslims Pakistan, granting special provisions for the scheduled castes and tribes, leaving every thing taken care of.... Except us. EXCEPT US. The Nepalis of India". (158) Nepalis have ably served as labourers, coolies and soldiers. They fought in World War II in Europe, Syria, Persia, Malaya and Burma. They are soldiers loyal and brave and their loyalty has never been questioned. But they have been treated with contempt and disregard. In their own country they are treated like slaves. And hence they resolve to fight to the death for the formation of a homeland, Gorakhaland.

We must unite under the banner of the GNLF, Gorkha National Liberation Front. We will build hospitals and

schools. We will provide jobs for our sons.... We will defend our own homeland.... We will run our own affairs in our own language. If necessary, we will wash our bloody kukris in the mother waters of the Teesta. Jai Gorkha. (159)

Gyan feels sympathy for the common people but distrusts the honesty of the leaders who step into the shoes of the colonizers after their liberation. The leaders, as a matter of fact, are motivated by their personal gains, Gyan feels : " It was just frustration - the leaders harnessing the natural irritations and disdain of adolescence for cynical ends; for their own hope in attaining the same power as government officials held now, the same ability to award local businessmen deals in exchange for bribes, for the ability to give jobs to their relatives, places to their children in schools, cooking gas connections....." (157).

The novel stresses the polyphonic multi-cultural diversity of its many subjects. Colonialism and anti-colonialism bring about a transformation of social consciousness. The encounter results in global mixing of cultures and identities. Kiran Desai takes a sceptical view of the West's consumer - driven multiculturalism. The writers, like Zadi Smith and Hari Kunzru feel optimistic about what Salman Rushdie has called "hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs."⁷ Desai's novel deals with the downsides of multiculturalism. The United States is a wonderful country. Its people are most delightful in the world. People from other countries migrate to the West for affluence – "a cockroachy desire to scuttle to where you never saw poverty, not really, never had to suffer a tug to your conscience, where you never heard the demands of servants, beggars, bankrupt relatives..." (299) NRIs get opportunity to earn more and more :

All the NRIs holding their green cards and passports, looked complacent and civilized... Fortune piled on more good

fortune. They had more money and because they had more money, thee would get more money. (289)

Colonial oppression acts as a catalyst for mutation of colonized societies. The decolonizing project radically upsets the old cultural patterns. The old habits give way to "new attitudes, to new modes of action to new ways."⁸ Phrases like cultural diversity, 'pluralism' and multiculturalism are frequently used just to depict the west as location of tolerance, where all cultural practices are happily accommodated. Makarand Paranjape aptly remarks :

A host country like the USA, for example, ostensibly does not distinguish between immigrants and diasporic people. Officially, all are the same to her, and all those who enter have the opportunity of instant assimilation, of fashioning themselves anew"

However, in actual practice the representations of cultural diversity are convenient fictions which mask the continuing economic political and social inequalities experienced by migrants and their descendents from the once colonized countries. People in the West are rich and prosperous. They have all the sources of comfort and luxury. The people in the third-world countries suffer from poverty and starvation. "World Bank, UN, IMF, everything run by white people." (134) Global economy is never a route to prosperity for the downtrodden. The gulf between the rich and the poor is deepening more and more. Kiran Desai observes in the novel : "Profit could only be harvested in the gap between nations working one against the other. They were damning the third world to being third-world." (205) A man working for an American company earns a hundred thousand dollars but earns one thousand dollars for working for the same company in India. "Still a world, my friend, where one side travels to be a servant, and the other side travels to be treated like a king." (269)

Apart from economic inequality, life in the modern world is disturbed by religious and racial conflicts. The novel makes passing

references to fundamentalism and terrorist violence which are world phenomena. Social and political life in a country like India is corrupted. The police are thieves. "Everybody knows it. Hand in hand with goondas." (218) People are involved in anti-national activities – "These anti-nationals have no respect for anything or anyone, not even for themselves.... The whole economy is under threat." (225) Indian nationalism is still disturbed and ambivalent on account of separatist movements and terrorist activities in different parts of the country :

Separatist movement here, separatist movement there, terrorists, guerillas, insurgents, rebels agitators and they all learn from one another, of course - the Neps have been encouraged by the Sikhs and their Khalistan, by ULFA, NEFA, PLA ; Jharkhand, Bodoland, Gorakhaland; Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Kashmir, Punjab, Assam...p.. 128 - 129.

Kiran Desai's second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* thus fulfills the promise established by her first novel. It is mature, significant and enchanting. Here Desai brings her narrative and characters to life. The novel treats contemporary international issues : consequences of colonial domination and anti-colonial resistance, global economy and terrorist violence. Her characters represent all levels of society and many different cultures. Exploring the hopes and aspirations of Sai and Biju and the expectations of their family the novel reveals the social and political history of India. The treatment is both comic and contemplative. The award of the Man Booker Prize 2006 to the novelist is well deserved.

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MANJU KAPUR'S *HOME* : A FEMINIST READING

Anupama Chowdhury

"One is not born but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature" (Beauvoir 457).

"Feminism", as we know it now, originated in Simone de Beauvoir's epoch-making book, *The Second Sex* (1949), and gained momentum in the 1960s. Though as early as 1869, J. S. Mill wrote about the problems of women's inequality in society and pointed out that -- "what is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing - the result of forced repression in some directions (22)", it was the excerpt quoted above that started a debate which propelled feminist thinking in a new direction. Since then both Feminism and Feminist Criticism have extended like ripples in a pond, constructing new meanings and deconstructing the older ones. It encompasses so many aspects that even the use of the term in a plural sense fails to do justice (Panja 59). We may best summarize the basic tenets of feminism by quoting Maggie Humm :

Feminism incorporates diverse ideas which share three major perceptions : that gender is a social construction which oppresses women more than men; that patriarchy shapes this construction; and the women's experiential knowledge is a basis for a future non-sexist society. These assumptions inform feminism's double agenda :

the task of critique (attacking gender stereotypes) and the task of construction. Without this second task (sometimes called feminist praxis) feminism has no goal (194).

Feminism asks why women have played a subordinated role to men in human societies. Thus, a feminist perspective would enable both the critics and the readers to provide an understanding of the sexist ideology in the text under study. Theory is not an abstract intellectual activity divorced from our life, but intricately linked with it. Feminist Literary Critics try to explain how power imbalances due to gender in a given culture are reflected or challenged by literary texts. While conceding that feminist criticism "seeks to expose patriarchal practices" (xiv), Morris points out that literary texts provide a strong powerful understanding of the ways in which society works to the disadvantage of women (7). From time immemorial, woman has been chained with the concepts of softness, sympathy, beauty and sacrifice. This entrapment has limited her pitifully. Her image has been constructed upon man's imagination. We cannot but agree with Beauvoir when she comments : "It is not by increasing her worth as human being that she will gain value in man's eyes; it is rather by modeling herself on their dreams" (68). Keeping the above discussions in view, this paper attempts to make an in-depth study of the theme of Manju Kapur's latest novel, *Home* (2006), in the feminist perspective.

A number of Indian women novelists writing in English made their debut in the 1990s producing novels that revealed the true state of Indian society and its treatment of women. Their fictions remind us of the plight of women in contemporary Indian society and depict the emergence of "new woman" who tries to break free the shackles of patriarchy and speaks of love and sex frankly and boldly. Manju Kapur emerged in the Indian English scenario as one such writer. Her debut novel, *Difficult Daughters*, published in 1998, won the Commonwealth Writer's Prize (Eurasia section) with its

depiction of India's emergence as a new nation running parallel with Virmati's story of rebellion and her quest for independence. With her second novel, *A Married Women* (2002), she went a step further. It deals with the debatable subjects of Hindu-Muslim confrontation and lesbian relationship, against the backdrop of the middle-class life of a Delhi-based family. A synthesis between women's experience vis-a-vis the Indian context and theoretical framework of feminism helps in a proper feministic analysis of the novels of this outspoken writer.

Home begins with a sort of prologue to the joint-family tradition of our society and this sets the tone of the novel. Set in Delhi's Karol Bagh, it presents a simple story of the "Banwari Lal joint - family" running a business in cloth marketing. In the very first chapter, Kapur draws us into the lives of two sisters, Sona and Rupa. In an interview with Ira Pande, Kapur said :

Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that I am exploring the space that women occupy in domestic relationships. It is a world I know and understand.... many manifestations of the Indian woman's roles. She is a wife, a mother, a daughter - in - law – in fact there are so many aspects of a woman's life that I still need to write about that (3).

Through many twists and turns Kapur explores this space and reveals the myriad issues that are deep-rooted within the family - revolt against the age-old tradition, the search for selfhood, woman's rights and the politics of marriage. Sona is married to Yashpal, the eldest son of patriarch, Banwari Lal. In spite of her fasting and praying she remains childless for the first ten years of her marriage. Surrounded by relatives and family members, she faces humiliation and pity for her condition from almost all corners. While comparing Rupa's childlessness with her situation, she laments : "She (Rupa) was not subjected to sneers and taunts, she was not the only barren

woman amongst myriad sisters-in-law whose wombs were bursting with perpetual pride (3)." In the Indian patriarchal system wifehood and motherhood have been accepted as pivotal roles for women. Woman's prime function, as defined by our society, is to serve as the vessel that will bring forth the next generation. As a result, she faces two kinds of oppression. First, by the imposition of "motherhood" as a symbol of her status and second by the responsibility of continuing the human race. Kapur portrays a realistic picture of the misery of multiple childbirth in her debut novel, *Difficult Daughters* :

For the eleventh time it had started, the heaviness in her belly, morning and evening nausea, bile in her throat while eating, hair falling out in clumps, giddiness when she got up suddenly. How trapped could nature make a woman ? (7)

Our society forces motherhood as a social obligation and looks down upon sexuality that is removed from procreation. This is evident from the sarcastic comment made on Sona by her mother-in-law (known only as "Maji" and never by name - Perhaps an indication of her identity only as the patriarch's wife): "Enjoying, enjoying" (12).

Ultimately, after a relentless psychological struggle for ten long years, Sona gives birth to a "mangli" daughter, Nisha. But her duty towards the family is not yet fulfilled because ours is a culture that idolizes sons and dreads the birth of a daughter. Her prayers are rewarded once more and after a complicated "caesarian" she gives birth to a son :

That moment on the hospital bed she experienced as the most blessed of her life. The mother of a son, she could join Sushila as a woman who had done her duty to the family, in the way the family understood it. Gone was the disgrace, the resentment, gone with the appearance of little Raju, as dark plain-featured as his father, but a boy, a boy (49).

Later, after Pooja becomes the mother of a daughter, Sona herself (now Puja's mother-in-law) perpetuates the same notion: "Raju says she is still young, but they may have to try two, three times for boy..." (335).

Through the ages, Indian women's history of suffering and rebellion against patriarchal dominance remains almost the same. There are old models and new models but the paramount questions of adjustment or rebellion in search of identity still remains. Entrapped by deeply entrenched attitudes, women themselves impose these on other women. Commenting on this issue Anita Desai rightly observes, "the conterminous constrains of widespread illiteracy and material dependence" make Indian women themselves "connive at patriarchal morals" "A Secret Convenience" (972). The older women are presented in this novel under study as guardians of patriarchal values and institutions. Sona tries to inculcate the same values that made her suffer so much in both her daughter and daughter-in-law. Kapur takes great pain to depict the shifts in relationships and the power struggles within the family. With the arrival of Pooja, Sona feels threatened and aggrieved by her loss of control over her son. Completely forgetting her own experiences as a daughter-in-law, she behaves exactly as "maji" had done when she first arrived.

In all traditions, irrespective of religion, country, race and the period in which they live, women have always been considered inferior and incapable of any serious thinking. They have been assigned fixed roles to play in their lives. Society expects them to be meek, docile, silent and passive. Kate Millet, in her *Sexual Politics* (1970), makes a distinction between "sex" and "gender" and argues that "sex" is determined biologically whereas "gender" is culturally / socially / psychologically constructed through sex-role stereotyping. Contemporary feminist theories have highlighted the immense psychological pressure created by this repressive ideology. Millet refers to this domination as a "a most ingenious form of interior

colonization (25)". Another critic, Ann Scott, describes it as "a cultural iceberg : for every one-tenth which is overt, or showing, the other nine-tenths are covert - submerged in a largely unquestioned tradition of women as inferiors" (qtd. in Hole and Levine 195).

The picture is not much different in India. Indu, the protagonist in Shashi Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows* laments : "As a child they had told me I must be obedient and unquestioning. As a girl they had told me I must be meek and submissive. Why ? I had asked. Because you are a female" (58). From her childhood, an Indian girl is taught that she is born to marry, procreate and serve others mutely. Social institutions shape her to fit these roles 'voluntarily'. The agony of women of our society who have to live their lives according to the diktats of the society finds a vent in these memorable lines by the revolutionary poet, Kamala Das :

Dress in sarees, be girl
 Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
 Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in. Oh,
 Belong, cried the categorizers (142).

We find almost an echo of the above lives in the behaviour of Nisha when she enters the threshold of her new house - "Nisha first touched her mother-in-law's feet, then moved into the kitchen to see how the maid was managing. She was now a daughter-in-law, she had to anticipate responsibility..." (emphasis mine, 322). Education and career are meant only for male members. This notion is voiced by Sona time and again : "What does a girl need with studying ? Cooking will be useful her entire life" (206). Kapur shows this disparity also in *Difficult Daughters* : "All the time in the lab, doing experiments, helping the girls, studying or going to conferences. I tell her she should have been a man" (16). Even outdoor activities like sports or going out with friends are reserved for the boys only. Whether it is the mother or the brother -- all impose this code of conduct upon Nisha : "It is better for girls to remain inside" (52) or "Nisha is a girl,

she has nothing better to do than sit around and read (122).” Beauvoir’s pertinent comment on this form of oppression is worth nothing :

The great advantage enjoyed by the boy is that his mode of existence in relation to others leads him to assert his subjective freedom. His apprenticeship for life consists in free movement towards the outside world.... he is aware of his body as a means for dominating nature... he undertakes, he invents, he dares.... In woman, on the contrary, there is from the beginning a conflict between her autonomous existence and her objective self (her being - the - other). She is not given the freedom to grasp and discover the world around her she does not dare to affirm herself as subject (307-08).

This ideal of “femininity” (that teacher subservience and passivity) creates a huge psychological pressure on women by the enforcement of what Betty Friedan calls “the feminine mystique... the motion that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfilment of her own femininity” (13).

“Marriage” and “family life” provide, as if, the skeletal framework of all the novels of Manju Kapur. These two concepts form the kernel of the lives of Indian women. As expressed by one of the characters in Kapur’s debut novel, the “real business” of a woman’s life is to marry and to look after her home” (22). Fasting (for example “Karva Chauth”) for the would-be-husband and his family from an early age is considered a virtue. When Nisha shrugs from observing the rituals in *Home*, she is told- “It’s never too early to fast for your husband” (94). Governed by stars, family background, caste and finance, marriage is more of a religious and financial deal than an emotional one - “In order to remain financially secure, and ensure the family harmony that underpinned that security, marriages were arranged with great care. The bride had to bring a dowry...” (4).

The woman's intrinsic value is considered to be less than a man's and to make up for this disparity she must bring some valuables with her for her husband and her in-laws (in the form of dowry). If her parents fail to satisfy the inordinate greed of her in-laws, she is mentally tortured, beaten mercilessly and, sometimes, is even murdered. One example from the novel under discussion will suffice :

Pooja was bringing quantities of cash, a car, a fridge, an air-conditioner, a TV, a Godrej cupboard, a double bed with a deluxe foam mattress, a dressing table, twenty-one sets of jewellery, countless watches, saris, suit pieces, frocks, and little pant - shifts for the women, men, and children, and a honeymoon in Europe, all expenses paid (254).

Yashpal's sister Sunita faces perhaps a "dowry-death" ! When she reached a marriageable age she was married to a man who was later found out to be a drunkard and abusive. In a stunningly matter-of-fact tone Kapur presents her death by burn : "There had been an accident in the kitchen, and Sunita had died of burns in the hospital. The cremation would take place the next day. She was only thirty-two" (18).

Our society is bound by a strange notion of family honour known as "izzat". The politics of making women the repositories of the family honour forms a method of exploitation. Anita Desai's observation in her Introduction to *Sunlight on a Broken Column* - that the world of the novel is dominated by "the two ruling concepts of Indian behaviour - izzat/honour and sharam/dishonour (ix)" - applies to *Home* as well. When Sunita died, nobody registered a complaint to the police or filed a court case perhaps because in that situation family "izzat" would be ruined. Neither did she reveal her own humiliation after marriage to her own family members - "... that boy drank and became abusive was something the daughter did her best to hide from her parents. This shame was now her own" (6).

As already pointed out, women are most of the times debarred from taking up of any vocation for themselves. Kapur's observations of the way in which women are devoured by this social system of exploitation are flawless. It is deeply held notion that "women's work was allowable only in unconventional situations (no children), and that respectability demanded it be avoided as much possible" (212). Nisha while pursuing her career travelled a largely uncharted course and violated the most deeply held conception of her proper role ".... working was all right as a time pass.... Families wanted a daughter-in-law, wife, and mother, husbands were not looking for businesswomen" (297). "Nisha's creation" was a search for an emotional independence rather than a financial one. In our society, violence, when directed against women, takes many forms. Subtle forms like denying a woman her right to productive work are difficult to control. Though Nisha finally succumbs to her role of an ideal housewife, it restricts her self development - first by taking away her freedom of thought and expression (emotional independence) and secondly by denying her the scope of giving a free play to her creative potentiality. Gone was her illusion that she "would talk, laugh, sing, smile..... Hers would be a modern relationship. Gone were the days when women needed to be so silent" (16) and within a few days of her marriage she found "every inch of the way to Karol Bagh covered with fragments of her broken future" (324). Though Pooja takes up Nisha's business, we feel doubtful about how long she will be able to continue it because Raju's words still ring in our ears : "I certainly won't let my wife work - who is going to look after the house ?" (226). Indian society does not permit individual fulfilment at the cost of family spirit. As Meenakshi Mukherjee aptly points out - "The fulfilment of oneself, however desirable, a goal according to the individualistic ideals of western society, has always been alien to Indian tradition, especially when it is achieved at the cost of duty to the family" (29).

The title of the novel, "Home", has many connotations. Home is the place where women are born, grow up and get their primary identities as daughters, wives or mothers. Though it offers shelter, food, and safety, yet it is the space that confines them psychologically and brings about their retardation. It is the place where Nisha first faces her childhood experience of sex which horrifies her to such an extent that she has to be sent to her "Rupa masi's" house and even when she returns, in spite of the assurance from the elders that this was her home and it was the place where she was needed, "it didn't feel comfortable" (129). *Home* reveals a disturbing home truth that joint families can both destroy and preserve our maturity, individuality and mental progress. In this novel Kapur explores the long oppressed voices of women imprisoned within the four walls of domesticity, better known as "home".

In her epoch making work, *A Literature of Their Own*, Showalter posits three phases in the growth of feminist tradition :

First, there is a prolonged phase of *imitation* of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition..... Second, there is a phase of *protest against* these standards... Finally, there is a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity. An appropriate terminology for women writers is to call these stages, *Feminine, Feminist, and Female* (16).

Manju Kapur's novels are directly related to all these phases. In this novel Kapur gives vent to kind of female subjectivity that refuses to reconcile and identify itself with a patriarchal and male dominated society. The well known feminist writer, Cixous, warns us that - "great care must be taken in working on feminine writing not to get trapped by names : to be signed with a woman's name doesn't necessarily make a piece of writing feminine" (323). *Home* is a

feminist discourse not only because the novelist is a woman writing about women but also because she understands women's minds.

The woman's issue in India is different from what it is in western countries. Here the woman's quest for identity and survival becomes a major discourse. The writers who are conscious of the 'othering' of women need to, as Shashi Deshpande puts it, "make ordinary women understand the possibility of power, of being able to control their own lives. And, to have this power, not as mothers, not as devoted wives, but as ordinary women, as humans (Afterword to *Shakti* 319)." But Indian women writers have to first battle against the deeply ingrained critical prejudices that writing is an activity that belongs exclusively to men and if a woman writes, if she writes at all, it is always trash. In an article Deshpande writes of her own personal confrontation with this sexist bias :

For quite a while, I believed - a belief that came from all around me - that men's lives are more important, more significant. And, therefore, that serious writing is done by men and is about men. That women's writing, like their lives, somehow lacks weight and substance (*Indian Literature* 107).

Home is a vital proof that Kapur's novels can never be blamed of lacking "weight and substance". Her sympathetic understanding of human characters combined with her maturity as a novelist par excellence, her writing skill, dispassionate conversational style and her power to handle her craft in a unique way all go together to make us feel at home in *Home*.

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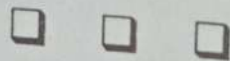
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TRADITIONAL, MYTHICAL, STYLISTIC AND TEXTUAL APPROACH IN RAJA RAO'S *KANTHAPURA*

Khandekar Surendra Sakharan

Kanthapura – a cohesive whole comprising the three distinct strands of experience - the political, the religious and the traditional are so dovetailed into the another as to present a panoramic picture of the revival in the twenties of the twentieth Century. Theoretically *Kanthapura* deals with Gandhi and Gandhian revolution, its impact on a small south Indian village caught in trouble and turbulent happenings of the national movement. The story covers the very volatile phase of Indian freedom struggle between Gandhi's Dandi Marchs in 1930. Raja Rao has presented the story in puranic "Akkhyan Style" which he terms in the "forward" as *Sthala Purana* in which the past mingles with the present and the gods mingles with men.... relieving and mingling the contemporaneous social-political history with the rich and religious mythology.

Srinivas Iyengar makes a point when he says : "What happens in *Kanthapura* is by no means a unique experience but the telling of the story gives the whole affair an itihasic - at least a puranic dignity". The entire action is set in a village, thus the novel is, at its best, considered to be a village novel having a record of its changeless and ever changing choice. The story of *Kanthapura* is beautifully narrated by a typical Indian grandmother – Achakka with her own idiosyncratic norm. Symbolically, *Kanthapura* is India in Microcosm: what happened there is what happened every-where in India during those terrible years of our fight for freedom. In his defacto analysis of the book Iyengar rightly summed up the stylistic feature of Raja Rao in his own way. He say "Gandhi and our village, but the styles of narration make the book more a Gandhi purana than a piece of

mere fiction. Gandhi is the invisible God, Moorthy is the visible Avatar. Moorthy a prudent protagonist came under the spell of Gandhi while he was a college student. Manners are equally good and grand."

In the heart of the village there is a temple dedicated to Kenchamma, great goddess, benign one. The organic picture of the village ipso facto, is being constituted by a river, a hill and a temple with the presiding and all pervasive deity. The folk song pertaining to Kenchamma evokes in us images and attitudes meant for the people of *Kanthapura*. Kenchamma, the blood and bone of village presents the core and cure of their lives and makes every thing meaningful. There is colourful context of the money - lender (Bhatta), the priest (Swami) and the Zamindar which focus the traditional forces of oppression and exploitation. Moorthy, the satyagrahi, the leader of the non-violent movement belongs to Gandhi in *Kanthapura*. Bade Khan is the embodiment of oppression, Bhatta stands for false orthodoxy, Range Gowda, indubitably, epitomizes sense, sanity and honesty in the village. The village has been charged with deep and dense, abiding and all pervading localized colour and charishma. To Raja Rao, Literature is meant for spiritual experience, it is for him a theological thirst. Raja Rao himself argues :

For me literature is sadhana. My writing is mainly the consequence of a metaphysical entity. So the ideal of Literature as anything but a spiritual experience is outside my perspective.

In *Kanthapura* both the matter and manner are equally good and grand. The use of tone and tenor, cadence and diction, the irony and humour and the sublimity in a language make the novel dazzling and delightful. The whole of Indian tradition is brought up to date, along with its pertinent persuasions for the present, flows into the villagers, because it is rendered in and recommended to the villager's own idiom. *Kanthapura* proves to be a milestone by combating the colonial complex and winning respect for the Indian in form and

content. Hence it becomes a potent weapon for creative use of English for the expression of a truly Indian sensibility. *Kanthapura* is a breathless story, of stories illustrating a story in the age-old Indian tradition of story-telling. Structurally the novel operates on the village level and all the knowledge and wisdom that come to it or go out of it can only be at that level.

The Novel discusses the distinctive Indian sensibility with peasant sensibility even in the second language situation. The words are English, but the expression is Indian. It helped him escape from the clichés and the elaborate prose style of the novel that had come down to us from the Victorian novelists. In *Kanthapura* the story has been narrated in the first person narrative. Raja Rao in *Kanthapura* by using the spirit of *Sthalapurana* highlights the esoteric significance or the local legendary history of particular place.

Raja Rao's spiritual doctrine presented in *Kanthapura* has a puranic pattern. The epigraph on the title page of the novel is full of vedantic nuances focusing the doctrine of incarnation as nucleus of the philosophy of avatar. The novel has a consistency in its narratology and prophetic utterances without any subsequent chapterisation. In *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao has shown "an epic breath of vision, a metaphysical vigour and philosophical depth, a symbolic richness, a lyrical fervour and an essential indianness of style". Therefore, it would be relevant to comment that, "the experimentation that Raja Rao hinted at was of the creation of a mode of expression which could give the real flavour of Indianness to the western readers besides the meanings and values of Indian life in a language comfortably accessible to Indian People". The description of the pastoral life and the linguistic use of the puranic form for all the facts of language behaviour adequately purports Raja Rao's critical venture to evolve a literary form rooted in the indigenous soil.

But in comparison to the European Writers, the Indian English Writers seems to have made very scant use of myth in his works. Raja Rao uses the mythical parallel to extend the reader's

understanding of the present situation. Raja Rao was the first inheritor of this tradition among Indian writers of English Fiction. The greatest legacy of Indian's past are the puranas. The influence of the Puranic tradition in Raja Rao has been very decisive and strong.

The conscious use of myth in Raja Rao is seen in the digressional method of story-telling of which he is the outstanding exponent. This method is perhaps the oldest device in narrative Literature. Weaving in stories within a story, or pausing to narrate a parable to drive home a point are characteristic devices of the *Panchatantra*, the *Vishnu Purana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* as well as the *Bible* and Greek epics, where episode follows episode in a meandering fashion.

In the employment of the tradition of mythicizing contemporary events, *Kanthapura* offers a rich and fascinating field for study. It should be understood that this mythicizing is not something unnatural. *Kanthapura* is the story of the impact of Mahatma Gandhi and the Satyagraha Movement on a small South Indian village which is the microcosm of rural India. But *Kanthapura* is not merely a political novel, its traditional and social concerns and the religious undertones are subsumed into myth and legend. It is a classic of resurgent India told in a poetic almost mythical style as stated on the back cover of the Indian edition of the novel. M. K. Naik describes the technique of the purana thus :

The Purans are a blend of narration and description, philosophical reflection, and religious teaching. The style is usually simple, flowing and digressive and exaggeration is the keynote of most accounts of happenings and miracles. There is much to correspond to this in *Kanthapura* (1972)

Regarding the mythicizing of the characters, Indians by nature, appears to discover in their heroes the unmistakable analogies of the mythological heroes who permeate their religious life, especially in the villages. Thus, in *Kanthapura*, Jayaramachar, the

Harikathamman raises Gandhi to the level of a god by identifying Gandhi with prince Rama resisting the demonic rule of purana, the Red men and again with Krishna engaged in killing kaliya, the serpent of a foreign rule.

Myth is life religious ritual which makes life more meaningful and enriches it by penetrating to its essence. This, both myth and ritual are seen renewing the life of the community in *Kanthapura*. Certain rituals are described in the novel like the yoking of bulls to the plough under the Rohini star, the different modes of appearing goddess kenchamma, or the Kartik Festival of lights where folk spirits is elevated to the grand myth of seasonal renewal and cyclical return. In the description of Moorthy's fasting, fiction is raised to the level of ritual. Character becomes symbol, action is ritual speech, is 'Mantra' surface realism, based on the literatures of factual narration, is subordinated to the mythical narrative. The time bound dispensation of myth in relation to the contemporary predicament in *Kanthapura* serves as a parallel to the concept of the timeless. The interweaving and dovetailing into the external historionics between virtue and vice, good and evil, gods and demons and the time and the timeless. Through Achakka's narrations, Raja Rao achieves a deft and artistic blending of the mythical and the real. As a result, the novel becomes a "glorious myth.... as profound as a shastra, and as prolific as a 'purana' yet in its brevity and verbal economy, it excels in capturing excessive critical imagination.

Kanthapura is based on Raja Rao's outlook on culture and history which reflect his spiritual bent of mind, preoccupation with the national history, patriotism, and the simple Indian village, expressed through such words as Bhajan, Upanishad, Sanyasi, Harikatha, Panchayat, Inquilab Zindabad, Vande Mataram, Maistri, Mahatma Gandhi ki jai, Lathi and pandal etc. These are some of the common factors related to the remarkable features of his style which need to be isolated and studied. The study is above all, concerned with Indian personality, lying deep in the mind of Raja Rao. There is

reason to believe that the novelist has thought about the problems involved in the use of language and has made a deliberate effort to represent our national spirit.

Literary theories and Principles forge insight into the various facets of literary writing - the personality of the author, his socio-cultural and historical background, his creativity in language, his attitude to life and above all, the general flavour of his artistic personality and gives expression to his cultural bias reflected in his choice of vocabulary. Moreover, Raja Rao has made an extensive use of verbal illustrations in *Kanthapura* in the forms of parables, legends, myths, word picture, familiar expressions and allusions which appeal to the imagination of his major characters, colouring the entire atmosphere of the novel. These catch up Indian sensibility and build up its form, covering linguistic aspects, such as style, felicity of words, phrases and rhythms. Besides certain linguistic choices are related to Indian mythology, spiritual and cultural relations.

The conversion of a word should be understood with reference to an individual, since it is the individual alone that can become the object of sense perception which is concerned with any concrete objects or thing affecting the live sense organs. Raja Rao has made use of a large number of words and expressions in order to express the Indian sensibility and ethos. A few of them may be taken here into account as examples from *Kanthapura*.

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1) The ghats | 2) 'He-ho' | 3) Zamindar (33) |
| 4) Maharaja (32) | 5) Bhajan (29) | 6) Lathi (46) |
| 7) Panchayat (103) | 8) Hari-om (102) | 9) Karma (129) |
| 10) Charka (27) | 11) Patwari (33) | 12) Goat-eyed (65) |
| 13) Badmash (205) | 14) Mandap (87) | 15) Veranda (110) |

Moreover, the author combined the local words to give a new structure. Pre-modification is more frequent than post-modification in *Kanthapura*.

For example :

- 1) Dung-eating curs (212)
- 2) Corn-distribution Barber Venkata (134)
- 3) A moon-crowned god (191)
- 4) Front House Suranna (33)
- 5) Corner House Narsamma's Son (9)
- 6) Post office House People (31)
- 7) Front house People (33)
- 8) Your fire-tailed Hanuman (188)

The author has moulded the syntax to suit his artistic purpose. In *Kanthapura*, at several places, we find the literal translation of local dialects and proverbs. The following examples may be given from the novel.

- 1) I'll drop a word in your ear (39)
- 2) Every squirrel has his day (110)
- 3) I am no butcher's son to hurt you (41)
- 4) You will take to evil ways (50)
- 5) Helpless as a calf (55)
- 6) Sons of concubine are planting well (19)
- 7) You sons of my woman (15)

At some places in *Kanthapura* we find typical expressions and local idioms which the author has translated into English in order to reveal the true nature and feelings of the characters. The following are a few examples :-

- 1) Moorthy had gone through life like a noble cow (6)
- 2) He was as honest as an elephant (12)
- 3) Why do you seek to make our stomach burn (2)
- 4) A crow and sparrow story (22)
- 5) Stitch up your mouth (84)
- 6) He wanted me to be his dog's tail (97)
- 7) I shall squash you like a bug (21)

The poetic account of the deeds of Gandhi and India's past

history refer to puranic myth because in it are mixed fact and fiction, myth and history and the Indian atmosphere echoes through various ceremonies, rites and rituals, hair cutting ceremony, rice-eating ceremony, marriage ceremony and death anniversary, from which emanate the social conditions of our villages, religion and spiritual resources of our people in the remote parts of India.

The Indian school of thought describe the common linguistic principle under the verbal testimony to the oral as well as the written tradition of intellectual and emotional subjects. The application of the interpretative methods of 'Pada', 'Vakya' and 'Pramana' shows the external linguistic signs or symbols of inner ideas, perceptual or conceptual, helping us to recall them. The 'Meemansaka' in general, recognizes the theory of class connotation of words which can be reconciled with the usage of 'Elders'. In *Kanthapura* we find such concepts presents in the talks of several characters, more particularly in Moorthy whose entire life is involved in the contemporary problems of the villages. More or less, he is an embodiment of the author's personality, and his language reveals the remarkable features of Raja Rao's style.

The use of Indian idioms, rhythm tone and the distinctness of its vernacular make the style of Raja Rao unconventional. These are present in the natural speech of rural folk and have been translated into English. The fabric of *Kanthapura* is woven round this translation which creates seductive rhythm and power. The speech of the characters in the novel coils itself round one inextricably involving one in experience. The words which they use form streams of suggestion, creating waves of sound which make haunting music and develop a unique style.

Raja Rao has made the use of short sentences which are involved or complex. Relative clauses in them are simple and frequently used. All these make his style nominal because in it case relation is more important than the finite verb and it also shows the abundant use of noun-forms and its equivalent, scarcely of verb

forms. At some places we find the purposeful use of participles and case-forms like those of the ablative, the instrumental and long compounds. Compound words are somewhat freely employed. Raja Rao exhibits lengthy compounds and complicated sentences. The order of the word, however, is not wholly arbitrary, since in the sentences, language - units (words. etc.) are used according to the natural sequence of thought. As thoughts changes and recur, words are also repeated - such as 'here' and 'there'. Thus it appears that the recognition and repetition of separated words in the language and their combination into a sentence is made by the synthetic process. That is to say, in the beginning of a sentence, the works are first arranged and then they are repeated again and again.

Specific quotations from *Kanthapura* show that the author's personality is deeply imbued in the literary cultural complexes of a particular context. They also show the author's linguistic orientations. Raja Rao is given to those contexts in terms of syntax, words and a distinct register of language. All this is done through collocation, derivation and compounding of words, so basic to Indian stylistics. Three type of nominal style emerge - the dialogue, the lecture and the verbose. A glance of Raja Rao's syntax would show that it lengthens itself with the help of connectives. This only bespeaks the inexhaustibility of the context that would like itself to be incorporated at a single stroke of the imagination. And Raja Rao, of course, does it beautifully and comprehensively.

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IMAGE OF GANDHI IN CHAMAN NAHAL'S *THE GANDHI QUARTET*

P. M. Patil

Chaman Nahal, a modern Indian English novelist and winner of Sahitya Akademi Award for *Azadi* for 1977, was formerly Professor of English at Delhi University. He was also a fellow at Churchill College, Cambridge University in U. K. He is the author of eight novels. Four of these novels constitute *The Gandhi Quartet*. Nahal's fictional work mainly deals with India's freedom movement and its socio-political consequences. *The Gandhi Quartet* is a very significant historical work which consists of the novels like *The Crown and the Lioncloth*, *The Salt of Life*, *The Triumph of the Tricolour*, and *Azadi*. The novels have appeared in India in response to the massive political movement and events such as Civil Disobedience movement, Non-co-operation, Dandi yatra, Quit India and Partition of the country. The historical period he is dealing with is the past which he himself has lived and experienced. The fictional characters created by him intermingle with the real historical figures like Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Bose and Jinnah. It is quite obvious that in all novels of the Quartet the focus is more on Gandhi than on any other national leader. Here an attempt has been made to project the image of Gandhi, as depicted by Nahal in *The Gandhi Quartet*.

The Crown and Lioncloth, the first of *The Gandhi Quartet* novels, is a fictional presentation of India's freedom movement. Nahal concentrates on the years 1915-22, and on the towering figure of Gandhi, whose burning idealism stimulated the entire nation's patriotism. No wonder that the author sees him as a symbol of moral and spiritual strength that inspired the whole country. The novel is

about Thakur Shanti Nath, a landowner of Amritsar in the Punjab, and his family of eight, all of whom are inexorably drawn into the hub of political activity, as Gandhi's ideology crystallized into a policy of non-co-operation resistance against the British. In the words of Krishna Sharma, "The title is symbolical suggestive of *the* theme-battle between two unequal forces - the Crown and the Lioncloth; power of rulers verses the power of the meek subjugated masses, 'Mighty British Empire' the Crown verses the newly awakened India under the leadership of Gandhi, the flimsy Lioncloth" (48).

Chaman Nahal, in this novel, presents Gandhi (who was yet to become Mahatma), emerging as a leader, shaping his policy, perfecting his methods of non-violence and Satyagraha. He becomes Mahatma through his practice of self-denial in his own way of life, and he teaches the use of this instrument of self-denial to the masses to fight any kind of tyrant. Gandhi becomes Mahatma by strictly obeying all his vows and never forgiving himself for any lapses. Nahal has shown this through Gandhi's life in the Ashram. Gandhi has realized, from his own experiences in South Africa, that moral right is the only answer to the moral wrong. He decides to try this in India. We can see that Nahal's Gandhi in this novel and following novels also, is not a static character. He is all experimenting and learning from the events and situations. He starts with the faith in the British character and their friendship. But after the incident of Jallianwala Bagh, he feels that his faith has been shaken. It is after this event that Gandhi invented the phrase 'non-co-operation' at one of his prayer meetings. He did not anymore trust the British sense of justice.

The secular image of Gandhi stands out in this novel when reacts to the talk of Muslim's emigrating from India and settling in Arabia or some other Muslim country in the following manner in his speech in the prayer meeting.

A Hindu may perhaps be happy to get rid of the Muslims. But he would be stupid Hindu, an ignorant Hindu. For what would India be without the Muslims ! Talk not to

me of the atrocities they committed upon the Hindus and the Sikhs. Given the chance, the Hindus would have committed as many atrocities upon them. Talk to me instead of the beauty they have brought to India, talk to me of their architecture, of the roads they laid, of the inns they built, of the wells they dug, of the gardens they planted. And talk to me of the amalgamation of the cultures which the best of the Muslim kings aimed at - in their own lives and in the life of the community. If they married Hindu women, they married them as equals and didn't promote a race of half-breeds. And the same Muslim heads that wouldn't bow or bend before a Hindu adversary on the battlefield, prostrated themselves before Hindu art, before Hindu music, before Hindu dance. Go and listen to a Muslim musician, if you doubt me. In all probability he will be signing of Radha and Krishan. If Hindu art and dance survived in fact today, it was because of the Muslim patronage of the art. No, I would say if Hinduism survived today, it was because of the challenge the Muslims threw to it as a religion. They made many converts, but not too many; they were in a minority even after centuries of rule. They made the Hindus sit back and think and put their house in order. Bereft of Muslims. India would be like a face with an eye missing. No, what touched the Muslims should touch the Hindus" (CLC140-141).

This speech reflects nothing but Gandhi's comprehensive soul. It also shows that there is no feeling of racial discrimination in the mind of the Gandhi. He gives equal status to Hindu as well as Muslims here.

The Salt of Life, being second novel in *The Gandhi Quartet*, deals with the second phase of the freedom movement, from 1930 to 1941. Actually this novels deals with some historical incidents such as Gandhi's life in the Ashram, his mass movement against the

British, role of Subhas Bose and his attitude to Gandhian movement, and Jinnah's demand for Pakistan. Within this historical reference, Nahal creates the image of Gandhi in this novel. Such image is projected through the eyes of Indian as well as British characters. Ashramites are deeply reverential about Gandhiji. He is a father figure for them. Kusum, the wife of Raja Vishal Chand, respects Gandhi a father. When Raja Vishal Chand tells her that the Government wants him to arrest Gandhi when he comes to Lambini, she becomes nervous: "Gandhi had been like a father to her for many years. He would be their honoured guest in Lambini. Would they stab a father and a guest in the back?" (SL 460). There are many foreigners who believe Gandhi to have spiritual powers. An American young man seeks moral support of Gandhi in his Satyagraha. Nahal takes help of fiction and history both in presenting Gandhian image. For e.g., when the news of Gandhi's arrest reaches the international capitals, there are demonstrations all over. Romain Rolland, the Swiss who had written a brief biography of Gandhi, went on a day's fast. *The Time magazine* in New York declares Gandhi as man of the year and carries his picture on the front cover. It seems that Gandhi is not only fighting for the common people of India; he is fighting for the dignity of the common man everywhere.

In *The Triumph of the Tricolour*, the third novel of *The Gandhi Quartet*, Nahal deals with the third phase of India's freedom movement, the 1942 Quit India period. Gandhi is the central figure even here, though the violent revolutionaries now play as significant a role in the challenge to the British rule. The novel deals with Kusum's two sons, Vikram and Amit who adopt different postures. Vikram, being the product of the Gandhi Ashram where he has lived from the age of five, follows the Gandhian path. Amit, Kusum's son by Raja Vishal Chand, is more inclined towards the violent revolutionaries. Historical circumstances force the British to announce an interim Indian government in 1946 before India's full freedom. While most of the Congress leaders accept office in that government, Vikram declines the honour. Here Vikram, a fictional character,

represents Gandhi in his unselfish, virtuous and honest leadership, because though the Government was formed, Gandhi did not share the power. Nahal shows how Gandhi was different from others in these words :

Gandhi had opted to stay at Bhangi Colony – the Sweepers Colony – at Delhi as a measure of protest. By staying with these untouchables, may be he could shame his people into a mood of reconciliation. He was extending himself to the limits. But Nehru and the senior Congress leaders had already shifted into government bungalows in New Delhi in preparation of the new role they would soon be playing. They were already moving around in official cars. They were already being provided with official security, (TT 460).

These words indirectly criticizes Nehru and other Congress leaders. They were as if in a hurry to grab power. Kusum's two sons have two different images of Gandhiji. Vikram says, "Bapu has the most intelligent eyes, ever shining and burning with a glow. In the worst of days, in the worst of tragedies, those eyes didn't lose their blaze" (TT434).

On the other hand, Amit, who was brought up in Lambini, away from his mother, considered Gandhi's non-violence as humbug. Amit represents the younger revolutionaries disillusioned with the ways of Gandhi. In 1945, with the defeat of the Japanese, Subhas Chandra Bose on the run, Gandhi quiet at Sevagram, and everywhere in India the Indians rising against the British in violent manner, there was no one for them to turn to. Amit takes part in abducting British officers alongwith his friend Kapil and the tribal leader Padamrai Kranti. Amit talks about Gandhi in a very irreverential manner. Attitudes to Gandhiji vary from person to person. Here, Nahal bring out all these aspects of Gandhian image. And yet he is shown to be constant in his principles and actions.

Azadi, the last novel of *The Gandhi Quartet* "highlights the psychological consequences of the partition." It is centred round the

Hindu family of Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant in the city of Sialkot. It also deals with "the political, social, economic, religious, psychological and cultural implications of 'Azadi' which India achieved in 1947", (Goyal 124). In this novel, Nahal has projected the image of Gandhi as a contrast to the other national leaders. Through Lala Kanshi Ram, Nahal voices the confidence and faith of a common man in Gandhi. Kanshi Ram believes that Gandhi will never let partition happen. He says :

The Congress had a promise to keep the people. For the last thirty years, since that wizard Gandhi came on the scene, it had taken the stand that India was a single nation, not two. And Gandhi was not only a politician, he was a saint. He had his inner voice to satisfy, too. Would that nagging voice of his let him accept the slaughter of so many? That's what it would mean, if Pakistan did come into existence. And Gandhi was shrewd-surely he saw it all. He wouldn't give in to such butchery. If nothing else worked, his fasts unto death always did (*Azadi* 42).

In the meeting of the merchants in Lala Kanshi Ram's store, the merchants, both Hindu and Muslim, express their faith in Gandhi. Kanshi Ram says, "Mahatmaji is going to save us" while Lala Shamshel Bahadur says, "Bapu has a shakti, an inner power, which no one else can dream of, (*Azadi* 44).

Chaman Nahal has created the character like Lala Kanshi Ram in the image of Gandhi. When the partition is announced, Lala does not go to India soon after the declaration of the partition. He continues to live in Sialkot only because he has a deep attachment with the 'land of the five five rivers'. Like a real Congress leader, he believes in living with the Muslim looking upon them as brothers. The young generation of Shikhs and Hindus, on the contrary, is ready to pay the Muslims in the same coin, but the Lala, like the Mahatma, tries to maintain peace through non-violence. He takes Gandhi's death very deeply to his heart, like Gandhi he endures several

personal losses very bravely. In short, Lala Kanshi Ram is Gandhi incarnate and goes through identical ordeals and sufferings. As Rama Jha says, "He is deliberately modelled as a Gandhian character to register Gandhi's death as a personal loss." (IL 116) Through a number of events and situations of the life in the Ashram, Nahal has projected Gandhiji's single mindedness, honesty, sincerity, his transparent thinking, his ability to persuade people, inspire confidence in them, and his open-mindedness. At the same time Gandhi could be very rigid, very autocratic and demanding.

Nahal has also presented the image of Gandhi through the revolutionaries like Ramesh Kumar and Rati Bahadur Hemant Kumar. They did not think much of Gandhi's principle of non-violence and his method of Satyagraha. As Hemant Kumar says, "Gandhi was a fool who was not taking the people forward but backward. What would going to jail achieve – or fasting? (CL 63).

In *The Triumph of the Tricolour*, Joseph Daniel, revolutionary is highly critical of Gandhi. He describes Gandhi and expresses his anger about him in the following manner :

The Mahatma was only a white-collar revolutionary if you ask me. The British were ever bending over backwards to satisfy his whims- special living quarters, special food, special interviews with his family. He, Joseph Daniel, had lost all contact with family. He knew his father had apple orchards in Kulu. But he had not visited Kulu in twenty-five years nor eaten an apple – out of sheer spite. Did the Mahatma lose touch with his family? Did the Mahatma change addresses to save himself from the police? Did the Mahatma go without food – there being nothing to eat? He was living in luxury and continuing with this farce of a non-violent struggle. Non - violent, my foot, (TT129).

But all revolutionaries were not of the same opinion. Bhagat Singh, for instance, expressed great regard for Gandhiji, when Nehru went to see him in a prison in Goa. The British characters, specially

the military officers like Brigadier - General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer, always suspected Gandhi's moves. Dyer describes Gandhi as the arch villain.

Nahal describes Gandhi addressing people in the special meeting of the All India Congress Committee at Bombay, where the monumental resolution was passed. He gives graphic picture of Gandhi on the dais as :

Squatting on the dais against a couple of round pillows, his supple legs crossed and curled under him, his round glasses in his nose, his long nose almost buried into the mike, Gandhi spoke on. He was skinny but hard and his iron chin stood out resolutely. His thin arms and his hands gestured constantly in impatience; they constantly jabbed - and cut the air before him (TT15).

This gives us an idea of not only Gandhi's physical appearance but his mental make-up, his strong will - power. Nahal, a young man in those days, must have seen and heard Gandhiji himself, which enables him to present his fictional Gandhi in consonance with historical Gandhi.

Nahal's Gandhi goes through introspective bouts now and then. He is aware of his own limitations and weaknesses. He reflects on his own strategies and his ability to carry them out. On his way to Dandi, for Salt-Satyagraha, he has one of his introspective moments in which he says:

I have no power to throw the British out of India either. I can only try, I can only pitch my faith against theirs, put myself and them on the scales of justice, in divine justice at least, and we will throw the British out and tip the scales in our favour if all of you were to lend me a small hand, you know I'm an old man, I cannot even walk without stick, without a staff, I just hate the idea of it, when a man cannot walk on his own, he has no right to walk at all, his journeys are over, he better take the road to the Himalayas, what am I doing on this road to Dandi (SL 211).

The image of Gandhi in *The Gandhi Quartet* is dynamic and manifold. Nahal's the moral and spiritual aspects of Gandhian image and the movement of Gandhi have been brought out to a great extent. Gandhi emerges as a selfless, saintly figure, who was worried about the ununited India and who suffered for the partition. Nahal has projected the image of Gandhi through various historical situations. Nahal's Gandhi is very human figure, sometimes full of doubts, introspective, susceptible to human weakness and passions. He is loved as well as hated. His image is varied and enigmatic, ranging from a shrewd baniya to a great spiritual master. Nahal has contextualized Gandhiji in the social and political scene of India during the struggle for independence. As a creative writer, Nahal has fictionalized Gandhi and history objectively. Therein lies his strength as a novelist.

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HISTORY, FACT AND FICTION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN*

Pashupati Jha

History, since centuries, has been accepted as record of the past. But none has questioned the truth behind those records when that truth is very much suspect. Has any one given even a little bit of thought behind the expressions like Ashoka, the Great ; Alexander, the Great; Akbar, the Great ; Napoleon, the Great ; Peter, the Great without any critical evaluation ? It is only the rationality and democratic temper of today that Hitler, the Great is not heard of. Did not these greats butchered thousands of people simply to satisfy their bloated ego, to expand their territory as if the land was more important than the hapless people inhabiting it ? And be sure, their glorious advancing army might have raped, plundered, burnt, and devastated everything in their way to victory. And yet, history celebrates these emperors as great ! The real heroes of this civilization are scientists, technocrats, philosophers, writers, thinkers and social reformers. Yet, I have still to come across any expression like Gandhi, the Great ; Martin Luther King, the Great ; Abraham Lincoln, the Great ; Mother Teresa, the Great ! Take another example of the distortion of history; the Taj Mahal is eulogized as the greatest monuments of love, when Shah Jahan had scores of other wives in his harem ! It may be an architectural marvel, but calling it the greatest monument of love is a blatant lie perpetuated by history. So, history as record of facts cannot be accepted as sacrosanct, because mostly it exaggerates and distorts facts when it comes to the so-called greats.

By the same analogy, even autobiographical novel should be accepted as factual representation only after its critical examination.

Generally, autobiography is written years after the actual events; hence they are recreation of facts and not the facts *per se*. The autobiographer may omit some troublesome facts and highlight the good ones. So, even in autobiographical novels, the narrative expresses only part of the life of the author and even that part may have been modified. It can be easily verified from *Sons and Lovers* by D. H. Lawrence and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce. There are only a few obvious facts from their lives in these novels, the rest is largely their imaginative recreation. The creative artist is more concerned about their mindscape than the physical details of their lives. So, even in autobiographical novels, the narrative expresses only part of the life of the author, and even that part may have been modified to suit the literary design of the writer.

It is, then, to be noted here, the nature of truth in historical novels is not the same as found in history. While facts are important in history, it is feeling that is essential in literature. After years of meticulous reading and research, Thomas Carlyle wrote *French Revolution*, a voluminous work on that important historical event. A few years later, Charles Dickens wrote *A Tale of Two Cities*, a tragic story of love-triangle against the background of the French Revolution, especially the period of Reign of Terror. Carlyle was so much overwhelmed by this novel, though very small in size when compared to his own work, that he declared the novel a better representation of the time than his gigantic work. So more than facts, it is the recreation of those facts giving the 'feel' of that even, which is much more moving and lively for a reader of literature.

Another interesting example in the context of literary transformation of history is *Roots* by Alex Haley. An African-American, Haley was a simple bearer on a ship. But he wanted to know his African roots, and so investing all his savings, he made a trip not only to his ancestral village Jaffure in the backwaters of Africa, but to all the important libraries of Europe and America to research

on his true lineage. He put pen to his findings in the form of the history of his past seven to eight generations in the form of the gigantic novel, *Roots* -- a bestseller turned into one of the most popular television serials. When the critics asked him whether *Roots* was fact or fiction, his simple reply was that it was 'faction'.

My motive in the above examples is to simply clarify the idea that when history itself is a record of half-truths cherished through centuries, it is fully justified then if a historical novel applies historical facts in modified, artistically transformed way. Another use of history in a novel is to provide big canvas or backdrop to highlight the drama of that time. In this regard, the novelist may take big historical figures as characters or may simply use the historical situation to highlight the plight of common people caught in the flux and upheaval of history. And all the time, a writer has the creative license to use historical facts in his own way. *Shatya* or truth in this case is confined to creating the verisimilitude of history; a history novel is not history but literature, and creative art has its own needs and compulsions.

Now, I would like to take up a few Indian English novels set against the backdrop of history. It is just an auspicious coincidence that when Indian English novel was establishing itself in 1930's -- it was also the time for national upsurge, for mass struggle for the independence of the country. Thus, historical development of the time had a lot of impact on the development of the Indian novel. Subsequent historical events like Partition of the country (1947), Chinese aggression (1962), Indo-Pak war (1965) and Independence of Bangladesh (1971) have also seminal impact on the novel in English written in India. I have taken up a few novels by R. K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Salman Rushdie in general, and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* in particular to analyze how, and in what ways, history influences novel -- its plot and art.

R. K. Narayan, in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, takes the love story of Sriram for Bharati, who is engaged in Gandhian movement

and hence has relegated her feelings of love to the background. Sriram also becomes a Gandhian worker to be near her and waits for the time when she is also besotted with love. Finally, Bharati tells him to wait for the permission of the Mahatma to marry Sriram; she gets it but minutes before Gandhiji is shot dead. Thus, Narayan has shown how a historical movement may affect the life in its most touching aspect of love. While love opens up the possibility of life, death closes all such possibilities; but both life and death have to go on. Narayan has, therefore, interwoven these apparently opposite strands of life skillfully with the ongoing movement of India's freedom struggle.

Bhabani Bhattacharya, in *Shadow from Ladakh*, takes up Gandhian principle of austere living and cottage industry; but everything is shattered with the looming dark clouds of Chinese possible attack on Ladakh. Satyajit, the champion of Gandhigram, is still in the favour of small industry, but for war the country needs steel and such other heavy industries. This cause for the Steeltown is loudly proclaimed by Bhashkar, Chief Engineer of the steel factory nearby. The crisis point is reached when Steeltown, for its expansion, needs the land of Gandhigram. But Bhashkar loves Sumita, the daughter of Satyajit, and Satyajit's own wife Suruchi is seething within from a life of abstinence imposed on her by her Gandhian husband. Moreover, Suruchi does not want her daughter to suffer the pang of emotional and physical deprivation and encourages Sumita, her daddy's daughter, to grow like a normal young woman. Finally, the crisis is averted by balancing of the two attitudes of life, and life goes on harmoniously. Thus, the Chinese design on India becomes a point of serious debate on the way life is to be led, influencing characters of the novel; Bhattacharya using historical event for the integration of two ways of philosophy, where both body and mind have their proper place.

Unlike novels discussed above, Manohar Malgonkar's *The Men Who Killed Gandhi* make historical figures like Gandhi, Nehru, Patel,

Mountbatten, Savarker, Godse, and Apte as the characters of his novel. In such a novel, freedom of the novelist in plot construction and character portrayal is restricted. And yet, Malgonkar has used creative liberty whenever possible. The partition of the country was the most traumatic event in Indian history, when millions had to shift from Pakistan to India and from India to Pakistan; in the process thousands were raped and killed. And all this happened despite the tall claim of Mountbatten of using of military might to quell the communal frenzy. It was not only physical but intensely emotional and social dislocation. Indian leaders were aware of it, and hence Gandhi told his followers that this division was possible only on his dead body. Finally, in the face of Jinnah's persistent demand, Nehru came to the opinion that if the communal headache was to go away, one might think of parting with the head. So, the head was severed from the body, but the headache remained forever. In his penchant for fairness, Gandhiji made Indian government to pay Pakistan fifty-five crore rupees as its due share from division – this was used by Pakistan to buy arms and send troops to Kashmir. This enraged Godse so much that he killed Gandhi. Thus, this novel takes up historical events but dramatizes historical facts to highlight how a single individual is not responsible for the murder of Mahatma Gandhi.

Salman Rushdie is different from all others in his handling of history, because he applies magic realism to the hilt--for him history is a reference point, and he points out that during the time of upheaval, a character cannot remain an individual but part of historical cauldron. So, Saleem Sinai claims, in *Midnight's Children*, he is "handcuffed to history" (3). Saleem is an expert in connecting his, and his family's personal life with public events. And all the important events are there waiting for him-- Jallianwala Massacre, Quit India Movement, the Cabinet Mission, the emergence of Muslim League, the Chinese attack, the missing of sacred relic from the mosque in Kashmir, the separation of Bangladesh etc. Not only Sinai, by extension, the children born during that crucial period, are all

shaped by history because "the children of midnight were also the children of the time, fathered by history" (137). Rushdie's *Shame* does almost the same with Pak history as a background. Among all the historical novelists, Rushdie has taken maximum liberty with history; he has almost re-written history turning it into a wonderful work of literature. Because of his innovative imagination, he has extended the very boundary of historical fiction.

Train to Pakistan has no such vast sweep of imagination, but it reads like real events happening around the partition of the country in a remote border village of Mano Majra in the province of Punjab. These events in themselves look simple and commonplace, but when they are forced to link with historical events, they give an intensely moving novel. It is relevant to quote Anita Desai here that "While an individual's history does not make sense unless seen against its national background, neither does national history make sense unless seen in the form of individual lives and histories" (63). The sudden and shocking division of the country into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan affects the life of this village and its villagers in a touchingly poignant way. While both the Muslims and the Hindus have been living there as brothers since centuries, this political event tears them apart, when the personal emotion is swept away in the swirling water of Sutluj because of the generated frenzy of communal violence. Surprisingly, this violence is not the natural outcome, but the handiwork of a few misguided youths impatient for a non-existent glory. A train from Pakistan comes at the local station full of the dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs massacred there during communal frenzy. Hukum Chand and other local authorities at Mano Majra try their best to hush up the matter, but the smell from the burning dead bodies disturbs the village.

The northern horizon, which has turned a bluish grey, showed orange again. The orange turned into copper and then into a luminous russet. Red tongues of flame leaped into copper and then into the black sky. A soft

breeze began to blow towards the village. It brought the smell of burning kerosene, then of wood. And then – a faint acrid smell of searing flesh.

The village was stilled in a deadly silence. No one asked anyone else what the odour was. They all knew. They had known it all the time. The answer was implicit in the fact that the train had come from Pakistan (100).

Two things are to be noted here; the cool tone representing the shocked but calm acceptance of the horrid facts by the villagers and, secondly, the ironic juxtaposition of colours against the backdrop of ghastly massacre. Hukum Chand, the highest government authority there, tries to play safe and wants the Muslims of Mano Majra too to leave for Pakistan on their own before resultant revenge may harm them. But the villagers, both Hindus and Muslims, are not ready for this sudden separation, despite all the machinations of the authority and the talk of mayhem all around. Imam Baksh, the most prominent Muslim, speaks for his community and the entire village agrees with him :

“What we have to do with Pakistan ? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers.” Imam Baksh broke down. Meet Singh clasped him in his arms and began to sob. Several of the people started crying quietly and blowing their noses (147).

Such is the communal harmony of the village. Yet, the authorities have their way and Muslims are forced to go to the sheltered camp till they are sent to Pakistan by train. In the meanwhile, some hot heads led by a young Sikh military officer, incite the villagers; he is supported by the Malli gang and handful of others. They tie a thick rope sufficiently high on the railway track so that Muslims traveling to Pakistan on the roof of the train would slip down and then butchered by them. Surprisingly, Iqbal, the educated leftist

sent by his party to maintain communal harmony there, does nothing. Educated people simply talk of high ideals, they do not act at crucial juncture, especially when there is danger to their life and limbs. Ironically, the tragedy is averted by Jugga, the confirmed bad character, who slashes the dangerous rope at the cost of his life, because Nooran, his beloved, is also travelling by the same train to Pakistan.

.... He went at it with the knife, and then with his teeth. The engine was almost on him. There was a volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the center as he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan (207).

Thus Khushwant Singh, in his unique style, presents the partition with deeply moving scenes and events where the participants are not big persons but small villagers guided by elemental emotions. So, my conclusion is to treat historical novel with open mind; it is never a factual representation of history, also because literature cannot be history. So, such comments as this novel is not an authentic history, or is authentic history, are irrelevant. Secondly, what David W. Price says in respect of Rushdie but which is applicable to all, there is "the need for critical history" (93).

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NO ROOM FOR INDIVIDUALISM IN RUSKIN BOND'S *THE ROOM ON THE ROOF*

Savita Dewangan
G. A. Ghanshyam

If I am not for myself, who will be for me ?
And if I am not for others, what am I ?
And if not now, when ?

– Hillel

These lines of ancient Hebrew sage as quoted by Ruskin Bond reflects his attitude towards life and world. The aspect that gives him a distinctive place in Indian English fiction is the high value he attaches to his vocation as a writer. Ruskin bond, an eminent Anglo-Indian writer was born in the dying days of the British Raj in Kasauli. Growing up in India, his character has imbibed the very spirit of the land that is reflected in his numerous works. Writing from the last fifty years, Bond has carved a prominent niche in Indian English literature. His works reflect his undoubted love for India, his passion for childhood, his simplicity of expression, his compassion for human values and his deep faith in the goodness of man and God.

The gentleness of the writer's vision takes up beyond the sophisticated ritual and pageantry of modern religions to a simpler, fresher and clearer world, where man, nature and God are one. Contrary to the current scenario of Indian English fiction, Bond's mission is to reaffirm the faith in the potentialities of man. Individualism is a western concept in contrast to Collectivism. Both are contrasting views of the relationship between the individual and

the group. In Western countries, the individual promotes the unrestricted exercise of individual goals and desires. But Collectivism holds that the groups one interacts with determine one's identity, it is in fact constituted essentially of relationships with others. Ruskin Bond's fictions are imbued with the spirit of Indianness which reveals a unique feature of the Indian society. Indians confirm their identities not in an individualistic way but in relation to their family and society.

The Room on the Roof, the maiden novel of Ruskin Bond bagged the 'John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize', the highest award for young writers in Britain, in 1957. In the novel, Rusty the protagonist is a self-portrait of Ruskin Bond. Like Dicken's David Copperfield, Rusty is the reflection of the author with whose triumphs and tribulations Bond identifies himself with. Through Rusty he projects his initial feelings of isolation and loneliness. Separation of his parents and the sudden death of his loving father made Bond helpless and insecure. Thus, he states: "A feeling of insecurity began to creep over me - a feeling that was to recur from time to time and which was to become part of my mental luggage for the rest of my life (SFWL 32).

He had a passion for the works of various writers. R. K. Narayan created Malgudi, a town of his dream and creative fulfilment; Hardy's Wessex provided him creative essentials, in the same vein Ruskin Bond's vision gets quickened by sylvan environs of Dehra valley. Dehra is the place of action of most of Bond's works in which he advocates that the spirit of "Loving Kindness" should be the basis of all human relations. Its heavenly landscape compensates the emotional vacuum of his life. He represents the rural way of life with its sense of values shared by the local society than with the intuitions of an individual.

Dehra was then of open spaces and this one beckoned to me. I set out for a stroll-the first of many through the lanes and byways of this leafy little town, and the fields and tea gardens that once surrounded it, (SFWL36)

Bond's skill in delineation of life especially that of the primitive and elemental shows his expertise and ease as a writer. His characters are drawn from the hill-folk who possess the quality of universal values of truth, goodness and mutual trust, whereas city people stand for artificiality, selfishness and snobbery. As S. C. Dwivedi rightly stressed it :

His characters make us both society oriented and individual oriented. They touch our hearts and awaken our conscience suggesting to break our narrow minded cocoons of individuality and selfishness (Singh 160)

Human relationships are vital to the Indian Mind. Indians never have the feeling of strangeness with each other. Even in the face of oppressive and provocative circumstances, Indians usually exhibit a forbearance found nowhere in the world. They are in the habit of sharing affection and love in very simple and generous manner. In India when strangers meet, the way they address each other reflects a familiarity, which in itself is sufficient to remove the feeling of alienation and strangeness. This is revealed in the novel by Somi and Rusty's first interaction, when Somi attracts Rusty's attention by his act of familiarity enquiring about Rusty's parents : "In India when strangers meet, they must know each other's parental history before they can be friends. (Bond, CSN 703).

In India family relations are more closer, warmer and more reliable than any other thing. This sense of familiarity and togetherness is also reflected in the festivals and celebrations of India. Depiction of Indian Festivals and seasons imparts a powerful realism to his fiction. In the novel, *The Room and the Roof*, the festival of Holi, proves a turning point in the life of Rusty. It is a festival of colour, life and togetherness that brings rejuvenation in his life. He shakes off all the artificial restrictions of creed and colour and merges into the euphoria of pleasure and universal brotherhood.

Rusty's deprivation of love and care is overcome by his association with his close friends in Dehra. His emotional vacuum is

filled by the warm environment of a home and affectionate welcome he receives from Somi's. His friendship with Somi fulfills his yearning to find a meaningful relationship as mentioned by Bond himself : "At twelve o'clock a door burst open and a great happiness entered my life" (SFWL 96).

In the novel, *The Room on the Roof*, Rusty rebels against his guardian not for the sake of individual identity but to get freedom from the isolation and alienation, imposed upon him by his guardian's restrictions. This act symbolizes his protest against individualism, which is also evident from his rush towards Dehra bazaar. Like Rusty, Ruskin Bond is also fascinated by Indian bazaar, nature, chat-shop and so on. His love for such places reveals his urge for socialization, for it is in those places like bazaars, local shops and parks in India that the community comes together to interact and socialize. He admits ; "To love and be loved; to be free. Free to wander where I pleased; read what I liked; be friends with those who attracted me, (SFWL 79).

In the story, Rusty prefers his room in Mr. Kapoor's house without any facilities to his room in his guardian's house with better prospects. In the small room on the roof, he enjoys the freedom which is much more precious than any other thing in life. He defines freedom as 'having your own tree, having your own room and having your own place'. But his elation at finding freedom is not an evidence of his assertion of individualism. It is in fact the much-needed freedom that is conducive to the formation of relationships in one's life, the freedom to choose the relations that give meaning and a purpose to life.

Rusty's infatuation for Mrs. Kapoor, who is the mother of his friend Kishen reflects the deprivation of love in his personal life. Here Bond has focused on Rusty's eagerness for relationship and bondage of love. He gets attracted towards Meena at first sight. Her intense yearning for love transforms into her relationship with Rusty which culminates in their passionate expression of love in the forest. Rusty

intoxicated with her beauty and sweetness dreams of an everlasting romance. "Rusty was conscious of wild urge, a desire to escape from the town and its people, and live in the forest with Meena, with no one but Meena.... (*Collected Fiction 613*).

The choice that Rusty makes in his life choosing friendship over personal ambition reflects the urge for socialization in his character. When still a child, Kishen loses his mother Meena in a car accident. After his father re-marries, Kishen becomes a vagabond, joining the bad company of ruffians. His departure from Dehra after Meena's death makes Rusty lonely. He returns again to the same frame of mind that had earlier made his life so empty and meaningless.

And Rusty remembered his first night in the maidan, when he had been frightened and wet and lonely. And now, though the maidan was crowded, he felt the same loneliness, the same isolation (*Collected fiction 645*).

Rusty also faces the loss of Meena very gravely. For the first time in his life Rusty starts thinking about his own individual aspirations and dreams. He wants to go to the west and achieve something in his life.

I am not interested in today. I want tomorrow. I cannot live in this small room all my life with a family of Lizards, living in other people's homes and never having one of my own. I have to break away. I want to be either somebody or nobody. I don't want to be anybody, (*Collected Fiction 643*).

The novel presents the universal value of human relationship in the Indian society through the character of Rusty. Man is a social animal who can't live in isolation. His need for social contact and relations provides the very basis of Rusty's story. Affirmation of life in contrast to alienation from it is the basis of human life everywhere, especially of the Indian society. Indian culture, customs and traditions always lay emphasis on this social character of our society and

psyche. One who merged his consciousness with that of others can establish relationship even in the remotest part. The tragedy of modern man is that he has locked himself in his cocoon. Loneliness has emerged as a major theme in modern writing. It is natural outcome of fast developing society where man has no time and consideration for others. Even in the stories concentrated on exploring the self like in feminist fiction, we find an inner urge to confirm to others. For instance in Shashi Deshpande's novel, *The Dark Holds no Terror*, Saru's search for identity ultimately ends with her realization of the importance of the other roles that she has to play in life. Her individual identity can become complete in itself only in her confirmation to these roles.

Rusty's desire to search for his own identity fades after becoming aware of Kishen's wild condition in Hardwar. Rusty affirms that both are indispensable for each other. Each is the shelter for the other, for they are the only people who love and care for the other. Rusty justifies his decision to return to Dehra, to his social circle and responsibilities. One's roots are not defined by one's individuality alone. And so Rusty affirms at the end. "But now we walk back. We walk back to the room ! It is our room, we have to go back !" (*Collected Fiction* 660).

Autobiographical nature of his fiction makes him an Indian Charles Lamb. Through Rusty, Bond speaks of his own tribulations standing at the threshold of manhood. His urge for breaking the ice of loneliness makes him a revolutionary. He demolished all social and racial barricades to live a life of his own. He himself settles down the dilemma of belongingness. Rusty's sensibility, his urge for friendship and above all, his Indianness is truly of Bond himself. There is thus no room for individualism in the novel, *The Room on the Roof*.

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THE AFRICAN NATIONALISM IN NADINE GORDIMER'S MAJOR NOVELS

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Marginality, alienation and related kinds of difference are inherent to nationalism. As Bruce King states : "Nationalism is a modernizing movement by part of a community which in seeking to replace those in power creates its own mythology of historical, folk and cultural values"⁽¹⁰⁾. The nationalist writer modernizes local literature while contributing to the society's awareness of its past and cultural difference. Nationalist writers are themselves double exiles, from both the colonizer and from the existing culture of their native land.

Ndabaningi Sithole defines the concept of 'African nationalism' : "African nationalism is a political feeling manifesting itself against European rule in favour of African rule" (57). It is only in this context of the African's desire to rule himself as against the European practice of ruling the African that African nationalism can be conceived as a political phenomenon. White supremacy is one of the major factors in the rise of African nationalism.

Like all movements, African nationalism has its roots in history, and without this historical foundation, the seemingly sudden African nationalism becomes inexplicable. World War II had a great deal to do with the awakening of the peoples of Africa. During the war, the African came into contact with practically all the peoples of the earth. After World War II, the Africans began to direct their British - aroused anti-domination spirit against the Allied Powers who had

extensive colonial empires in Africa. African nationalism was directed against European domination. It opposed, not the white man, but white domination. Sithole in his book *African Nationalism* quotes Kwame Nkrumah, who argues : "I stand for no racialism, no discrimination against any race or individual, but I am unalterably opposed to imperialism in any form" (55).

The Christian Church has played a major role in the forging of African nationalism on the anvil of history. The church has only been a blind instrument in the whole process of African nationalism. But, on the whole, missionaries have been unwittingly helpful to the rise of African nationalism. The same Bible helped the African individual to reassert himself above colonial powers. It could deliver the African from traditional domination without, at the same time, redeeming him from colonial domination. African nationalism was strongly influenced by Christian principles.

Africans found themselves confronted with European colonial powers. They wanted to understand how the control of Africa had slipped from the hands of its rightful owners, and therefore, they studied European history. They wanted to understand how other people got their independence so that they might also get theirs. The rise of African nationalism directly challenged European imperialism. European imperialism in Africa gave to African nationalism unprecedented strength. The emancipation of slaves, therefore, opened a new world to thousands upon thousands of African slaves; hence, it can rightly be said that European colonial powers, by dealing slavery a deathblow, set the whole continent of Africa on a new venture of freedom and human dignity. Colonial powers have helped in the detribalization of the African, and the African in many cases had to be detribalized before he could aspire nationally. There developed then a growing tendency among the Africans to think of themselves less and less as tribesmen, but more and more as Africans. As Sithole states : "African nationalism was only a practical effort on the part of the dominated millions to throw off the yoke of domination" (122).

Perhaps the two most important political developments in South Africa after the Second World War were the accession to power of the Afrikaner (Whites of Dutch descent) based National Party in 1948, and in direct contrast, the growth of a more militant and assertive black African nationalism. The leading edge of National Party ideology was its philosophy of 'apartheid' – the idea that the different races in South Africa should rigorously be kept separate under a general regime of white supremacy. In fact, segregation had a long historical background in South Africa, part of the English colonial heritage as well as the Afrikaner; but it was after 1948, under apartheid, that the greater excesses of exploitation and oppression in the interests of white profit and white power began to occur. African nationalism for its part dated institutionally to 1912 with the formation of the South African Native National Congress, later the African National Congress (ANC). From the twenties to the early forties this organisation was relatively quiescent, but after the Second World War a greater urgency was evident. In 1946 the consultative Natives' Representative Council dissolved itself in protest of its 'puppet' status. In 1946, there occurred the African Mine-workers' strike, the largest single stoppage in South African history. In 1949 the ANC's new Programme of Action announced the use of extra-parliamentary action towards its aim of 'National freedom'. The immediate culmination of this ascendent phase was the Defiance Campaign of 1952-53 when volunteers – mostly black, but including members of the other races – systematically defied South Africa's 'unjust laws' following a model of something like Gandhian passive resistance.

In South Africa where the Nationalist Party is in power, a new spirit among both black and white is pressing for a new independence for the downtrodden peoples of that land. Victor Alba remarks :

Nationalism does not issue forth by spontaneous generation. 'Nation' is an abstraction; the sense of it must be taught. Nationalism always, in one way or

another, is due to propaganda -- Nationalism, then, is a bourgeois product that manifests itself in industrial societies as a means to higher ends (6-7).

It is clear that all South African literature is deeply rooted in its local environment and cannot be assessed in its full significance without a detailed knowledge of the social background from which it emerges. This is particularly true of Nadine Gordimer's fiction.

Nadine Gordimer's first novel, *The Lying Days* responds to the rise of both Afrikaner and African nationalism. On the one hand, it details very closely the experience of life under what it calls the 'Fascist Nationalists'; on the other, it details the anxiety occasioned by the growth of a militant and isolationist African nationalism. In the novel, Gordimer presents the Africans' protest in order to assess their national identity at a smaller level. She refers to an incident of the strike of the Mine-workers which marks the assertion of their identity, their status. The workers object to the bad food they are given. They gather around the compound of the Manager's house. They protest against bad food, not on a working day but on Sunday. It was not really a strike in today's sense of the term.

Yet the docility of the workers themselves is remarkable, and here, one might compare the strike, as it appears in the novel, with the most important strike that actually occurred in the period covered by *The Lying Days* - the African Mine - Workers' Strike of 1946. In South Africa, it had become almost in the natural order of things that whites should rule and be wealthy and that blacks should be poor and be workers. But, as Stephen Clingman (1986:30) claims: "Gordimer maintains, there is still the possibility of unravelling this myth-bound cocoon, and in doing so there is for the individual something like a rebirth - a birth into a 'second consciousness'."

Helen, the central character, attains a second level of awareness, in particular by transforming her attitude to the blacks. Helen remarks that she suddenly understood that she had lived all her life among strangers, the Africans, whose very language to her

had been like 'the barking of dogs or the cries of birds'. (186) In the novel, Helen does try to break out of her ideological confinement. It is true that she represents a white liberal feeling. As a white liberal girl, Helen protests against the family and the social atmosphere. Her passive protest is remarkable. The most important event in the novel is the general election of 1948 in which the National Party came to power. The novel responds to this transition in strong terms. Remarking on the victory of 'Fascist Nationalists', Helen notes its effect on the people around her : "... the moral climate of guilt and fear and oppression chilled through to the bone, almost as if the real climate of the elements had changed, the sun had turned away from South Africa, bringing about actual personality changes that affected even the most intimate conduct of their lives" (256). The novel depicts Helen's 'racial consciousness'.

Nadine Gordimer's second novel *A World of Strangers* is specifically different, as it arose in different circumstances. The Defiance Campaign was in effect a relatively short-lived phenomenon, unevenly expressed in different parts of the country. With its conclusion, a change of emphasis occurred in ideology of the movements opposed to apartheid. There was a decline in strength of purer forms of African nationalism, and the corresponding growth of a philosophy of 'multi-racialism'. Stephen Clingman remarks : "Essentially it is in relation to multi-racialism that *A World of Strangers* must be measured" (34).

Sam Mofokenzazi, who is described in the novel as a 'decent bourgeois', and Toby are able to transcend social barriers through a purely human and interpersonal relationship. Similarly, we have only oblique references to the activities of the Alliance Congress and the Defiance Campaign through a reference to Steven's refusal to have anything to do with either (115). Anna Louw is a radical Afrikaner, who is a member of Communist Party. Importantly Anna's revolt began as a revolt of taste (172). Her family are passionate Nationalists whose politics are produced through a fusion of hatred and fear.

(173) Anna, the white lawyer who works for black legal aid and ends up a treason trialist, explains the apologetic instinct to Toby : -
 -- The lack of a common human identity. The loneliness of a powerful minority' (80).

As Stephen Clingman states : "The form of Gordimer's literary consciousness is now more precisely historical rather than social" (106). This remark aptly describes Nadine Gordimer's fourth novel *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966). There were three primary features of this consciousness, and the first was the stunned mood of the aftermath of the failed 1960s revolution. In the novel's resolution, it becomes possible to discern the remaining two features. The second concerns the likelihood that she will channel money to the PAC. A theory of utility is already evident in Elizabeth's idea, which is expressed in relation to Luke, a black activist, of simply 'giving what one has' (75).

From the details supplied by Elizabeth about Max and his upbringing, we can see that Max grew up in an atmosphere hardly conducive to the warmth of personal relations. He was Elizabeth's ex-husband. We find here that Max was a revolutionary white activist. He hit out at the wall of his prison home, first by rejecting the privileged world of the whites, he protests against his prison home, family - he refused to join the country club. The crisis comes when Max joined a Communist cell, took part in a Defiance Campaign march, and was put in jail. His defiance of the colour-bar laws is remarkable. He was determined to sacrifice himself in it.

In the novel, Gordimer describes the black activists' protest against the colour-bar laws. As a part of their protest, the active blacks had decided to keep out of white houses and to reject friendship and even intimacy with whites as part of white privilege. Luke Fokase, black activist, is one of them. The blacks, after the Sharpeville Massacre, decided not to trust whites.

Such a feeling of desperation is reinforced in the third main feature of the novel's historical consciousness. Stephen Clingman

observes :

In an entirely contradictory move Elizabeth's radical utilitarianism is conjoined with what can only be termed a massive romanticism; it is far more elaborate and intense than Max's kind (108).

At the end of the novel, having had her request from Luke, Elizabeth lies musing in bed, in moments of half-sleeping, half-awaking, before dawn. She agrees to help Luke Fokase, a black revolutionary, by arranging for a transfer of funds from London to a local bank account. Here Gordimer describes the participation of white revolutionaries in the black struggle and the black peoples' protest against it.

Nadine Gordimer in *Burger's Daughter* returns to the participation of the white revolutionaries in the black struggle which she had left off in *The Late Burgeois World*. The traumatic events of Sharpeville, Soweto and the Black Consciousness movement form the background of the novel. The Soweto riots alongwith the Sharpeville Massacre are commemorated each year as marking the sacrifice of innocent men, women and children. The Soweto incident took place on 16 June 1976 when about 15,000 school children gathered at Orlando West Junior Secondary School in Soweto to protest against the enforced use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in certain subjects in black schools. The meeting began peacefully; but by the time it ended, two children were shot by the police. In the ensuing riots, violence spread like a wild bush fire and hundreds of people were killed and 143 vehicles and 139 buildings were destroyed. The children were seriously wounded and their action demonstrated to the world, their anger at the system of government and their frustration with the struggle of their elders and the inadequacy of the dissent of the whites. A brief discussion of the Black Consciousness Movement is necessary at this point to understand the changed attitude of the blacks towards the whites as apparent in *Burger's Daughter*.

The Black Consciousness movement was very popular amongst the Africans. Steve Biko was the leader of the movement and he regarded blackness as something to be proud of and worth fighting for. Dougie Oakes (444) states :

Black Consciousness was, and perhaps still is, a new way of looking at the world. Liberation, its proponents argued, would come about only when Africans threw off their shackles of fear and their feelings of inferiority, and conducted their own political campaigns instead of relying white liberals to map out their strategies. Whites, they argued, were too enmeshed in the apartheid system ever to be reliable allies (444).

This ideology had an appeal for thousands of black South Africans. Steve Biko launched a series of attacks on white liberal thinking. As Dougie Oakes observes : "The integration they (Liberals) talk about ... is artificial ... a one-way course, with whites doing all the talking and the blacks the listening ..." (443). To Biko, a true liberal was a white person who directed all his energies into educating other whites and preparing them to accept a future system of majority rule. Until this comes about, blacks have to unite and fight alone without the help of the white liberals.

Burger's Daughter examines the revolutionary activities of white liberals, and its efficacy in the present struggle of the blacks. However, for the blacks, the Sharpeville Massacre had a different significance. To them it dramatizes more plainly than ever the hopelessness of their situation. Also they realized that the white liberals could not do much for them. The Soweto Revolt had earned a central place in the calendar of resistance in South Africa. This was the context from which *Burger's Daughter* grew. One striking motif is that of the revolt of children against parents; this occurred in Soweto and this is what Rosa Burger goes through in relation to her father.

Black Consciousness was the challenge in theory. Its challenges is implicit in the novel's major themes. It first enters directly at Fats Mxange's party where some of the younger blacks reject the class analysis of South Africa offered by the communist fellow-traveller, Orde Greer. Their spokesman, Duma Dhladhla, angrily dismisses him : "This and this should happen and can't happen because of that and that. These theories don't fit us. We are not interested. You've been talking this shit before I was born." (162) In the novel, Baasie, the little boy who had once been like a brother to Rosa, protest against white liberals. He bitterly rejects his relationship with them. According to him, there are hundreds of black men, including his own father, who have also died in gaol, often more violently than Lionel. His own father died of an improbable prison 'suicide'. But the black names have been forgotten. As Dominic Head argues :

The insistence by Zewlinzima (Baasie) on his identity seems to be the crucial aspect of a vitriolic attack which finally pushes Rosa to consolidate the redefinition of her own identity ... (121).

Baasie protests against the white liberals out of his spirit of nationalism.

Nadine Gordimer attempts to assess the role of white liberals in the backdrop of Sharpsville, Soweto and Black Consciousness, in her next novel *July's People*, she goes a step forward and sets the novel amidst a revolution. With the publication of *July's People*, Gordimer has entered a new phase by presenting a revolutionary war in the future bringing about an end to white supremacy. In her earlier novels, Gordimer portrayed the inefficacy of the revolutionary activities of the white liberals as in *The Late Bourgeois World* and *Burger's Daughter*. Gordimer's *July's People* is set in a future close to the time of writing, which might have come into being by publication date. Her state of affairs has certainly existed in the mind : South Africa is in revolution. The strikes of 1980 have led to riots,

attacks on buildings, marches, occupations and mass arrests. Liberation forces arrive from Botswana and Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, and Mazambique. Cubans attack by air. Freedom fighters from Soweto and other townships range the land. America hopes to airlift its citizens and, perhaps, 'Europeans'. In Johannesburg Bam Smales, an architect, and his wife Maureen possess a yellow shooting-brake or 'bakkie', a second vehicle for holiday outings in the bush. In this they escape, guided by their servant July, with three small children and a few provisions. The Smaleses are hiding in a village hut, among July's people. The black army takes over Johannesburg and the situation goes out of control.

The novel takes as its epigraph a famous maxim from Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*: 'The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms'. It is the project of this novel to examine some of the 'morbid symptoms' of this interregnum through a concentration on a crisis of identities, exposed in the revolutionary moment. *July's People* offers a vivid description of what the future holds for whites in South Africa with particular emphasis on a community caught in the throes of revolution:

Riots, arson, occupation of the headquarters of international corporations, bombs in public buildings – the censorship of newspapers, radio and television left rumour and word of mouth as the only sources of information about this chronic state of uprising all over the country (7).

Bam and Maureen Smales consider themselves lucky to have escaped the holocaust. In a small van they fled six hundred kilometres into the countryside, taking their money and children to the only refuge chance offered to them – a hut that belongs to July, their faithful houseboy for fifteen years.

July's chief wants Bam to help and protect him against the 'Russias' and 'Cubas' if they come, or the other black tribes of South

Africa if they are the ones to invade. As regard to the complications of a black revolutionary response, the novel has simply no illusions, not even concerning July's action in 'saving' his white mistress and master. As Maureen puts it : 'What will the freedom fighters think ? Did he join the people from Soweto ? He took his whites and ran'(128). In this connection, Stephen Clingman states : "The moment of revolution, for everyone, is also a moment of choice" (198).

Gordimer, in *July's People*, has presented her vision of the future. It is to be wondered if the revolution will be as violent as portrayed in the novel or if the whites can hope for a better treatment by the blacks. With the escalation of violence in South Africa and the bloodshed in the black townships, a peaceful reconciliation between the white minority and the black majority was hard for Gordimer to visualize. As she suggests, there can be a solution to the solution in South Africa only if the government meets the black leaders for talks.

In the novel *A Sport of Nature*, Gordimer presents the spirit of nationalism of the black people who were dedicated to the cause of freedom. Gordimer gives details about the political events in the childhood and adolescence of Hillela and her cousin Carole. We find that the impact of the Alexandra bus boycott upon the schoolgirl Carole, takes her ahead to later involvement in protest meetings (64). Whaila, a black revolutionary activist, had dedicated himself to the cause of liberation of the blacks in South Africa. His task of liberating his people is remarkable. He was assassinated in the struggle of freedom. In the Freedom Struggle of South Africa, the black peoples' leaders were imprisoned and the government used brutal force to quell their struggle. But, out of their spirit of nationalism they continued protesting against white supremacy, apartheid system and participating in the struggle of freedom.

In *A Sport of Nature*, Gordimer portrays the transformation of Hillela, a white Jewish girl, who dislikes colour discrimination. She learns from Whaila the significance of the struggle carried out by the exiles for the liberation of the blacks in South Africa. After the unfortunate assassination of Whaila, Hillela takes it upon herself to complete his unfinished work of liberating his people. In this connection Judie Newman states : "Her commitment to the extended family of African nationalism develops from a clear-eyed, unsentimental perception of the economic reality of the 'rainbow' family" (101).

Throughout the novel, Gordimer emphasizes the dedication of Sonny, a coloured school teacher, to the cause of liberation. He is even imprisoned for his activities against the government. His active protest against the government is important. He is applauded at party meetings for his brave work and is appointed as a member of the executive committee. He leads a hectic life as a revolutionary activist, holding late-night meetings at home and arranging for protest rallies. He is also subjected to state surveillance as he is considered a threat to the government. He is imprisoned for two years. His imprisonment has yearned for him the freedom to fight for freedom.

The struggle brings the change in Sonny's family. Everyone of Sonny's family has tried to give his/her best to the struggle for liberty. Aila, Sonny's wife becomes part of the revolution as a carrier of messages from South Africa to the exiled leaders in Lusaka. She is arrested on charges of treason and explosives in her house. Sonny's daughter, Baby, later leaves the country to join a Freedom Fighters Camp in Lusaka. Resistance to the immanent power that holds people powerless makes life meaningful rather than submission to it.

Her work, in the best possible way, gives us a 'history from the inside' of her world. Her novels are all deeply informed by broader social and historical codes. Through Gordimer's novels, then, we are able to write a 'history of consciousness' in South Africa.

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**“BUT I AM NOT A WOMAN ANY MORE” :
THE PERILS OF MOTHERHOOD IN BUCHI
EMECHETA’S *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD***

**Protibha Mukherjee Sahukar
B. K. Patel**

An African proverb states that a woman is a flower in a garden and her husband is the fence around. Undoubtedly this is a beautiful picture of women in an African society. Yet in *The Joys of Motherhood*, Buchi Emecheta's (a Nigerian, non-Western and unhyphenated) *magnum opus*, we come across a culture where the worth of a woman is determined by her womb; where labels, roles, terms, spaces are used to categorize human being. The novel illustrates one of the most damaging of traditions that motherhood signifies a rite of passage for a woman.

It is a well documented fact that a patriarchal society needs to nourish various myths and traditions in order to maintain and propagate its system. Women, who are at the periphery of such a society, suddenly get catapulted to a central position by virtue of motherhood, find this male child bearing tradition irresistible and succumb to the system. In many African cultures the importance of motherhood overshadows every waking moment of an African woman's life. Failure to conceive and to produce male children can result in divorce, ostracism from the tribe or worse.

The present paper evaluates womanhood and motherhood and explores the victimization relating to African woman's struggle for her identity as a woman and a mother. It focuses on the fact that there is no joy of motherhood when fertility simply becomes a subject matter of statistics and sexuality. The paper studies the victimization

of Nnu Ego, a young Ibo woman, also the central character by way of societal, traditional, patriarchal, and cultural means. It dispenses with the romantic portrayal of motherhood and denounces the unscrupulous and misplaced values of life.

Nnu Ego is a classic victim of motherhood. She is a woman who makes devastating choices and sacrifices her health and selfhood in the pursuit of failed tradition, capsulated in the idea of motherhood.

The novel points to the utterly dependent and consequently helpless position of the protagonist as a woman in her society and throws light on the reproductive practices (of the Ibo people) that harm woman by letting her institutionalizing the very idea that a traditional wife should seek only to beget and care for her off - springs. The Ibo society obliterates female sexual desire and also effaces quintessential rights by subconsciously brainwashing it's woman to carry a 'moral albatross' around her neck.

We witness how fertility becomes essential to a woman who links her femininity to maternity and how the joys of motherhood turn into the agony of otherhood. Emecheta, who is herself a Nigerian, analyzes a woman's place in the Nigerian patriarchal society and focuses on the dangers of adhering to the harsh masculine ideologies and the ensuing damning societal outcomes.

Since the Ibos are a patriarchal people, marriage is deemed an indispensable factor for the continuation of the family line of descent. Children occupy the central point in Ibo marriage. The first and foremost consideration is the fertility of woman. Parents long for this and the father of the family requests this every morning in his kolanut prayer. The mother begs for it while giving cult to her *chi* during annual festival. In other words, if you ask the ordinary Ibo man or woman why he desires to marry, the spontaneous answer will be : “I want to marry in order to beget my own children, to get a family like my parents”. A childless marriage is a source of serious disappointment and sooner or later, leads to serious trouble. The position of a wife in her husband's family remains shaky and

unpredictable until she begets a child. She becomes truly secure only after the birth of a male child. Trying to follow these community norms of the Ibos, Nnu Ego goes through a very hard life. This is the story of Nnu Ego during the first half of the 20th century. She is the daughter of a Great Chief in Nigeria.

By repositioning motherhood from being merely a symbol to social realism, Emecheta critiques the ways in which the myths of motherhood are imposed on Nigerian women and deals with the false consciousness of the Mother Africa trope through the life of Nnu. Emecheta makes an effort to free women from the mystique of motherhood by presenting not only its joys but also its pains. She tries to drive home the fact that motherhood is slapped on as a 'responsibility', whereas it is actually a chain that binds a woman to maternal slavery.

Although Buchi Emecheta is unquestionably Western feminism's preferred African writer, yet she cannot be considered a typical feminist in the western mould. Emecheta weaves a melange of traditional beliefs and cultural standards throughout her story. However, the message contained in it is neither plain nor traditionally feminist. We have to understand that Emecheta's conception of tradition is complex, neither accepting nor rejecting entirely. Yet as a Nigerian, and as well as belonging to the Ibo community, she is the spokeswoman in literature for the rights of women to function as human beings.

She clearly leads us to understand that beyond these biological and cultural roles, the African woman is also an individual in her own rights. It is portrayal of traditional society which successfully negates the importance of women as individuals through its constant valorization of motherhood as a role and function that comes to the fore. Obviously there is truth in the African proverb which says that until the lion begins to write his (or her) own story, the hunter will always be the hero.

The story opens with a hysterical Nnu Ego who is on the verge of committing suicide because her first-born son is dead. She wails at her terrible loss, "*But I am not a woman any more, I am not a mother any more...*" (Buchi 62). The child's death sends Nnu Ego on an immediate mission for self-destruction because he is a practical vindication of her womanhood. Her entire worth depends on her motherhood and without her son, she is non-existent, a zero. It is understandable that a mother suffers extreme emotional distress after a loss of such a magnitude; nevertheless, we are hit in the face by the fact that Nnu Ego is devastated because "she had just lost the child that told the world that she was not *barren*" (Buchi 62). One can easily see this opening scene as a point against the traditional African culture and how unfair these standards are towards the female gender. Tradition acts as victimizer to Nnu, in her childlessness. Nnu Ego finds herself in the terrible clutches of a soul-killing tradition which places motherhood above everything. Nnu realizes that this failure brings shame to her family and so suicide seems to be the only way by which she can preserve her dignity and her family's social status. It is important to understand the pervasiveness of the enormity of motherhood in an African society.

Eventually, Nnu Ego has more children than she and her husband can in fact support. She has accomplished her goal as mother, nurturer and life giver. She becomes everything desired in a woman: submissive, nurturing, devoted to the care and concern of her household. She believes that "If you spent all of your time making money and getting rich, the gods wouldn't give you any children; if you wanted children, you had to forget money and be content to be poor. Money and children don't go together, (Buchi 81). She plunges herself in her family - her husband and her children. She never stops to make the connection that all these children were actually contributing to her daily agony. Her daily existence seems very agonizing and stressful. She so strongly identifies with being a mother that her vision becomes blurred and she fails to see the significant changes going on around her.

Nnu's victimization by men began long before she was born. She grew up without her biological mother who was a strong aggressive woman. Ona was a very independent woman who if she had lived would have guided her child from infancy to womanhood. Nnu Ego might have had a very different life. She was considered "troublesome and impetuous" because she "had the audacity to fight with her man before letting him have her" (21). Ona was a woman who did not bow to anyone, not even the great and famous chief, Agbadi, so highly regarded in Ibuza. On her death-bed (she dies when her and Agbadi's second baby is still-born) she – poignantly - asks the heart - broken Agbadi to "allow [their daughter, Nnu Ego] to have a life of her own, a husband if she wants one. Allow her to be a woman" (28).

However, despite her mother's plea, Nnu Ego fails to obtain a life of her own. Nnu was raised by Agbadi's other wives. She was taught that children made a woman whole and that male children were favorable. She guided to think that in old age her children would take care of her.

Nnu Ego's first marriage was childless. By the conventional values and beliefs, she had failed in her first marriage to Amatokwu. It was assumed that it was she who was infertile and not the other way round. There was no means of checking for sure. It was generally accepted that the male was not at fault in such situations, so naturally it had to be Nnu Ego. She stands alone in her dilemma despite her status as the daughter of the chief of the tribe, since her father as chief refuses to do anything to restore her dignity. Nnu Ego is full of self scorn, "How can I face my father and tell him that I have failed?" (31). She brought shame to her people for not conceiving and her husband's community looked down on her. She was in fact sent back to her father in shame. As she was not able to produce any heir, her husband married another woman who was able to conceive. Amatokwu's ability to impregnate another woman is a declaration of public humiliation because all of the tribe members now know

that Nnu Ego is infertile. Amatokwu can find no compassion in his heart to console his wife; rather, she is considered to be dead in the eyes of her husband. Amatokwu derisively states “I have no time to waste my precious male seed on a woman that is infertile... If you really want to know, you don’t appeal to me anymore” (32). For Amatokwu’s, his semen is too precious, and cannot be sated on a woman that cannot make use of it to breed.

In a society, women are treated inferior to men even when they can bear a child, one can imagine the status of a woman who cannot bear a child which results in a complete loss of value within the tribe. No doubt Nnu Ego was deprived of her role as a senior wife and had to work on the farms. She was allowed to help with the new born baby. Nnu Ego, who had yearned to be a mother, began secretly nursing the newborn baby. She had thoughts of taking the baby and running away. She would often whisper to the baby, “Why did you not come to me ? I cried in the night and longed for a child like you - why did you not come to me” (34) ? One day, she was caught nursing the baby and was beaten badly by her husband. She was taken back home and with the help of her people was nursed back to health. She felt so ashamed for letting her people down.

Having no other choice, Nnu Ego moves to Lagos. In order to uphold her status in society and in an effort to please her father she settles for the unattractive second husband Nnaife. Nnaife didn’t fit the typically traditional physique. He was not tall, lean and muscular as the men she was used to seeing back home in Ibuza. She was appalled at the sight of him because “she was used to tall, wiry farmers with rough, blackened hands from farming; long, lean legs and very dark skin.” “What was more, he did not smell healthy either, unlike men in Ibuza who had the healthy smell of burning wood and tobacco”. (Buchi 43-44) She is shocked to discover that Nnaife works as a domestic servant and washes “women’s underwear”.

These negative images of her new husband soon faded when she became pregnant with their first child. She sees Nnaife through different eyes. He becomes the center of her world. She was actually

grateful to him for making her a complete woman. By proving her ability to bear a child, she hopes to bring new life to herself within her tribe. Nnu Ego's relies on her body as a means of survival. Though Nnu Ego does not market her body, she does attempt to use her body to insure her and her family's future.

Nnu gives up everything so that her sons Oshia and Adim can have the benefit of an education. There is never any thought given to educating her daughters. Nnu Ego encouraged her daughters to help her with domestic chores, to chop and sell wood. She tells them "the most important thing is for them (her daughters) to get good husbands" (189). Buchi Emecheta provides us with powerful images to reinforce this theory: "He who roars like a lion. My sons, you will all grow to be kings among men. He who roars like a lion. My daughters, you will all grow to rock your children's children" (29). This poem relates the designated social positions for men and women.

Nnu Ego assumes that her sons will come home to live and will care for her as she grows old. Tragically, the endless sacrifices she makes bring her little reward. She dies a broken spirit whose fertility did not enhance her life as she was taught to believe. She is truly an unfortunate product of her heritage. Nnu Ego's joys as mother remain unrealised because her children fail to reciprocate as is expected by taking care of their parents, brothers and sisters. One by one her joys turn sour as each child strives to escape from the poverty and depravity of his parent's environment.

No other character in the novel seems to experience unhappiness of this magnitude. The question arises why does Nnu Ego have disappointment? That is because she is enslaved by her inherent devotion to tradition. Nnu Ego's traditional views of marriage and family responsibility are completely outdated. She is entrapped between two cultures. She is a product of her homeland but her life is spent raising her children in a foreign land. She tries to play her expected gender role but she can neither put down her traditional African gender role nor accept the western mould of a woman. The

irony of Nnu Ego's predicament is seen when she reflects, “because she was the mother of three sons, she was supposed to be happy in her poverty, in her mail-biting agony, in her cramped room.... Oh, it was a confusing world” (167). Nnu Ego has retains her pride as an African woman and chooses to live in dire poverty. She cannot understand the injustice of it. In her ignorance, Nnu Ego sees this contradiction as “confusing”. She is a typical woman for her time. She is trapped in her own world of expectations, embedded in her mind from the patriarchy dominance. Towards the end of her life, she realizes that having children does not necessarily guarantee happiness. At the novel's end “Nnu Ego realizes that while nurturing children brought her status in Igbo society, it does not bring her personal fulfillment. Her life was marked with loneliness, poverty, and strife” (190).

The Joys of Motherhood is not only an indictment of African patriarchy, but also an illustration of the failure of inadaptability on Nnu's part in the face of enormous change. The novel reveals Nnu Ego's internal and external battle with traditional tribal ways and the new ways of the newly urban, colonized Nigerian city. Nnu Ego is a “protagonist”, but she is not a “hero”, a woman to be admired or emulated, for in the end she fails. Abandoned by her husband and the male children for whom she worked in order to fund their education. Nnu Ego meets a miserable, lonely end. No “happily ever after” ends this novel.

It will not be wrong to conclude that *The Joys of Motherhood* composes the most exhaustive and moving portrayal extant of the African woman, an unparalleled portrayal in African fiction and with few equals in other literatures as well.

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V. S. NAIPAUL'S *A HOUSE FOR MR. BISWAS* : AN EXISTENTIAL APPROACH

Gajendra Kumar

V. S. Naipaul shot into literary limelight when he received Booker Prize and more recently Nobel Prize for English literature. Today, he is a living legend of post-colonial literature. He is often compared to Joseph Conrad for innovations in English language. It is believed that "philosophically they share a similar vision of life. It is infact this Conradian Vision which became central to Naipaul as he looked at various post-colonial societies (Bala 1). Like Conradian characters, Naipaul's characters fight for self-respect in the midst of bitter and biting experience of life. Naipaul raises questions about rootlessness and crisis of identity, as faced by Diasporans. He is acknowledged as a writer of diaspora who is in search of roots. Being a Trinidadian by birth, Indian by descent and western by education and attitude, Naipaul 'looks before and after' to carve out a space for himself. The creative cosmos of Naipaul offers an existential paradigm which suggests the problem of rootlessness and his characters try their best to locate roots and respect in this dislocated and displaced humanity. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* seems to be a modern saga of disgust and despair in the course of seeking the self and society. At last the novelist succeeds gratifying himself in this perennial crusade.

Thematically, *A House for Mr. Biswas* purports to suggest the two sets of views and values. On the one hand it deals with the protagonist's resistance and resilience against the odds of life and on the other hand, it exposes the declining state of Hindu ethos and etiquette under the pull and pressure of the western values. In a comparative account V. S. Naipaul can fairly be compared with

Chinua Achebe. Like Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* presents the life-sketch of the protagonist which is replete with continual cultural clash between African and European viewpoints. V. S. Naipaul earnestly notes down the emotional as well as intellectual strains and anguish of his characters. Like the Conradian protagonist of the novel *Heart of Darkness*, Naipaul's protagonist too faces suffocation and suffers from existential predicament. The novelist makes it a point that the hero's sufferings are unavoidable and only through suffering, the hero can discover the meaning of life. The hero realises the absurdity of life and questions its very meaning. The first half of the twentieth century witnesses the philosophical discourse initiated by Camus, Sartre and Kafka. The protagonist Mohun Biswas appears to be an embodiment of existential vision and vigour. In no way, Mr. Biswas conforms to the conventional attitude and philosophy of life. In fact, Biswas is at odds with the world around. All the time, human beings come across the challenging and puzzling question of the existence of God and meaning and mission of life. Biswas cannot find answer to any of these questions. Like any modern man he finds himself detached from the social milieu and human values. Every individual in modern set up is alone to plod the weary ways of life like Hardy's Henchard. Naipaul achieves a great fit and fervour or integrity in art in tempering philosophical objectivity with sympathetic insight into the human predicament. Simon de Beauvoir observes the human experience in both the ways and argues :

There are two ways of seeing and explaining metaphysical reality. One can attempt to elucidate the universal signification in an abstract language. In this case the theory takes a universal and timeless form. Subjectivity and historicity are utterly excluded. One can incorporate into the doctrine the concrete and dramatic aspect of experience and propose not some abstract truth but my truth as I realise it in my own life.

This is the existentialistic way. And this also explains why existentialism often chooses to express itself through fiction, novel and play (e.g. Marcel, Sartre, Camus). The purpose is to grasp existence in the act itself, in which it fulfils itself, (qtd in Desan 7).

V. S. Naipaul's creative urge and immediacy can be interpreted in modern context of colonial consciousness. He makes us aware of the Indian immigrants' dilemma, his troubles and travails, problems and plights in the rapidly changing Caribbean universe. In the western set up, the life of Indian immigrants has become miserable. Like Charles Dickens, Naipaul presents picturesque portrayal of the indentured slave's descendants whose conscience has been ruthlessly fractured or fragmented, badly affecting the feeling of the wholeness of existence. It is apparent that *A House for Mr. Biswas* is a treatise on the pangs of exiles. Exile is a mental condition – a sense of security and anxiety for living "Half a life". The great literary thinker of the era, Edward W. Said says, "The man who finds homeland is still a tender beginner, he to whom every soil is as his native one, is already strong, but he is perfect to whom the entire world is a foreign land (7). The human life in exile has become a hallmark of Naipaul's literary zeal and zest. Meenakshi Mukherjee aptly suggests, "Naipaul's lack of roots as a burden that he carries with him in his restless travels around the world, as well as a weapon with which he can ironically slice up the countries he visits. It's source of his strength as well as acerbity" (1). Naipaul's creative venture evinces that the modern generation of the post-colonial writers relish or rejoice the plurality of their heritage.

In order to find out self-respect and recognition, the fictionalist peeps at the corridors of his life and experience and ancestry and his ancestors who even showed betrayal, deceit and disloyalty to their own community. He is "eternally an outsider - and Indian in the west Indian, a west Indian in England, and as described by many a nomadic intellectual in the non-descript Third World (Nagarajan4).

He seems to be controlled by Swifitean vision of the life-absorbing affair of all colonial and post-colonial social construct which he has portrayed as that of "Whitman's nigger" always "Looking down". Since his childhood, Naipaul perceives his father as a victim of parochial pursuit, poverty - stricken, poor and pathetic Hindu universe for his professional career in this creative outburst in his diaspora identity. He looked into the heart of matters which denied his father to be a prominent and potential writer. In a typical but tremendous manner the novelist takes the existential affair into his creative account. Naipaul's *modus operandi* displayed in *A House For Mr. Biswas* makes the work of art an epic version of his private life. The author makes us aware of the touching and tangible truth, which occurs in the suffocating life of the protagonist of the novel.

Critically speaking, *A House For Mr. Biswas* is a critique of the problems and plight of the Indian or Hindu community in Trinidad in general and a life sketch of Naipaul's father in particular. The novelist "through his father's stories", was learning a great deal about the writer's craft as they give him a way of looking an example of labour, a knowledge of the literary process, a sense of the order and special reality. The novel is the fictional version of experiences Naipaul has recalled in later autobiographical surveys which he describe as "very much father's book... written out of his journalism and stories out of his knowledge" (72). Mr. Biswas suffers from the psychosis of extinction of the self what the novelist also discovers in his father. He realises the existential consciousness which is aptly focused by Camus in following words :

"It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, tram, four hours in the office or factory, meal, tram, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, according to the same rhythm - this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the 'why' arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement.

'Begins' – this is important weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness, (9).

With a view to restructuring his father's life pattern he has examined his own process of self-creation, tone and temperament, alienation and identity. Like Mulk Raj Anand's Bakha, Mr. Biswas is puzzled with the anomalies of the world in which he is condemned to live and the new world of his dream and desire. Camus analyses the contrast between 'Intention' and 'Reality' which happens to be the source of absurdity. It is something of a discrepancy between individual and his life, the actor and his setting. Mr. Biswas unsuccessfully fights to effect harmony between the self and the society. He, from the core of the heart, realises that he is an alien, an outsider, a detached who cannot have the sense or sensibility of belonging. "Naipaul locates the circumstances – socio-cultural and historical – in character, that go into the making of Biswas' experience of a community caught somewhere in the larger process. Mr. Biswas makes humanly interesting and compelling the immediate existential and socio-cultural themes in a transparent and natural style (Singh 114) At a time the novel offers the double like sketches of Seepersad and V.S. Naipaul. The novelist himself says, "*A House for Mr. Biswas* was created out of what I saw and felt as a child" (22). The novelist's feeling, attitude, taste, conviction and commitment – all these are reflected by the personality of Anand. Mr. Biswas's life and achievement become a kind of Odyssey of perennial restless quest. It appears to be the touching and moving critique of Biswas's experience of alienation and exile. The birth and up-bringing up of Mr. Biswas is perceived as inauspicious because of horoscopic signs and sixth finger and "an unlucky sneeze". The priest warns the relatives of Mr. Biswas that he will eat up his parents and kith and kin. In addition to his forecast the priest advises to keep the child away from tree and water and his father should not be permitted to see the child for twenty one days. Raghu, the father of the child

along with others finds Mohun, a suitable name for the newly born baby. The search of name satisfied everyone because it is done after the name of Lord Krishna. As John Thieme suggests, "By giving Biswas a name accorded to one of the avatars of Vishnu, Naipaul ensures that his central character is viewed in an ironic light, he established him as a Hindu mock – heroic figure" (507).

Structurally the paradigm of the novel has been designed around three avowed purposes: to search his house, to click as a journalist and to make his son ready to leave home for further study. Anand received a didactic and delightful note from his father to face all the impending odds and obstacles in life. During his stay at Arwacas, Mr. Biswas who is away from the touch and affection of his family has a bitter realization of life and becomes more puzzled when he thinks of his son Anand. Mr. Biswas gathers painful and problematic experiences of life as a worker, labourers and in other various capacities at different places. In the general traffic of life, Mr. Biswas tortures himself by having depersonalisation and hallucinatory visions, so he struggles with his wife, Shama and children to have a house. Simultaneously he tries to hide his ill feeling for Shama by saying that he is physically not fit. While Naipaul describes Anand's psychological affinity with his father, he does not feel that he is exploring the dynamics of his own relationship though he becomes autobiographical in his treatment. Mr. Biswas shows his thirst for knowledge and his characteristic features mocking to the Tulsis and all these become a source of inspiration for the children. The society is so orthodox that when Raghu dies by drowning in the pond the people think that Anand may die in the same way. Hence Anand's danger of drowning is palpable and perplexing. The novelist gives the full description of the family and says that Mohun's two brothers have been sent to sugarcane and his sister Dehuti goes to stay with her aunt, Tara. Mohun and his mother Bipti went to Pagotes and there they were accommodated by Tara. During his school life Mohun came close to Alec who taught him the tips for a sign –

painter. His poor orientation or education encouraged him to be a 'pundit' but he was expelled by the Hindu priest Jairam from his house under the charge of misconduct and greed. This incident proved to be a crucial factor in the life of Mohun and he returned to his mother and thought over the problems and predicaments of a man without a house of his own. Afterwards he got a job by the grace of Ajodha's (Tara's husband's) brother. It was something unfortunate for him that he was accused by Bhandat of stealing a dollar from a pocket and because of grief he decides to be a sign painter. During his Hanuman House days while he was working for Tulsī Store he came in contact with Mrs. Tulsī who was running her business with her husband's brother Mr. Seth. Here he comes close to Shama and marries her hurriedly by following the Hanuman House tradition. Walsh writes :

Everybody lived at Hanuman House in complex relationships and transient alliances, the purpose of which was to placate the authorities and to slide through life unnoticed. In this cruel, comic world, both crowded and solitary, bullying and servile, Mr. Biswas kept alive a mere glint of independence and self by refusing to be either a slave or a mild victim (33-4).

Mohun fell into the traps of the Tulsīs whom the novelist considers a "totalitarian organisation family". One can feel and find the matriarchal hegemony in Mrs. Tulsī's mode of behaviour in all respects like politics, religion and morality and Mr. Biswas's inner self breaks the frontiers for freedom. He realises himself misfit for Tulsī's household affair. He could not satisfy the dream or desire of his wife until he gets a house of his own. He conveys his feeling sarcastically to Shama that the Hanuman House was "a real Zoo where all kinds of animals dwelt. Mr. Biswas, by getting himself on the verge of extinction, thinks for his redemption. Anand finds that his father's deed and achievements impress even Mrs. Tulsī who suggests that he and his family share a house with her and one of

her sons in Port of Spain. Mr. Biswas continues his struggle against the self which threatens his existence. However, he is a part of Trinidadian Indian community, though he questions, its customs, culture and values. Mr. Biswas develops a skill to adjust himself to the changed situations. The place where he dwells in, becomes his monument. His crusade and call against Hindu, faith, crystallises his restlessness for the emancipation from Tulsi's old and worn-out Hindu world. The square view of the narrative structure makes it pertinent that Mr. Biswas represents the moderate or liberal form of Hinduism and outrightly rejects the orthodox or conservative form of it. He is in fact more inclined towards Arya Samaj with which he came into touch during his Trinidad visit but in no way he shows his soft corner for western identity and individualism. With the passage of time he becomes more self conscious and rebels against the constraints imposed on him by his immediate environment. His endeavour is meant for a choice but his choice is a negation rather than an affirmation. He has been denounced for his repetition from situation to situation and every house which he occupies belies his mission or vision of life. This reveals the colonial consciousness of Mr. Biswas and his effort to escape from the actual realities of slavery. It is obvious that "Biswas's alienation is the consequence of his vivid, imaginative life, created and sustained by the alien influences of his education and his reading which channelise his ambitions unrealistically" (Karma 85). At last when he gets a house on the Sikkim Street, St. James, Port of Spain, he comes to feel that the romance of the house is destroyed by the disgusting reality of despair. Actually the house is an object, a symbol and an emblem of the loss of his El Dorado - the "golden dream" of his life. House symbolises the places of his confinement and constrain as he moves "from one house of strangers to another". He finds himself frustrated and thinks that all his effort is futile or a bit of fiasco in his repining search for the dream house. The life-long suffering and search for self-actualisation of Mr. Biswas makes him gloomy.

Like Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, Naipaul's realisation of rootedness, life of exile that comes out in personal insecurity and cultural instability, are narrated in the tone and tenor of Mr. Biswas's experience. He is alienated from all spheres of life and is unable to belong either to England or Caribbea, so he is a man without social root. The thesis of the text is that Mr. Biswas reflects Naipaul's past heritage and his reactions for self introspection and identity. Psychoanalytically it can be argued that there is a keen intimacy between the protagonist and the narrator. Of course, it is the loss of identity that results in alienation. Existentialism harps on despair and nausea, irrationalism and nihilism. "Existentialism is no less optimistic than humanism and it is the hopeful commitment to human existence that has prompted Sartre to affirm that Existentialism is humanism (Shim). The crux of existentialism has been carved out around human existence, affirmation of freedom and above all, the dehumanising social culture. The Marxist philosophy also underlines the existentialistic character and feature and it focuses the significance of change rather than interpretation. Jean Paul Sartre, an avant-garde of the 20th century literary philosophy, supports unequivocally the moral importance of human freedom. He advocates that man must establish morality and his own integrity by his freedom alone. In *The Plague* and *The Rebel*, Camus explores the vigour and verve of compassion and brotherhood as lasting values of human existence. Stylistically and strategically the novelist uses the title 'Mr.' for the protagonist Mohun Biswas, to underline the dignity and integrity and struggle for identity, by owning a house which is both existential and universal. In fact, 'House' stands for the image of fulfillment, a release from years of slavery and tyranny of an extended family. In a colonised framework of the society, it is difficult 'to achieve' white collar job and self respect. Therefore, the " 'House' in this novel is a symbol not for 'rootedness' but for freedom - freedom from slavery and oppression" (C. Das).

Identity is a value-laden term which requires one's socio-cultural base to be recognised, which seems to be at stake with his status or stature as an outsider, a subject of refusal, humiliation and condemnation. The psychosis that puzzles Seepersad and puzzled Mr. Biswas with the pragmatic, intuitive urge, can sustain an individual. But Seepersad's awkward or untoward feeling which got transmitted to Naipaul became identical with the young and aspiring creative writer. The novelist often deals with the disadvantage of growing up in the colonial framework of Trinidad shadowed by a mysticised ancestral antiquity of India. But the image or the identity of the novelist that filters out from the body of his creative output and the point of departure at times appear to be a blessing. Consequently this kind of literary biography of Naipaul's father and father-son relationship as narrated in the fiction, become quite autobiographical containing a story of three generations. Bruce King aptly analyses the chaotic and cultural plurality of the Caribbean social set up and argues :

"In the case of V.S. Naipaul there is a triple alienation since the author is dispossessed from several cultures and possible homes. Mr. Biswas is taken to be representing a universalist and a transcultural vision of man's rootlessness and a search for identity and place." It becomes more cogent and clear through the interpretation of Anthony Baxil when he says that "Naipaul is like Biswas, who having no tradition to turn to, must create his own. And this tradition has its roots in the rootlessness of western - Indian society rather than in the well-established European and Indian societies. (Boxils 24). Naipaul attempts a brilliant synthesis out of 'home' and 'abroad'. The meaning or mentality varies from place to place and generation to generation. There is a cultural mismatch. Naipaul is the obscure person in the new generation of post-colonial writers who celebrate the plurality of their heritage. Nissim Ezekiel says, "My quarrel is that Mr. Naipaul... writes exclusively from the point of view of his own dilemma, his temperamental, alienation from his mixed

background, his choice, and his escape. That temperament is not universal, not even widely distributed, that choice is not open to all, the escape for most is not from the community but into it. The theme of the existential predicament of the novel is of paramount significance and relevance. Camus rightly analyses the socio-cultural complexity or intricacy of the human personality and argues that "the rebel is a man who is on the point of accepting or rejecting the sacrosanct and determined on creating a human situation where all the answers are human or, rather formulated in terms of reason (16). The epilogue of the discourse is that every individual in the universe intends to locate some space that would be his house or home. The feeling of the rootlessness compels every individual to get a concrete home-space even in foreign land as Mr. Biswas does at Port of Spain.

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HERMANN HESSE'S *SIDDHARTHA* : A NOVEL OF SPIRITUAL QUEST

Bhambar S. B.

Hermann Hesse (1877-1962), the Nobel Prize winning German poet and novelist has depicted in his works the duality of spirit and nature, body versus mind and the individual's spiritual search outside the restrictions of the society. Flesh and spirit are two conflicting components in all of Hesse's novels. His *Siddhartha* is about Buddha, the Enlightenment of the East, the glory of Atman, the self and self-realization, without mixing in Western thought. Hesse employs in his works previous to *Siddhartha* the Eastern concepts and they become more and more central as he deals in *Siddhartha* with pure Buddhism. Shende has rightly observed that, "Modern western literary tradition is a superb specimen of the work that constantly unfolds the influence of Buddhism" (Mutalik-Desai. 146). Hesse's *Siddhartha* is the best example of it. Hesse accepts here the Buddhism with all its charm, glory and forcefulness. The framework of the novel is Buddha's life and the atmosphere in it from the beginning is Buddhist. *Siddhartha* dramatises the dilemma of the man who strives to find a higher meaning in a strange world. The early life of Buddha is fused into the development of the plot and it determines the character of the novel. The language of the novel is meditative and so it is appropriate to the character and teachings of Buddha. The name Siddhartha means the one who has achieved his goal.

In this paper, the main focus will be placed on the journey undertaken by Siddhartha with an intention in search of the meaning

of life. What keeps Hesse preoccupied here is the idea of a continuing journey, something like that of a well-known Upanishadic term "Charaybeti" (go ahead; don't stop). Gangeshwar Rai has rightly observed that, "Journey has been used right from the days of Homer to symbolize man's spiritual quest". (Rai 98).

Hesse's *Siddhartha* is a compassionate portrait of people struggling to find a spiritual home. It delineates Siddhartha's alienation and the concomitant quest for spirituality. Like Anita Desai's *Matteo*, (Desai 1996) his quest for eternal truth is a struggle for spiritual sustenance. Disturbed by the contradictions between his comfortable life and the harsh reality around, he takes to the life of a wanderer. This reminds me Paulo Coelho's *Santiago* who ventures from his homeland in Spain to North Africa, where a fateful encounter with the alchemist brings him at last to self-understanding and spiritual enlightenment (Coelho : 1988). A spilt self, Siddhartha's existential suffering springs from his constitutional inability to adjust to his self-created situations and the challenges of spiritual life. His existential contradiction results in a state of constant disequilibrium. Always 'on the run', Sidhartha emerges as a restless seeker of his 'Spiritual Self'. Thus while depicting the conflict-ridden existence of Siddhartha, Hesse is dealing with the predicament of the modern man caught in the contrived dialectical opposition between 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. A disintegrated and fragmented being, Siddhartha's endeavour all through has been to attain integration of being and wholeness of personality.

Thus *Siddhartha* is a novel about the soul's journey to enlightenment and awakening. Lush, evocative and deeply humane, the novel is an eternal testament to following our dreams and listening to our hearts. It is one's journey within oneself, a journey towards the land of destination, the thought, the vision and the philosophy. Siddhartha wanders in search of spiritual truth, hearts truth, a quest for reaching one's homeland and at last discovers the wisdom. Siddhartha is obsessively occupied with the quest for meaning and

value; freedom and truth that provide spiritual nourishment to the estranged self in a seemingly chaotic and meaningless world. The novel is a story of multiple journeys undertaken by three different characters – Siddhartha, Govinda and Kamala – at different planes of existence and each of these journeys is interlinked to the other.

India is nothing if not spiritual. India was one of the most influential conditioning factor in Hesse's childhood. He says : "From the time I was a child I breathed in and absorbed the spiritual side of India just as deeply as Christianity" (Ziolkowski 147). *Sidhartha* is the manifestation of it. The magic of the East exerts an ineluctable attraction upon his mind and imagination, and he returns to it again and again. This is evident in his journals from the year 1920, precisely during the composition of *Siddhartha* :

My preoccupation with India, which has been going on for almost twenty years has passed through many stages, now seems to me to have reached a new point of development. Previously my reading, searching and sympathies were restricted exclusively to the philosophical aspect of India – the purely intellectual, vedantic and Buddhistic aspect. The Upanishads, the sayings of Buddha, and the Bhagvad Gita were the focal point of this world. Only recently have I been approaching the actual religious India of the gods, of Vishnu and Indra; Brahma and Krishna. And now Buddhism appears to me more and more as a kind of very pure, highly bred reformation – a purification and spiritualization that has no flaw but its great zealousness, with which it destroys image-words for which it can offer no replacement

This evaluation brings us directly to the story of Siddhartha, the Brahman's son who rebels against strictures of his caste and predestined office in life. Siddhartha's journey in search of peace, tranquility, the divinity, the meaning of existence and the ultimate

truth forms the centre-stage of the novel. Born in a luxuriant Brahman family Siddhartha decides to try other paths feeling that the teachings of Brahmanism do not lead to salvation. He leaves home with his friend Govinda to join the ascetic Samanas, with whom he spends three years. Gradually he realizes that asceticism and yoga are only leading him further away from himself so he goes with Govinda to hear the teachings of Gautam the Buddha. Govinda remains with Gautama but Siddhartha perceives that everyone must seek out his own path. Husain Kassim has observed "Yoga, meditation and fasting do not help him much. They do not give him happiness, peace, the Buddhist 'absolute peace'" (Husain Kassim : 239). His goal remains unfulfilled. By these means the soul can reach at most Brahman but Siddhartha asks the question : what good does it do his soul of self ? Siddhartha has only one thing in mind : "to become empty, to become empty of thirst, desire, dream, pleasure" (11) It centres around the concept of suffering and anxiety, which is a pure Buddhist concept and the outcome of Buddha's religiousness. Departing from Buddha, Govinda, and a life of the spirit alone, Siddhartha determines to expose himself to the world of the senses and experience. Crossing a river on a ferry, he reaches a large city where he quickly meets and desires the love of Kamala, a famous courtesan. Kamala helps him and Siddhartha soon becomes wealthy and is able to afford all the pleasures of life that he desires – including Kamala herself. However, after some years he realizes that this path was just as foolish as that of asceticism, that his luxurious life has lulled his true self to sleep just as perniciously as the exercises of yoga had done before. He decides to break his way out of the world of Sansara and illusion and one day he steals secretly away from the city and returns to the river. At the river, at the height of his despair, he almost commits suicide, but he suddenly feels a stirring of his old self and realizes that escape by suicide is impossible. When Siddhartha breaks his way out of the world of Sansara, this reminds us in fact Buddha's life story. In order to search for happiness, Buddha left his home,

wife, children and every worldly luxury. Siddhartha, too, leaves Kamala and all other things, for people like Buddha cannot love the world of family, wife and children. Now he decides to stay by the river and try to learn, to understand himself again; leaving him once again in his original state of innocence – with the added dimension of knowledge of good and evil. In his continuous quest to discover an interpretative principle that would explain Siddhartha to Siddhartha, he learns a great deal about the world and the men; wealth and business from Kamaswami, a wealthy merchant. He himself becomes a merchant, earns huge profits and squanders his wealth in enjoying himself. Even this kind of life does not satisfy him.

Living with the wise ferryman Vasudeva, Siddhartha learns many secrets from the river :

And once again when the river swelled during the rainy season and roared loudly Siddhartha said : "Is it not true, my friend that the river has many voices ? Has it not the voice of king, of a warrior, of bull, of night, of a bird, of a pregnant woman, and a sighing man and a thousand other voices ?" "It is so," nodded Vasudeva "the voices of all living creatures are in its one voice." (88).

The river is the symbol for timelessness. Siddhartha grows in self awareness in perceiving beyond the time and space world when he hears the voice of love in everything. Devinder Mohan says "The rivers voice, which animates all voices of the universe, symbolizes the eternal female voice which binds the human heart in order to be humbled and sustained, in order to foster its spirit that encounters and sees through what is merely temporal. Siddhartha prepares for his temporal journey with female energy working constructively in him". (Dhawan 168). I find this critical opinion to be significant as it is Kamala who inspires him to make spiritual utterances of his actions, all of which unite in OM. It (OM) refers to a spiritual and aesthetic

balance of manifested and unmanifested energy of God which each individual achieves according to his or her progressive achievement of human Karma" (Ibid : 170).

Hesse's *Siddhartha* dramatizes the timeless theme of making sense of life in its finite and infinite aspects. Siddhartha fulfills his Dharma and achieves his Nirvana. He learns from Vasudeva a great deal about the significance of the river, its secrets and voices. Kamala, who had a son by Siddhartha, on her way to meet the Buddha reaches the river but unfortunately dies of Snakebite. Siddhartha keeps the boy with him. He begins to care for the boy. He loves his son desperately, but the spoiled young city boy yearns only to get away from him and to return to life in the city. The boy does not like him and gives him a hell by his hostile acts. Unable to endure the life of poverty, eventually he succeeds in escaping. Siddhartha wants to go to the town to see whether the boy is safe and return with him if possible, for he experiences for the first time the pangs of love and, then, pure unselfish devotion. Vasudeva advises him to forget the whole business. When he has reached this stage, Vasudeva goes into forest, for Siddhartha can take over the tradition and his knowledge. Govinda passes by one day and in a mystic revelation, realizes that Siddhartha in his own way, like Buddha, has achieved absolute peace and harmony. It is interesting to note here that Govinda has not found enlightenment inspite of living with Buddha, but Siddhartha appears to be as enlightened as the Buddha, had been, Govinda remains a restless shadow, destined to follow behind others who experience the world while he stagnates. He loves his old friend Siddhartha, for he has become like the Buddha. Now he understands that one must learn to enlighten and teach oneself. He remembers the words of Siddhartha 'wisdom is not communicable'. It is not age but experience that gives wisdom. Siddhartha reaches the state of 'Nirvana'. He achieves the absolute peace – the peace which emerges out of the consciousness of death as a bliss, liberation, salvation or Nirwana. He realizes his self- and self knowledge is an

understanding of the relationship between life and death. It is the understanding of our relationships with the surroundings, individuals or inanimate things. Nirvana is a state of total desirelessness. As M. G. Deshpande rightly says :

Nirwana is the 'raison detre' of the Buddhist discipline. Etymologically it means cessation of a gust of wind. Nirvana is thus the highest goal, ultimate object of human aspirations and sumun bonum of rational life. Buddha says that virtue and wisdom purify each other. Prefect wisdom, goodness, equanimity and complete relief from suffering are simultaneously attained in Nirvana (260).

All these things are attained by Siddhartha living with a ferryman Vasudeva and from river. Vasudeva teaches him how to listen to the quite sounds of the river, endlessly flowing, and he realizes that the world is simply a recurring cycle. Nothing really changes at all. He realizes that his life is a part of the greater unity of things that is 'Om'. He is heart broken when young Siddhartha (his son) escapes to the city, but realizing that he cannot shelter anyone from the world and that each must find his own path towards understanding. Siddhartha heals As a young boy he had fled from his own Brahmin father and never returned; why should it be so bad now when his son leaves him ? It is a part of the world's cycle. Just as water from the river evaporates and falls again as rain, flowing everywhere, so too is life itself a recurring cycle of birth and death. The river teaches him of how everything moves in a cycle, a thing he had not understood when living amongst the people. In this context Scribilas' comment on spiritual discipline is significant. He tells his friend, "I should say the true way of spiritual discipline would be to acknowledge Nature and yet rise above it" (Tagore: 62). Siddhartha acknowledges nature and only then reaches the state of self-realisation. Nature focuses his thoughts and enlightens him. He learns to listen to the world rather than selfishly worrying about

himself. Siddhartha realizes that his life is a part of the greater cycle of nature, of Om and the unity of things. He laughs at the world's cycle of transitory appearances because he understands it now. The river teaches him that time does not exist :

He (Siddhartha) once asked him. 'Have you also learned that secret from the river; that there is no such thing as time ?

Yes, Siddhartha, 'he (Vasudeva) said. 'Is this what you mean ? That the river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the current, in the ocean and in the mountains, everywhere, and that the present only exists for it, not the shadow of the past, nor the shadow of the future ?

That is it,' said Siddhartha, 'and when I learned that, I reviewed my life and it was also a river, and Siddhartha the boy Siddhartha the nature man, and Siddhartha the old man were only separated by shadows, not through reality -. Nothing was, nothing will be, everything has reality and presence (88).

The river is like Siddhartha himself, and the life of any person. It is unchanging and yet it is always changing within, deeper inside beneath the surface. He now belongs not to a group; but instead to everything. Everything is 'eternity' to him, like the river, unchanging yet always changing and flowing. This is the meaning of life that he has discovered, and he is a part of it. Everything moves in recurring circles, and people find themselves in different roles until their lives end. Even in death, they follow a path followed by so many before. The world moves in circles with this realization Siddhartha ceases to fight against his destiny. He reaches the highest enlightenment here :

There shone in his face the serenity of knowledge, of one who is no longer confronted with conflicts of desires who has found salvation, who is in harmony with the

stream of events, with the stream of life, full of sympathy and compassion, surrendering to the stream, belonging to the unity of all things. (110)

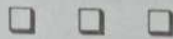
Thus he finds finally what he has sought out since the beginning of his journey. Now Vasudeva calmly declares that it is time for him to go "into the unity of things" (110) and he goes off to die in the woods. There is no sorrow felt at their final parting, but instead he feels a sense of joy, as he knows that death is just another part of life. This is the greatest realization on the part of Siddhartha. He attains salvation here in this world, by experiencing the world for himself like the Buddha who said : "Seek your own salvation by yourself like the Buddha who said : "Seek your own salvation by yourselves. Be ye lamps to yourselves" (qtd. in Deshpande 96) Finally Siddhartha finds peace and wisdom, recognizing that everything in the world is a recurring cycle. He experiences the same enlightenment as the Buddha by experiencing the world for himself instead of following others teachings. He achieves the absolute state of bliss, Nirvana, by listening to the river.

Thus he achieves the spiritual peace. His journey in search of spiritual quest is over. The earlier Siddhartha torn by the inner struggle ensuing from his spiritual hunger at last achieves 'absolute peace.' The wheel has turned a full circle as Siddhartha became the "Sthita Prajna" of the *Bhagvad-Gita*.

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THE THEME OF LOVE AND DEATH
IN
HENCEFORTH

Basavaraj Naikar

Harindra Dave (1930—95) is an important Gujarati writer. He is a poet, novelist, critic and journalist. Born in Khambra and educated in Bhavnagar, he came to Bombay and served for some time in the USIS and later became the chief editor of *Janmabhumi-Pravasi* group of newspapers like *Samarpu*, and *Jansakti*. The introductions and critical comments of his annotated books reveal his love for literature. He is a romantic poet whose poetry is marked by an aesthetic beauty. He has published four collections of poems, which show the growth of his poetic vision culminating in *Suryopanishada*. *Asavi* (1961) is the first book of *ghazals* and *Samaya* (1972) is the second book of *ghazals*. It is in the second book of *ghazals* that one may find the technical excellence of the *ghazal* form and intense emotional exuberance. *Mauna* is an important collection of exquisite lyrics. These songs express the delicate sentiments of youthful love. There is a bunch of poems written in the tradition of folk songs on the Radha-Krishna theme. *Suryopanishada* (1975) marks the beginning of a new poetic style. A majority of these prose-poems indicate the departure from the old style. The agony of love is resounded in some sonnets and songs. He has also written a few important novels like *Aganpankhi*, *Palanam Pratibimba*, *Anagata*, *Madhava Kyamya Nathi* and *Sukha Namano Pradasa*, which are known for their technique and content. "The recurrent image of death in all these novels is beautifully blended with the image of life. The quest of love is another theme of these novels. Unlike the socio-

psychological themes of earlier novels, the theme of *Madhava Kyamyia Nathi* (1970) is mythological. The novel narrates major events of Lord Krishna's life ranging from his birth to death." (Datta 907-08).

Harindra Dave's *Henceforth* (1996) is translated from Gujarati *Anagat* by Bharathi Dave, who is a medical practitioner by profession and a translator of Gujarati by inclination. *Henceforth* is a short but sweet novel, which depicts the life of the protagonist Aalok in a Gujarati village called Urad. Hence the regional element is quite conspicuous in the novel and sets itself off from the other novels of other regions. The Gujarati characters, place-names and landscape apparently contribute a good deal to the local colour. Hence it easily attracts the attention of the non-Gujarati reader due to his unfamiliarity with this geographical and cultural area.

But the novel is different from the traditional Indian novels in the sense that it does not merely depict the external world but delves deep into the human psyche. Hence it may be described as a psychological and philosophical novel. The concept of the novel has also been changing in India as also all over the world according to the changing reality of life and new critical ideologies. Dharmavir Bharati rightly describes it as follows: "The reason is, today the novel has already crossed its traditional bounds and encroached upon the field of philosophy and poetry. The novel does not merely reflect life or provide a sketch of characters or narrate events, but using traditional devices, poses questions as to what life is and why it is so. It also tries to find the answers. Exploration into the unknown area with the help of the old tools of fiction is a new literary experiment. In the modern literary environment, there are few novelists, who have taken up the challenge. In my view, the author of this significant novel has not only assumed this challenge but has met it successfully" (Bharati vii).

The protagonist of the novel is Aalok, who happens to be a super-sensitive (sometimes hyper-sensitive) young man, who has been suffering from a sense of loneliness, as he has no relative alive to give him company. As a young man he has some attraction for a young girl called Manjari, who wants to marry him. But he has no deeper craving for women. "It was true that during weak moments he craved feminine company, but by and large, he had never felt the real need for a woman in his life." (Dave 3). His marriage with Manjari had been postponed due to the unexpected death of her uncle. Manjari had refused to go to a movie with him because of her fear of the society. There is some difference between the two in their attitude to the marriage. Whereas Manjari has total faith in marriage and attendant happiness, Aalok is very diffident about his marriage with her. He articulates his doubt by asking her, "You have so many relatives – people who might be called yours: your uncle, father, mother, brother, sister, aunty, cousins... don't you sometimes get lost among them?" (P.4) She replies to him, "Oh no, on the contrary I would feel lonely without them" (P.4). Then he questions her further, "You come from such a large family, and I have nobody in my house...won't you feel suffocated?" (P.4) She replies to him very confidently, "But you will be there!" (P.4) His reaction to her answer is very strange, "Will I? Who knows?" (P.4) This small incident testifies to his deep-seated doubt about his own future life. Perhaps he has a premonition about his own life. He sighs in a melancholic fashion and Manjari leaves him with a heavy heart. The contrast between these lovers is conspicuous. Whereas Manjari's faith in life and marriage is firm and unshakable, Aalok's faith in the same is rather infirm and shaky.

Though quite young in age, Aalok is given to Hamletian brooding about life. Not deciding positively about his marriage, he leaves Manjari and goes to Urad village to have some kind of solitude, rest and peace of mind and to write something. He has selected Urad village because of its beautiful sea. "A fellow resident in the

hostel had mentioned that the sea there was unique. He used to say that there were only three beaches worth seeing in the whole world! One was Brighton, the second was the Marina in Madras and the third was the beach of Urad in Gujarat..." (P.4). When he reaches Urad Railway Station he tells the Station Master, "Somebody suggested that the beach of Urad is very good and that I should go and stay there" (P.5). Then the Station Master gives him a different opinion, "...otherwise it is a dying village – full of old people, widows, orphaned children..." (P.5). Then he continues to offer a contrastive picture of Urad in the past and in the present. Urad was thriving in the sea-wealth and business in the past but has lost its glory in the present. He suggests that Urad village has been disintegrating gradually. "Sir, there is no business here now. Once upon a time where were such unique fishes in the sea, you couldn't find them anywhere else. Once I saw with my own eyes a fish twenty-five feet long. Gafur had caught it" (P.6). He tells him further that Urad was a heaven for fisher-folk and connoisseurs of a variety of drinks. "Since the Daman port became operative, our business has dropped, but the natives used to brew such nice toddy that though there was strict prohibition, the policemen used to come here – not to arrest anybody, but to collect installments of bribe" (P.6). He also alerts Aalok about thieves in the Railway Station. Aalok sleeps in the Station until daybreak in the fear of thieves and ghosts. On the whole the Station Master gives a negative picture of Urad village –with its commercial and moral degeneration, constabulary corruption and social evils like thievery etc. Aalok's a priori knowledge of Urad has to be converted into a posteriori experience after actually staying in the village and absorbing the impressions of the external world through the mediation of his senses.

After going to the Christian Boarding House, he meets the proprietress Christine Wellworth and learns that she has been living alone for a long time. She tells him, "Many people get tired of being alone, but I like this quiet atmosphere. I have stayed here almost

alone for the last twelve years" (P.11). Although the Station Master has given a rather negative picture of Urad village, Christine balances it by giving a positive picture of the same when she says, "Mr. Aalok, dare I mention it? If you but once drink the toddy distilled here, you would forget all superior kinds of rum. It is a real man's drink..." (P.12).

Aalok's stay in Urad village provides him ample time to relax and enjoy his solitude. Loneliness will a sort of punishment for an immature man or for an existentialist, but for a mature man or one with a yogic or philosophical bent of mind it will turn out to be blissful solitude and helps him to reflect deeply about the self and the world. Accordingly Aalok's stay in Urad village provides a congenial atmosphere for his observation of and reflection about life. Like all reflective persons he is a restless soul. For example when he is in the boarding House he wants to write something but cannot do so due to his self-reflection supported by his vision of himself in the mirror. "Aalok looked at himself curiously with both dread and some confusion. Staring at himself for such a long time in the mirror made him fearful. He remembered an elderly person, who had once said, 'You will go mad' to the boy Aalok as he sat staring at his reflection in the mirror. Today he felt that some part of his self from within was telling him, 'perhaps you will go mad.' But in spite of this warning he continued to stare at the reflection with great consideration, as if he had never encountered himself before" (P.13). His looking into the mirror seems to give a new understanding of his self to him.

Aalok's experiences in Urad village, his meeting with a variety of people, and his observation of their life make him think seriously about human life in general and his own self in particular. His attempt to understand others helps him understand his own real self, which is otherwise masked. Aalok's experiences in Urad may be classified into two categories: one, the experience of higher love and two, the hearing of the reports about various kinds of sorrows, suffering, bereavement and tragedy. These two types of experiences look

contradictory and suggest the very irony of human life.

When Aalok stays in the Christian Boarding House, he grows acquainted with Christine Wellworth, the proprietress of it. Christine tells him about the past prosperity of Urad and its present decadence, the people and the sea. In a way she acts as his local guide. She is very courteous to him and takes extra care of him. In their initial meetings both of them appear to each other as strange, different and mysterious. When she offers him wine, Aalok declines it, "No, but I am not habituated, and I don't think I have time enough left in life to form new habits..." (P.31). She asks him, "Why do you say that? You have hardly knocked at life's door and you have still to enter its arena" (P.31). But Aalok expresses his doubt and reveals his deep-seated pessimism, "Well, do we know whether the door by which we are standing, will take us into life or out of life when it opens?" (P.31) Christine expresses her sense of surprise when she says, "You speak in riddles. I cannot understand..." (P.31). Although Christine is puzzled by his riddle-like answers; she seems to have liked him as a thorough gentleman. That is exactly the reason why she sits alone with him in a room of her hotel at midnight. She has deep trust in him. She drinks her wine, but gives him some soft drink. Aalok hesitates to talk freely with her, but she goads him to talk freely and frankly with her, "Don't you feel like asking me, Aalok, why at this hour of the night, almost after midnight O sit with a drink in hand and what sort of woman I am, drinking in the presence of a stranger?" (P.31) Then Aalok breaks his silence and says, "I will not lie, I'm curious to know about you, and I am not in two minds regarding what sort of a woman you are. I may not know who you are, but I am very clear in my mind as to what you are" (P.31). Urged by Christine, he tells her, "You are a fine woman. Any chaste woman can feel jealous about your being nice, attractive and pious..." (P.32). Christine likes his complimentary words about her nature and notices his extra goodness, "I really wondered why during all these days you have never asked me a single question about myself. Other

customers have tried to find out on their first day as to why I live alone, where my husband is, how many children I have and so forth – you are so different from others –perhaps that is why I could trust you” (P.32). Under the influence of liquor she becomes loquacious and expresses her pent up sorrow of loneliness and pessimistic philosophy of life. “Aalok, some times I wonder why I continue to live. Sometimes we are left alone at crossroads and it becomes difficult to find the beginning or the end of the road and know the directions. It does not matter which way we turn and in which direction we go, the result will be the same. We come back to the point from where we set out, and that makes us feel so childish and stupid, it takes away our courage to start the journey all over again; or sometimes we reach a dead end...” (P.32-33). Then she continues to tell him about her loneliness and frustration caused by the contingencies of her life. She tells him how her husband has been wandering away from her because of his over-fondness for her and his weakness for women. “He is over fond of me – and I cannot see him unhappy. The sight of me makes him extremely unhappy. For the past eight years he has not come here. I don’t even know his whereabouts. Whenever he sends a money order or a draft say after six or eight months, I would know from where he has sent that. Sometimes it even comes from some foreign country! Many a time I have wondered as to where he is. Would he have remarried? He had a very unsteady mind. The mother of this boy Shankar also used to work here and well, I do not know why but I see a great resemblance between my husband and Shankar. May be I am mistaken, I have never asked him: but I am sure he must have married again. He cannot get through a single night without a woman” (P.33). Christine has put up with her husband’s vagabondism and debauchery and the presence of his illegal son in the Boarding House, mainly because of her maturity of mind and generosity. She wants to unburden herself by telling a small detail about the cause of her husband’s separation from her. She unzips her nightgown and reveals

a big white patch of leucoderma on her chest and explains its effect on her husband's relationship with her. The white patch of leucoderma on her chest is, obviously, a tragic aspect of Christine, as of any woman. She hides the tragic mark beneath her gown. She reveals the secret truth to the stranger Aalok only because of her trust in him. She explains to him, "You are unhappy just looking at it, while he was supposed to desire it; and he loved me. The initial small patch of leucoderma that was in the middle of my chest increased to such an extent! Nature has stamped this ugliness on my beauty in such a way that nobody in the world can see it. And as I said it my husband is a very unstable person, and though he stayed married to me, could not enjoy me and endure me. For a long while after marriage, he stayed with me but was very unhappy. Then he started this hotel. He would come here. He would look very jovial and happy and I would always pray the night would not fall. Inevitably night would be. He would come to me, try to take me in his arms but could never embrace me, as he would remember that ugly patch. He would say, 'When I see this patch, I just melt from within as if I have suddenly reached the sun...' and he would become sad. I would prepare a champagne cocktail so we could forget the agony, but instead, our unhappiness would deepen. Then he started coming once a month or so after sometime he stopped visiting me altogether. Neither of us said anything to the other – but we both knew and understood' and sometimes I still wonder where he must be. Is he happy?" (P.34)

Obviously Aalok is very sad to learn about Christine's hidden sorrow. He thinks seriously about the irony of Christine's as also of human life. He wonders at the togetherness of beauty and ugliness and thinks that reality lies somewhere between the two. "Now he was able to look at the whole event in its right perspective. Last night he had felt sorry for Christine's husband, but he was also touched by Christine's agony; now he felt that the veil of sadness that had been built around Christine's face was beyond reach and

perception. She was a wonderful woman – the beauty of her veiled body and the ugliness of her unveiled figure: perhaps reality existed in neither state. Aalok felt that to differentiate between beauty and ugliness was futile. Christine had her own unique beauty – a beauty that was as sad and as transparent as the atmosphere in which she lived. Her husband had never discovered that beauty; but had been able to perceive and reach the beauty of her inner self, surely he would not have been so aloof and distant from her for so long a period” (P.36). Aalok concludes that Christine’s husband was bothered about her physical beauty and disappointed to see ugliness in her body. His view is corroborated by Christine’s views also. “When the sight of this patch is unbearable to you, what about the man who was supposed to desire me!” (P.36) Aalok wonders, “Isn’t there more to life than the physical enjoyment that a man can get from a woman!” (P.36). Aalok is able to see spiritual beauty in Christine whereas her husband is so blind and insensitive to it. He feels pity for Christine and also fear about himself, “What would happen if he were to become disfigured after marrying Manjari? The thought made him shiver” (P.36). He loves and wants to marry Manjari but he has not seen her unwrapped beauty. That is why he could sit with her for hours together without getting involved.

Aalok’s meeting with others in Urad gives him the bitter knowledge of sorrow, frustration and death. Each man or woman he meets there has a big story of sorrow to tell him. The old man that Aalok meets on the beach after going to Urad is the first one to tell his story of tragic loss of his wife. References to sorrow, frustration and death come again and again to Aalok’s notice. The old man whispers, “Yes, once I did go in there intending to commit suicide...” (P.15). When Aalok asks him for the reason for his attempt at suicide, the old man replies that he had quarreled with his wife Gomti that night, that she had her bed separately in the far corner of the room and slept alone facing the wall. He tells him further how the earthquake happened all of a sudden. “After some time, he realized

that it was the tremor of an earthquake, and not the sound of the sea. The noise became more and more dreadful: the sound of the frightened birds in the trees and the sound of the sea grew louder and deeper than before. Suddenly a tremendous shattering noise ripped through the air. 'G...O...M...A...T...I...!' he shouted and Gomti who suddenly tried to get up from her bed was thrown back – the earth which bore her person, suddenly gave way, and along with her bed, she vanished down the chasm created by the collapse of the floor" (P.17). This unexpected natural catastrophe has remained as an unforgettable traumatic experience in the old man's mind. Even the memory of it makes him shudder. Deeply shocked and saddened by his wife's death, the old man had escaped from the army tent and walked to the seashore to commit suicide. The old man's decision to commit suicide gave him a chance to think about death but he did not find it easy to die and hence returned home. This is the first half of the old man's story of sorrow. But there is the second half also to his story. But this time the sorrow is of different kind. As the old man tells Aalok, "I continued to live, married a second time but did not stay in the same house. We had children, but fate took them away. My wife has been suffering from filarial for the past two years. I had brought her back from the hospital only a month ago and now I am waiting for death to arrive and take me away..." (P.18). The old man has seen the deaths of his first wife and children (from the second wife) and been waiting for his own death due to his deep despair. When Aalok listens to the old man's story of sorrow, bereavement and frustration, he is deeply touched.

Before Aalok is able to forget the old man's tragic life, he hears the story of another man's sorrow. When Aalok is going to the toddy-palm forest in a horse carriage, Rustomji the driver tells him his story of suffering, "I love this place very much and Burjor's mother, my wife, is suffering from cancer. She may not live for more than a year or two" (P.21). Whereas the old man has lost his wife instantly right in front of him, Rustomji is fearfully looking forward to his ailing wife's death in the near future.

When Rustomji takes Aalok to Jivabhai's toddy shop on the way, Aalok refuses to taste the liquor, as he happens to be a teetotaler. But he hears the story of another kind of suffering and frustration from Jamna, the daughter of Jivabhai. Jamna tells Aalok how her husband drank limitlessly and got defeated in the tribal game called *gadi* and attributed his defeat to his wife's inauspiciousness. Jamna explains the details of the game, "You see, there are two persons. Between the two a line is drawn and then both the parties secretly start chanting. Then both the parties thrash one another. The one who vomits blood is defeated. My husband started playing. He drank a full drum of toddy, but then he could not bear any more and got defeated. He started abusing me, saying, 'you are not a good woman and because I am married to you, I lost the game. All these years I have never been defeated.' As if this were not enough, that rascal friend of his took our hut as well... I told him, 'Let your bet go to hell. I will go away to my father's place.' I cannot let anybody else to touch my body lest my mother-goddess becomes angry" (P.23). Jamna's separation from her husband is, obviously, a kind of matrimonial frustration bringing sorrow to her as well as to her father.

Another person whom Aalok happens to meet in Urad is Chhanalal, a stage actor, who has his own story of sorrow and frustration to tell. Chhanalal is an old friend of Aalok in Bombay. When Aalok goes to the touring theatre in Urad and meets Chhanalal, he is surprised to see the latter carrying burning embers on his palms. When Aalok asks him as to how he could do that and what if he burnt his face, Chhanalal expresses his deep-seated frustration, "Oh sir, how can one, who has already been burnt by the fire of my fate, get hurt with coal?" (P.27) Although Chhanalal is an excellent actor, he has his own frustration hidden in his heart. He tells Aalok how he was in love with a co-actress called Vilasvati but could not marry her because of the director's disapproval. "Sir, our director did not approve of our being in love. He used to say, 'He who falls in love with his heroine, loses the art of acting' and so he not only dismissed

me but also disgraced me so much that no drama company was prepared to hire me. Actually he was afraid that if we got married, we would start a drama company of our own..." (P.29). Having heard Chhanalal's story of frustration, Aalok thinks about the metaphorical death that he has been living, "How many deaths this one man had died during his lifetime! He had ceased to be a hero, he had lost his fame, he didn't get Vilas –his beloved; his love had died. He was still living! At the age of fifty, he was doing the role of a lover – his eyes, full of madness, cast a magical spell on stage: Chhanalal was perhaps the truth of the stage; he was everything in that atmosphere, but removed from that atmosphere he was nobody" (P.29-30). Aalok concludes that Chhanalal has been living a sort of metaphorical death.

Aalok has been advised by Christine to meet an intelligent Parsi couple, Dr. Meherwan and Piloo in Urad. When Aalok meets them he is easily impressed by them. After the exchange of amicableities Aalok learns the story of their deeper sorrow. Before that he happens to see a drawing on the wall. "It had a picture of an ice-berg floating in the sea and on that ice-berg stood a man" (P.37). Obviously the picture symbolizes the illusion, insecurity and ephemerality of human life, which are illustrated at least partially in Dr. Meherwan's family life. When Dr. Meherwan leaves Aalok in the company of Piloo and goes out to treat a boy, Kishore suffering from high fever, Piloo reveals the story of the tragic life and death of her son Shyavaska to Aalok. It is indeed an extraordinary story. Her son Shyavaska was a handsome little boy, who suffered from the 'marble bone disease.' Consequently he used to suffer from fracture every time he fell on the floor. Although he was taken to Geneva for treatment by the famous Doctor Brown, the boy could not be cured completely. The boy could never walk or play properly as the other children do. "Perhaps the small child had taken for granted that life itself was pain!" (P.41) The tragedy of the boy's life becomes all the more conspicuous when compared to his dream that is impossible to

realize. One pleasant evening the boy Shyavaska happened to see the peaks of the Alps and wanted to fly to them. "Then there won't be any question of falling down and breaking any bones, would there?" (P.42) Dr. Meherwan tried to convince him by suggesting that they could pass through that row of mountains when they fly in an aeroplane over them. But Shyavaska did not like to fly in an aeroplane, because his dream was much bigger and far more romantic than that. He said, "Oh, no... that won't be fun. I want to fly alone: then I will sit on the top of that mountain and call you from there, and you will try to find me and look for me here while I will be there, on the top, laughing and looking at you...!" (P.42) Shyavaska's romantic dream simply intensifies the tragedy of his life and jerks tears in the eyes of the reader. He dies just two days after that incident. After listening to the tragic story of the boy, Aalok can easily understand how much of sorrow Dr. Meherwan and Piloo must have hidden in their hearts and still been carrying on.

Tikekar and his daughter-in-law are another set of individuals that Aalok meets. These people have their own story of sorrow caused by Ashwin. Tikekar had held an important post in Gaikwad establishment. Ahilyabai was his wife. They had high hopes for their son Ashwin before sending him to England for highest studies; they had arranged his marriage with Sheela, a girl from a Chitpavan Brahmin family of Poona. After returning from England Ashwin wanted Sheela to change and adopt the Western ways of life. Sheela tried to please her husband and bore his perversions stoically. But in course of time Ashwin's interest in her and his motherland evaporated. Consequently he went to England for another educational course, remarried in England and had two children now thereby betraying his first wife Sheela. Tikekar was so angry with his son that he severed his relation with Ashwin. "Sheela went away to Poona and started teaching in a college there. Years passed. Tikekar after retirement settled in a house in Urad. He did not have the courage to go to Poona and face Sheela or their relatives. Ashwin

had once sent a photo of his family, but Tikekar had torn it into pieces. Once Tikekar saw Ahilyabai, trying to rejoin those pieces and had said to her, "Bai, you want to eat out of your daughter-in-law's hands? Then come, I'll get you passport, but in my house I do not want even a trace of their identity" (P.59). A little while after this event, Ahilyabai died. Hence Tikekar became lonely in spite of his money, bungalow, servants, a son and two daughters-in-law. After the death of Ahilyabai, Sheela returned to Urad to take care of her father-in-law. "She had thought that this way his agony would be reduced and her loneliness too would become bearable – but the worlds of two lonely persons are actually even more painful" (P.59). Both of them suffered a void in their life. Now that both Tikekar and his daughter-in-law have been frustrated in different ways – especially because of Ashwin's betrayal of Hindu family values, — they have become very philosophical and read and sing the hymns from *Jnaneshwari*, which highlight the ultimate loneliness of man, the ephemerality of life and the unpredictability of death. When Aalok goes to their house he notices an inexplicable void on their faces. Sheela sings, "I saw my death before my eyes. I feel I am a stranger in this world" (P.60). Sheela sheds tears silently while singing the song whereas Tikekar listens with closed eyes and quivering lips. Tikekar tells Aalok how he could recite the whole of *Jnaneshwari* in the past but now he can only recite a few, which deal with the motif of death, "O Pandav, one should leave the mortal frame like a covered candle flame unknowingly extinguished" (P.60). It is quite obvious that frustration makes men and women philosophical and religious and old age intensifies their consciousness of death. Aalok becomes aware of this phenomenon when he observes Tikekar and Sheela. "Aalok felt that only those people, who can see their own selves reduced and face death boldly could behave and live like strangers when the real end comes. Not only in the village of Urad but in this house two people lived together, each witnessing the other's death, unable to know from which direction death would approach, yet

constantly listening for its footsteps" (P.60). Aalok has not only heard a theoretical observation about the unpredictability of death in *Jnaneshwari* but also seen two persons actually waiting for their deaths. Thus Aalok's consciousness is frequently haunted by the theme of death either as a retrospective or as a prospective reference or as an actual marching towards it. All the people that he has met in Urad have had a close experience of death either as a memory or as fear or as a metaphorical endurance of it. There seems to be an alignment between Aalok's philosophical melancholy and the theme of death that he encounters in the society of Urad.

One of the ironies of the novel is that the experience of love and the knowledge of death are simultaneously had by Aalok. Although he loves Manjari, he cannot marry her on account of the difference between their family backgrounds and standards of happiness. Although he has left Manjari and come to Urad to have some peace of mind *maya* chases him in the guise of Christine. He has almost fallen in love with Christine although he has no courage to confess it to himself initially. Confusion creates restlessness in Aalok. The whole night his mind agitates. He tells Christine that he would leave the village the next morning and that she should keep his bill ready. But Christine does not want to be present in the Boarding House when Aalok would be leaving. She, therefore, leaves a chit with the hotel boy Shankar to be handed over to Aalok the next morning. She goes to Daman to confess his sins before Father Velant. When Aalok gets ready to leave the Boarding House in the morning Shankar comes and gives him a letter from Christine instead of a bill. He goes inside the room and reads the letter, which speaks of her deep love for him:

Aalok. Does everything have to be paid in rupees? The whole night I tried to settle your accounts in rupees for the period that you have stayed here. I have failed and I am sorry, I think you will have to pardon me.

These few days that you have stayed here have been made sorrowful by me. You came here to find a new life, instead, I feel, you have been crushed into an atmosphere of death I know, I am not totally responsible for that, but whatever little I contributed, I have to ask your forgiveness.

I want something more from you than a mere bill. Please forget everything that I told you on that fateful night. It was not the whole truth. It might have been true momentarily but then, when you consider the whole situation, the untruthfulness of those words stands out very obviously. It would be better if you could forget that moment. You have obliged me with many favours, please do one more; I would be much indebted to you for it.

Do you have enough money to pay my bill? If you do not, please leave without trying to pay me...

Yours

Christine

Aalok is simply stunned by the letter and does not know what to do. After enquiring Shankar he learns that Christine has gone to Daman.

After rushing to Daman, Christine happens to meet Dr. Meherwan, who appreciates Aalok's interest in her. He remembers Aalok's words, "This Christine is a wonderful lady. I would like to somehow remove the sadness on her face" (P.68). He tells her further, "Christine, because we are so close to you I can take the liberty and venture to say that perhaps he was in love with you!" (P.68) Christine feels embarrassed at the Doctor's words as they contain an element of hidden truth.

Then Christine goes to the church and listens to Father Velant's sermon about Christ's suffering and compassion. After the sermon is over she confesses her sins before the Reverend Father, "I confess. Bless me Father for I have sinned... Father. I ... I bared my body to a stranger... a person whom I did not know... Father, one night when I was sitting with him, his innocence appealed to me. I wanted to share my sorrow with someone and lessen the pain. I was unable to do so for so many years! At that time, for a second, in a weak moment, I showed my body... Father, perhaps I love that stranger... it is just that in my heart I have given him some place...some status... Father... I like the way he talks and the emotions that he evokes in me. I do not know whether it could be called love or not..." (P.70-71). In the course of her confession she clarifies that she no longer loves her husband, who has abandoned her for the last eight years. Finally she asks him, "Father, can I marry him?" (P.71) Although Christine has not meant to ask this question, it has slipped out of her tongue Freudianly. The Father advises her, "Child, you are a married woman, and a Christian woman is always faithful to her husband. Such thoughts can pollute the mind" (P.71). Again Christine confesses honestly, "Father, I am unable to stop thinking about that man. When I was praying just now near the altar, instead of the face of Jesus I saw the face of that man, carrying the cross" (P.71). Finally he asks her to be a good Christian wife and not think of marrying Aalok, who is not a Christian. He tells her, "The road to happiness can be a sinful one; but the road to unhappiness is never sinful" (P.72). He clearly implores her to take the path of unhappiness.

Christine returns to Urad. Father Velant's recommendation of the path of unhappiness seems to be forced upon her by the circumstances of her life. While she is about to come out of the church, she learns that Shankar has sent a message that Aalok is bitten by a snake in the sea. When Aalok had gone to the beach and bathing there something fatal had happened to him. "This time the tidal

wave rushed and coiled about his ankle but did not release him. He stopped for a while and waited. He then tried to lift his leg and with an effort did so. He saw a long, thick snake coiled tightly about his leg. Aalok, using all his strength, put his leg once again into the water; the heaviness about his leg remained. He was stupefied. He did not know what he should do. The pressure on his leg was increasing and he screamed out in intolerable, excruciating pain. The pressure then lessened but by then he had fallen unconscious" (P.64). Then he has an experience of delirium, in which he sees himself as the sole actor on the stage while the whole world has turned into an audience.

When Aalok is brought back to his room in the Boarding House, he is surrounded by a dozen people including Chhanalal and Shankar. Chhanalal has sent word to Dr. Meherwan, but he knows that half a day would be wasted before the arrival of the doctor. Meanwhile he has sent for a snake charmer, who could give some emergency treatment. The snake charmer comes there, burns the incense, chants the charms and invokes the snake-god. He describes the snakebite as "the gift from the water deity" (P.2). He tells Aalok, "Don't say poison, Babu, it is not poison, it is the gift of the deity. This deity, the king of water, stays at the bottom of the sea in a white cave made up of seashells, and hardly ever emerges to give his blessings! With those blessings, even if life ends, death will be a worthy reward... Babu, is life so dear? You have gifted a life of forty-eight hours...what will happen to me? My life can end even the next moment. Only a lucky person has such a long life!" (P.3)

The snake charmer's words, "You have been gifted a life of forty-eight hours, Babu," sink deep into his consciousness just as the snake poison penetrates his veins. He thinks he would be able to see only one more sunrise. Chhanalal asks Aalok to give his residential address so that he may send a telegram. He also points out the inalienability and inevitability of death and opines "Nothing

but truth can prevail in the vicinity of death..." (P.78). When Dr. Meherwan comes and examines Aalok's condition he becomes serious and says that the infection is very marked. Aalok asks him, "Doctor, like the snake charmer, do you also feel I am a guest for forty-eight hours?" (P.81) Dr. Meherwan gives him four injections at an interval of every hour and consoles him. Dr. Meherwan and Chhanalal go away to attend to their daily duties. Now Christine sits watching and consoling Aalok. Though both of them have fallen in love with each other, neither has expressed it directly so far. Christine has achieved a sort of purgation by confessing her so-called sin before Father Velant. But Aalok has not expressed it so far perhaps because of his controlled nature and the restrictions imposed upon him by his culture. But the vicinity of death forces him to 'know himself' by removing his mask and to communicate his love to the lady i.e. Christine directly and boldly. It has also intensified the brief life that remains for him. "Christine, today I am able to see reality... Perhaps the last twenty-four hours of my life have begun. I want to remove that mask of innocence that I have been wearing... Christine, it is in these few hours that I have really lived, though I have existed until now masking my real face. Whenever I have shown a lack of attachment or affection in reality, it actually was the opposite - I wanted to be with you, but masked it with a show of indifference" (P.84). Obviously Aalok has suggested that he is in love with her. But Christine points out the difference between a man's love and a woman's. "You are a man, Aalok and for most men love means physical desire. I am a woman and have loved - loved my mother, my husband, my God, perhaps you too in an unconscious moment, and I have occasionally loved my unborn children... and without knowing all these different facets I love, what sense do all your words make?" (P.84)

Christine tries to pacify Aalok by giving him milk and keeping a watch over him all night. But Aalok tells her, "I can observe the progress of my death objectively. My last breath will just fade away..."

(P.87). He remembers the *Jnaneshwari* of Tikekar, "This town may head anywhere, but he was heading towards his end like the flickering candlelight hidden under the vessel. When someone suddenly flung the vessel open, Aalok would not be there anymore!" (P.85) When Aalok is nearing his death he has a new awareness about his self and the others. He realizes that he has been wearing a mask, that there is a wide gap between the truth and the mask and that removing one mask involves donning another and that his playing the game was not his but perhaps someone else's. He has started looking at life in a new perspective. Being sure of his death, he wants to express his sense of gratitude to Christine, "In this birth, I will never be able to repay you for the way you have attended to me and taken care of these past few hours. But the touch of your cold hand on my feverish head has put me in another world. Christine, I have experienced a woman's touch at different times, but the most calming is yours. There is no excitement in your touch; there was a prayer. With that touch I felt a peace settle on me and not excitement" (P.87-88). Then he takes a promise from Christine and makes his last request to her, "Christine, if I die... And if my eyes remain open, then... Then you close them with the touch of that white mark on your chest—perhaps I may be able to pull out the pain that is in your heart and absorb it—along with my soul that is trying to leave my body" (P.89). Naturally Aalok's words are deeply touching. "Christine was silent during all these moments. She was determined not to break down in front of Aalok and to listen calmly to all that he said. She could see the pain in which Aalok said these words. But Aalok's request unnerved her. Was it a confession of love? Or was it only a part of his compassion?" (P.89) Death, which is approaching fast towards him, has expedited his discovery of true love, which is not physical but transcendental and the conversion of his passion into compassion. Thus death has paved the way for his self-realization. "What thou lovest well is thy true heritage," says Ezra Pound. Aalok's love for Christine is his heritage.

Henceforth, thus, highlights the motifs of love and death in life. The consciousness of death intensifies the sense of life and elevates love from the physical to the transcendental level. The novel is philosophical in its general tone. As far as the reflective narration and the protagonist's philosophical brooding are concerned, the novel resembles Raja Rao's *Serpent and the Rope*. But the atmosphere of *Henceforth* is somber and pessimistic. It makes the reader think deeply about the mystery, unpredictability and ephemerality of human life and the nearness of death. There is a strange coincidence of Aalok's knowledge of death in the families of a variety of people and his actual inching towards death.

Although the novel deals with the characters and events of Gujarati area, it does not have a rich texture of local colour and flavour. The stress seems to be more on universal aspect of human life than on ethnic specificity. The novel ending with a question mark is quite in line with the postmodernist fictional tradition. It is undoubtedly a significant addition to the realm of Indian fiction in English translation.

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LANGUAGE AND MEANING IN INDIAN POETICS

Haladhar Panda

Indian Poetics, like other branches of knowledge, is sometimes said to have its Vedic Origin as the Vedic poets seemed to have some knowledge of the nature of poetic language because of the frequent use of figures of speech in their compositions. It is doubtful, however, to conclude on the basis of such creative use of figures of speech that the Vedic poets held a consciously formulated theory of poetry. Further, while ideas regarding different sciences are found in Vedic literature, there is no mention of comparable ideas on poetics anywhere. On the other hand, the pre-history of Indian Poetics may very well be traced to the speculation of the grammarians and linguists more than eight centuries prior to the first known theorist, Bharata. Thus, Yaska, one of the oldest linguists and the author of *The Nirukta*, analyses the peculiarities of poetic language in contrast to the ordinary, everyday variety, and comments extensively on the use of comparison in poetic figures. Grammarians like Panini, Patanjali, Katyayana and Bhartrhari have made substantial contributions to the development of poetic theory. S. K. De, therefore, observes :

.... it is clear that the theoretical background of the discipline was, to some extent, founded on the philosophical speculations on linguistics, so that Grammar, one of the oldest and soundest sciences of India, was the god-father and helped it towards ready acceptance (*History of Sanskrit Poetics I. 7-8*).

This intimate association between Poetics and linguistic thought has led the theorists to view poetry as primarily a Verbal construct, an artistic design of language and meaning. Their enquiry is, therefore, directed to identify and describe the distinctive features of this verbal design, its poeticity/literariness – what makes a text of language poetic / literary. Indian poetics is, thus, very unlike certain Western theories – the Mimetic, the Expressive, and the Pragmatic – but akin to the twentieth Century Objective Poetics in terms of the typology devised by M. H. Abrams. As in this later poetics, the focus of the Indian theory is not on the world or the writer as the cause of poetry, or on the reader as the receiver of its effect, but on the poetic text itself, the specific structure and organisation of its language and meaning. Discussions of the poet's imagination or the reader's sensibility are sometimes made not in recognition of the same as independent entity but in so far as it can clarify the features of the poetic text under study.

The Indian theorists hold the view that poetry as a linguistic construct makes a special use of ordinary language unlike the theorists of 'poetic diction' of the eighteenth century. They, therefore, set up an opposition between poetic and non-poetic discourse and assert that the former is uniquely a deviation from the latter. Bhatta Nayaka, author of the lost treatise *Hrdaya Darpana*, as quoted by Abhinavagupta, observes that *Sabda* (forms of language) alone is all- important in the scriptures whereas *Artha* (meaning) is so in narrative and chronicles; but it is the *Vyapara* (creative activity) with both language and meaning together that distinguishes poetry (*Dhvanyaloka Locana* 89). Abhinavagupta asserts that the scriptures issue commands and the histories provide information; but the unique character of poetic work is that it excites delight since the language of poetry in neither informative nor hortatory but expressive and acts out its own meaning. Hence, in reading poetry one does not stop with the sentences and their meanings but their comprehension engenders further an understanding that is a direct perception in the mind (*Abhinavabharati* 279).

Bhatta Nayaka's theory of poetic activity with language and Abhinavagupta's doctrine of the perceptibility of poetic mode of expression are aspects of the uniqueness of poetic discourse accepted by the Indian theorists in general. Nayaka postulates two complementary activities of poetic language, *Bhavakatva* and *Bhojakatva*, in addition to the normal linguistic function of denotation. These two special powers of poetic language operate to inhibit the designatory function of language, driving a wedge between the verbal symbol and its referents; and thus, releasing language from its referential meaning, they restore to it the corporeality of a medium and actualize the same in reader's experience. Denotation serves merely to designate the *Vibhava*, etc. of the poetic situation, but *Bhavakatva* snaps the bond that ties persons and feelings to their specific, personal contexts. Thus, 'distanced' from their conventional contexts, the emotions and their objective correlatives are transpersonalised and fictionalised. The corporeality of language, its sensuous fullness, converts the transpersonalised emotions and their objective correlatives into the 'concrete universals' of the poetry, existing only as objects of reader's contemplation. The other power of poetic language, *Bhojakatva*, on the other hand, actualizes these concrete universals in the reader's experience through a specific attitude of contemplation evoked by it.

The Indian theorists invariably view the poetic work in anthropomorphic terms as having a body constituted by language and meaning; and a soul, the animating principle of this body, theorised in a variety of ways. The body-soul metaphor serves to highlight the distinctive character of poetic discourse in contrast to the non-poetic. In the latter, the relation between language and meaning is simply conventional and hence separable : the same meaning may be transferred hence separable : the same meaning may be transferred to another set of expressions. But, the chief character of poetic discourse is, however, not referential and hence not conventional : it is intra-referential and integrative. This

unconventional and integrative function of language in poetry creates a dynamic poetic context which fuses expression and meaning, form and content of the poetic text. This concept of poetic organicism, the unique union of language and meaning (*Sahitya*), is designated by the theorists as union between two friends, or two brothers, or in the picturesque conception of Kalidasa, the foremost Sanskrit poet, as the divine union between Parvati and Parameshvara. This concept of poetic organicism along with the principle of deviant language are the corner - stones of the Indian theory of poetic discourse.

In discussing the deviant language of poetry, the theorists isolate a single feature like characteristic (*lakshana*), quality (*Guna*), trope of figure (*Alamkara*), style (*Riti*) suggestion (*Dhvani*) and oblique expression (*Vakrokti*) and hold the same as the *differentia specifica* of poetic language. The Indian procedure is analogous to that of some modern Western theorists who view poetic language as characterised by ambiguity, irony, defamiliarisation, foregrounding, *différance* and the like. Bharata, the earliest known theorist, discusses dramatic poetry in his *Natyasastra* and brings in the concept of 'characteristic' as its distinctive feature while quality and figure contribute to the beauty of poetic language. Bharata offers no clear definition of the thirty six characteristics with the result that they have given rise to varied interpretations. Most of these characteristics involve an ambiguity of speech and analysis of the same leads to admiration of the dramatist's skill in creating a lively interest in the story and the characters presented by him through a clever exploitation of the linguistic and other resources of theatrical performance. Hence, Abhinavagupta observes in his commentary on Bharata's treatise that the Characteristics are broadly related to the activity of creative imagination in both aspects of vision and expression and serve to reveal the distinctive theme of drama. Thus interpreted by Abhinavagupta, the characteristic is held to be the speciality of deviant language of poetry (*Abhinavabharati* 405). Quality on the other hand, relates, according to Bharata, to the

arrangement of words and syllables, their harmony and sound values, and the adequacy of the expression to the particular emotion that is sought to be evoked. Bharata has a list of only four figures and they are said to make both language and meaning picturesque. Although the theorist's treatment of poetic language is rather sketchy, his formulations have been influential in the later development of poetics.

Bhamaha, who is regarded as the first theorist of poetics proper, looks upon poetry as a fine art and criticism as a science, a specialised study of the same. He is credited to be the father of the figurative school of Indian Poetics, the *Alamkara* school. The title of his treatise, *Kavyalamkara*, shows that his central concern is with the study of figurative language of poetry which, for him, is its distinctive feature. His simple definition of poetry as the union of language and meaning is rather misleading because it does not specify the exact nature of such union, or more accurately, its speciality that differentiates the poetic union from the togetherness of language and meaning in ordinary discourse. However, one can well gather his ideas on the subject from his theory of figures or tropes to which he has given an extensive treatment. Bhamaha suggests that both the language and meaning need to be ornamented. He opines that however handsome a lady may be, she will fail to appear beautiful unless she is adorned by ornaments. Just as decoration lends charm to a lady's face, ornamentation of language bestows beauty on ordinary expression and transforms it into poetic (*Kavyalamkara*, I., 13). Thus his *alamkara* is not just poetic figures but the beautifying principle informing poetic discourse which makes the same charming and appealing. This wider denotation of the term constitutes for Bhamaha the speciality of poetry as discourse.

In analysing the general nature of the poetic figures, Bhamaha observes that they are characterised by an obliqueness or strikingness of expression termed *Vakrokti*. According to him, "By mere verbal expression, beauty in speech is not achieved and that type of expression called oblique is the factor that adorns speech"

(*Kavyalamkara* II.85). The poet, according to the theorist, is a person who speaks obliquely and hence, "All types of poetry - whether it be long narrative, drama, or single verse - must possess this feature of oblique speech" (*Kavyalamkara* I. 30). Bhamaha sets up a contrast between the oblique and deviant poetic discourse and the ordinary prosaic expression which is mere information (*varta*). The latter being devoid of the element of strikingness and surprise of poetic discourse is simply banal. So he asks: "The sun has set; the moon shines; the birds are returning to their nests". What sort of poetry is this? One calls this mere information" (*Ibid.* II. 87). The deviance of poetic discourse is achieved by this principle of oblique expression, but Bhamaha cautions that the poet should not throw aside grammatical correctness and logical coherence in the name of such deviance because outlandish grammar and illogicality would be confusing and lack the necessary acceptability to be appealing to the reader.

Dandin, the contemporary and rival of Bhamaha, differs from the latter in his general theoretical position but agrees with him that poetic expression is characterised by deviation from ordinary language. Dandin gives a very wide signification to the term, *alamkara*, and states that any factor that produces beauty in poetry should be called so (*Kavyadarsa*, II.1). Unlike Bhamaha, he considers oblique expression as only one type of poetic discourse and contrasts it with naturalistic expression (*Svabhavakti*). Further, *Vakrokti* for him, is not so much an oblique but a hyperbolic turn of expression (*Atisayokti*) which is not simple exaggeration (*Atyukti*) but signifies an experience of the world transcending the ordinary, everyday type, an experience that came to be designated by the later theorists as non-ordinary (*Alaukika*). The non-oblique, naturalistic expression which is unmarked by its use of ordinary, everyday language is, however, deviant in its character like the oblique expression. Its deviance consists in presenting the forms of different objects of the world in their diverse aspects in such a manner that it seems as if the objects are before one's own eyes (*Ibid.* II.8). Such concrete

embodiment of objects in language transforms the ordinary linguistic expression of *Svabhavokti* into poetic discourse.

The theory of style (*Riti*) including the concept of poetic qualities (*Guna*) is formalistic in its approach like the theory of figurative expression. Vamana, its propounder, happens to be the first theorist who makes an explicit formulation of the 'soul' of poetry, and observes :

Style is the soul of poetry style is a special arrangement of verbal forms permeated by particular poetic qualities (*Kavyalamkarasutra*, I. ii. 6-8).

The statement that style is a special arrangement of verbal forms, does not, by itself, give any clear idea of the concept since there would be no end to the ways in which linguistic forms could be arranged ; and further, the ordinary arrangement of such forms cannot aspire to the condition of poetic discourse. Hence, the need for a special and deviant arrangement guided by the presence of poetic qualities which are said to be both of sound and meaning and produced by combining phonemes, lexemes, and the syntactic units of language. Vamana classifies styles into three types - *Vaidarbhi*, *Gaudi*, and *Pancali* - both in terms of the poetic qualities present in those and the geographical regions where they were most used.

The concept of style is, however, not a new one in poetic theory; Bhamaha was aware of the styles but insisted that they should have the obliqueness of expression in order to be acceptable in poetry. Dandin, his contemporary, may very well be credited to be the first theorist of style and recognises two style types, *Vaidarbhi* and *Gaudi*. His term for style is *Marga* and *Prana* for the poetic quality in forming a style. Dandin views poetic qualities to be more important than the figures since they directly contribute to the poetic appeal of particular styles unlike the figures which could be indiscriminately employed in all styles. Unlike Vamana, he has no preference for any one style because differences between styles are so subtle that all attempts to categorize them are bound to fail. So he comments :

A great difference exists between the respective sweetness of sugar cane, milk, and jaggery. But even the Goddess of speech is incapable of explaining this difference (*Kavyadarsa*, I. 102).

Because style is a variable element in poetry and appears as numerous as the poets and their works, Dandin chose to restrict his attention only to the two extremities - *Vaidarbhi* and *Gaudi* - in a cline of styles and observes that each poet has his own individual style.

Vamana seems not to have drawn the right lesson from Dandin's cautious approach and that results in the weakness of his theoretical position. But his purpose is laudable enough in so far as he is in quest after an inclusive principle of poetic discourse that should go beyond mere figures and styles, the visible body of the poetic work, and be its life-breath, the 'soul'. It leads him to formulate the concept of poetic quality in greater details than Bhamaha in whose treatise it is merely touched on. In Dandin's system, the poetic quality is not distinguished from the figure and both are said to be the attributes of poetic discourse contributing to its beauty and charm. Vamana, however, clearly distinguishes between the two and observes that while the qualities have the distinctive function of producing beauty in poetic discourse, the figures merely enhance such beauty already conferred by the qualities. Hence, poetic figures are rather adventitious and optional while the poetic qualities are essential and indispensable. As stated earlier, Bharata is the first theorist who formulated ten such qualities and the later theorists more or less accepted the same with some variation in their features, Vamana distinguishes between his three styles in respect of the effect created by the qualities on the style types. Thus, *Vaidarbhi* is said to be characterised by a combination of all the qualities whereas the *Gaudi* by energy and brightness and *Pancali* by sweetness and delicacy. Vamana, however, departs from the position of his predecessors by observing that stylistic features are not limited to the sound effects

generated by the structuring of verbal forms but also extend to the meaning of the forms. As a result, he has a scheme of twenty poetic qualities, ten each for sound and meaning and each appearing under the two heads. Such a rigid scheme of classification makes Vamana's theory rather far-fetched and artificial.

Anandavardhana, the theorist of *Dhvani*, considers the speciality of poetic discourse from an entirely new stand point. His predecessors had formulated such speciality on the basis of the normal expressive power of language. For Ananda, however, the conventional significative power of language cannot account for the deviance of poetic language since the same power is used in ordinary discourse. Hence, Ananda posits that poetic expression must tap some deeper power of language not ordinarily resorted to in everyday discourse; and that this extraordinary power must not be accessible to all alike as that would affect its uniqueness in turning it to just one aspect of the conventional signification of language. This insight leads him to make a departure from the positions of the earlier theorists as their formulations were based on the conventional, significative function of language. Ananda terms this unique power responsible for the speciality of poetic discourse suggestion (*Dhvani*) and asserts the same as the soul of the poetry (*Dhvanyaloka* I. 1).

Dhvani ordinarily means sound, but as meta language of poetics, it refers to several related aspects of poetry : the process of suggestion; its product; and the poem where the suggested is dominant. The usual meaning of suggestion as "an indirect idea or sense" does not bring out the richness of the critical term and it is wrongly assumed to refer to the tertiary / super numerary meaning of expression beyond the primary, denotative; and the secondary, metaphoric ones. It is, on the other hand, what is evoked by these primary and secondary meanings of the poetic text: it is, thus, meaningfulness beyond the usual meanings. This poetic signified is a product of the power of resonance or revelation inherent in language and discovered by the right reader of poetry (*Sahrdaya*). Ananda

observes that the expressed and the suggested work together; but whereas the former is directly related to the linguistic signs; the latter's relation is indirect since it is evoked by the signs being revealed by a sudden leap from the expressed without any mediacy between the two. In view of such a sudden flash revealing the expressed and lack of mediacy between itself and the expressed, the suggested cannot be called a logical inference from the expressed. On the other hand, the suggested can not be said to be the implication of the expressed since there is no natural/logical order of succession between the two. The suggested and the expressed go together as one unit and the latter cannot be dispensed with while the former is being experienced. Ananda, therefore, observes that the right condition for the suggested to operate is when the expressed willingly subordinates itself to the suggested intended by the poet.

The suggested is categorised into three types: fact, idea or event (*vastu*) ; trope or poetic figure (*alamkara*); and emotion or mood (*rasa*). The first two are usually presented in poetry discursively, but when they undergo the *dhvani* - process, they are not expressed directly and achieve extraordinary charm and effectiveness. On the other hand, the third variety cannot be stated; it can only be suggested. The peculiarity of the suggested emotion is that it cannot be dissociated from the sensuous details in the poem which uniquely determine its evocation. In the absence of the suggestors, the emotion can at best be named but not presented poetically and, thus, loses its charm and effectiveness. Thus, the expressed; the suggested idea; and the suggested figure of speech belong to the conventional, significative level of language unlike the suggested emotion. Hence, Ananda concludes that it is the suggested emotion (*rasadhvani*) that is the 'soul' of poetry.

Ananda identifies the suggestors as phoneme; morpheme; lexeme; sentence; structure and arrangement of linguistic units; and the entire text. Thus, the suggestors belong to the two different levels of the literary semiotic system; the first or the lower level consisting

of items in the linguistic system as phoneme, morpheme, lexeme and sentence; the second level comprising the signifieds of the items of the first level which work as signifiers at this higher level and are identified as imagery, plot, character, setting, atmosphere and the like. The role of the suggestor is to throw light on that which is evoked while revealing its own form. The centrality of suggestion in Anandavardhana's theory of poetics leads him to revalue his predecessors' concepts of poetic figure and style as distinctive features of poetic discourse. He recognised that even the highest form of poetry with the suggested as dominant cannot afford to dispense with these features; but as beautifiers of expression they belong to the body of the poetic work. It is only when they partake of suggestion they can be considered as intrinsic to poetic discourse. Poetic quality is however, a factor that pertains to emotive meaning (*rasa*) and is, therefore, directly connected to the 'soul' and intrinsic to the poetic expression. Such reinterpretation of poetic quality meant that Ananda should give up the traditional scheme of their number as ten or twenty and admit only three—sweetness, strength, and clarity - which get associated with the psychological states of the reader while experiencing the emotive meaning through suggestion.

Kuntaka, the theorist of *Vakrokti*, reacted against the *Dhvani* theorists for their restrictive view of poetry as the suggested emotive meaning. He was critical of their artificial division of poetic expression into statement and suggestion thereby splitting the essential unity and continuity of poetic meaning. Hence, he elaborates a theory that is a synthesis of all the earlier concepts - poetic figure, style, quality, suggestion, and emotive meaning - worked with marked individuality. What distinguishes poetic expression is its wonder - provoking power and suggestion alone cannot be credited with creating this poetic wonder (*viciti*). The forms of imaginative expression produced by the poetic activity with language and meaning, are indeed infinite. There is no element in poetry, beginning from the smallest phoneme to the largest text, which would fail to

provoke this poetic wonder and cause enjoyment and admiration of the reader. Hence, he considers the poetic figures, style, poetic qualities as well as suggestion to be different phases of that imaginative expression which Kuntaka designates as *Vakrokti*. And emotive meaning is said to be at the root of all these phases with the principle of harmony or appropriateness relating each phase to it. *Vakrokti* is said to be a certain striking deviation from the ordinary mode of expression; Kuntaka owes much to Bhamaha and Dandin in formulating his ideas on it. For him, however, no mere deviation from ordinary speech results in poetry unless it delights the connoisseurs who are responsive to the beauty of poetic discourse. This extraordinary turn given to expression is effected by the skill of the poet through an act of imagination. (*Vakroktijivita*, I. gloss on 10). Kuntaka views *Vakrokti* as the underlying principle of all poetry and asserts that it is the life-breath animating the latter.

Kuntaka insists that the poet must ensure proper union of language and meaning. If there is no proper expression, the meaning sought to be conveyed is as good as dead; and if the expression signifies meaning not according to the intention of the poet and is, therefore, not proper to the occasion, it is a disease of speech. Even in ordinary discourse, lack of the proper togetherness of expression and meaning results in lifeless and ineffective speech. As a thoroughgoing organicist, Kuntaka asserts that poetic discourse must have an organic union of expression and meaning. The charm of poetic organicism proceeds from the mutual competition of expression and meaning to surpass each other in beauty and charm. The mutuality of such tension, however, resolves into an equilibrium of complementary rivalries. In the process, no one gets the better of the other or is made subservient to it; the whole turns out to be a 'complete consort' of expression and meaning, wonder - provoking and charming all through (*Vakroktijivita* gloss on 17).

Kuntaka postulates the presence of deviant expression (*Vakrokti*) at six levels of poetic discourse : phoneme; morpheme;

lexeme; sentence; section of a text; and the whole text. Each of these micro-linguistic and macro-linguistic structures may be transformed by the poet's creative activity into an element of beauty and wonder. Phonemic deviance or obliqueness includes not only the use of rhyme and alliteration but also the more subtle sound effects of assonance and consonance. Morphemic variety plays with the grammatical construction of parts of speech. Thus, an inanimate noun may be given the feature of agency by attaching to it a proper inflectional morpheme, and thereby giving rise to personification. The lexical is related to the choice of words with due regard to connotations of meaning based on synonymy and usage. A word may be used, for example, in its secondary sense applied to an object with which it is not directly associated in reference, thus, causing transference of meaning, both metonymic and metaphoric. Kuntaka places the poetic figures at the sentence level and reduces the number of those to eighteen figures of meaning. He insists that the figurative sense of these tropes must be achieved by an exercise of poetic creativity and not by mere cleverness and ingenuity. He allows for possibilities of deviance to be limitless at this level since the figures may be mixed according to the genius of a poet.

The skilful disposition of the parts of a poetic text to increase its charm, is obliqueness or deviance of the section of text. The poet may change the details in the source story; rearrange those differently; or introduce invented episodes. He may resort to dramatic irony, suspense, or surprise to make the development of action more interesting. He may introduce new details to make the characterisation consistent with his intention. As to the poetic text as a whole, deviance is achieved by skilful combination of all the five varieties. The text may be designed to present a great hero for captivating the hearts of the readers. It may have moral and allegorical meanings and seek to instruct in virtue and practical affairs. The emotive meaning of the source story may be changed in favour of introducing a different one. In fact, the genius of the poet may act in

innumerable ways and all of those cannot be anticipated and enumerated by the critic. Kuntaka's *Vakrokti* is, thus, coeval with any element of poetic discourse that causes beauty and charm and provokes wonder of the reader. The great significance given to the poet's creative activity in designing poetic discourse distinguishes Kuntaka's theory from all other Indian theories.

The meaning of poetic discourse is generally said to have two aspects: the human experience of emotions, attitudes and ideas; and the represented objects, persons and events that actualise such experience. The Indian theorists distinguish between these two aspects as *Bhava* and *Vibhava* respectively. In discussing the etymology of *Bhava*, Bharata makes it clear that whereas emotion in actual life exists or happens, the same is always brought into being in dramatic or poetic discourse as its meaning. Bharata's conception of *Bhava* is wide enough to include both emotive experience as well as those represented elements of the poetic work. Later theorists, however, narrowed the denotation of the term to one type of emotion, the basic or durable (*sthayi*). The durable emotions are a set of instinctual propensities, both inherited and acquired, but lying embedded in the individual's consciousness. Being recurrent or permanent and universal, these emotions can be aroused by appropriate situations. Hence, they cannot be directly expressed in poetry and need to be represented in the poetic situation for evocation.

The poet depicts an emotion by describing certain characteristics of human beings acting in certain situations. The representation aspects are not, however, actual people, objects or events but de-contextualised from their time and place and 'distanced' by the process of transpersonalisation (*Sadharani Karana*). Similarly, the emotion is not a personal one, but transpersonalised and available to all readers alike; it is not so much an actual emotion but a 'virtual' one brought into being in poetic discourse through skilful presentation. The emotion is, thus, not expressed by its objective

correlatives, it is rather their resonance; nor are the latter referential signs of the emotion but rather its evocative symbols. Anandavardhana first appropriated Bharata's theory of *Rasa* for poetics, and observes; "Where *rasa*, in its various forms, is not the subject matter of discourse there is no manner of poetry possible (*Dhvanyaloka*, III gloss on 43). Abhinavagupta developed the doctrine further in his commentaries on the treatises of Bharata and Ananda; the later theorists accepted their view that communication of emotive meaning is the primary purpose of poetic discourse.

Bharata formulates the theory in the famous *Rasa Sutra* in his *Natyasastra* and states : "Emotions in poetry come to be expressed through the conjunction of their causes and effects, and other ancillary feelings that accompany the emotions" (*Natyasastra*, VI gloss on 31). The causes of a basic emotion are what generate it and make it known ; they are termed as *Vibhava* and viewed in two different aspects : the object of emotion (*alambana*) which may be a person, thing, scene, or thought that brings into being the emotion in an individual; and secondly, the circumstantial factors constituting the situation that excite the emotion (*uddipana*). The effects of the emotion (*anubhava*) are behavioural responses by the individual undergoing the emotion, his words, actions and gestures. The ancillary emotions (*vyabhicari* or *sancari*) are transient in nature, but being associated with the basic they reinforce and develop it into an enduring one. Emotions, objects, and expressions are not bound to one another in any fixed or invariable relation and so, it is not possible for any one of the same to represent alone the desired emotion. Hence, it is necessary that there should be an appropriate conjunction (*samyaga*) of all the factors in order to evoke the emotive meaning of poetic discourse.

Bharata enumerates forty one *bhavas* of which eight are the basic or durable ones and the rest thirty three transient or ancillary feelings. The latter are said to be incapable of existing by themselves and become meaningful only when they are associated with one or

more basic emotions. On the other hand, the basic emotions rarely appear in their pure form and usually assimilate the ancillary ones with which they have affinity. Hence, Bharata observes : "Rasa - manifestation is effected through the conjunction of different *bhavas* (Natyasastra, VI gloss on 31). Even in short lyrics where one or two emotional strains may be developed unlike what is done in longer compositions, the unexpressed factors relevant to the emotive situation are derived by the reader through the process of implication. In the longer compositions, however, different basic emotions may be combined to create an emotive complex in which one of the basic emotions is the major and dominant and the others are minor and subsidiary. The principle governing all such combinations of basic emotions is achievement of aesthetic unity, however disparate these constituent emotions may be. Thus, when the disparate emotions are treated as subordinate and together contribute to the development of the dominant one, the poetic discourse communicates an integral but complex emotive meaning.

The Indian theory of poetic discourse, with its peculiar modernity and comprehensiveness, has immense value for our time - a time of "Criticism in the wilderness" - when competing theories and doctrines vie with one another for informing the approach and methodology of critics in their study of actual literary works. It is true that the Indian theory apparently neglects the issue of contextual factors in the production of literature which, for example, the Marxist and the New Historicist theories consider the most important aspect of literary study. For the Indian theorist, however, the context provides only the materials for literary production, but such materials must have to be shaped into poetic discourse through the devices of expression available to the poet alone. Hence, the study of context is extraneous to an intrinsic study of literary texts in the view of Indian theorists.

Similarly, the valorization of the reader as is done, for example, in Subjective and Feminist Critical theories is ruled out by

the Indian theorist because those theories posit the reader as an individual who brings into reading his own personal prejudices and predilections and thus responding to the literary work in a subjective and eccentric manner. The Indian theory, on the other hand, insists on a reader who is transpersonalised, capable of transcending his ego, and immersing himself willingly in the poetic situation delineated in the text in order to respond to it as *Sahrdaya* in the same manner as the poet had done in the situation of his life. Again, the Indian theory is very much unlike those which characterise poetic discourse with irresolution, undecidability and lack of closure, and thereby justify a chaos of unending interpretations of the poetic text. But for the Indian theorist, notwithstanding the diversity of the elements of language and meaning in a poetic work, it is capable of providing unity of impression and thereby stabilising interpretation of the same. In view of the state of critical theory today, it is possible to develop a viable practice of the applied criticism basing on the Indian theory of poetic discourse. It is true that certain aspects of the theory may have to be modified because of "the whirligig of taste" that has resulted in the production of the Modernist and Post-Modernist texts so very different from the classical Sanskrit literary works which inspired the Indian theory of poetic discourse.

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ECO-CENTRIC VISION OF S.T. COLERIDGE
IN
THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

Binod Mishra

The term 'eco-criticism' which came to light in 1990s and attracted worldwide attention of readers and critics does not seem new if we peep at the Romantic age of English literature. The originators of this term believe that it refers to the study of natural environment in literary texts. Most of us would agree that even though the term is new and might bring new food for thought yet with some examples, realize that Romantic age could be read under the theories enunciated by the eco-critical critics. 'Return to Nature', being a famous slogan during those times heralded a deep and solemn interest in Nature and its objects.

Romanticism has been called a revolution in the sense that it enabled readers and critics to find a message in nature contrary to the new pace of progress and tendency to destroy it to pave the way for modernization. S.T. Coleridge, one of the prime leaders of Romantic age through his poems exhibits his benevolent attitude to Nature. Unlike his friend, Wordsworth, who believed 'Nature never did betray the heart that loved her', Coleridge focuses on the other side of nature. Nature may offer its bounties to mankind but it can also invite catastrophe in case we show any disregard to its entity.

The present paper is an attempt to show Coleridge's concern for nature. He makes us realize how nature can take its vengeance on mankind. The poet through *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* warns us not to forget our limitations and makes an appeal to respect the natural order to maintain ecological balance. The poem began

on an excursion in 1897. Planned as a joint venture with his friend William Wordsworth, it finally became Coleridge's alone because of their different imaginative sparks. While the origin of the poem can be traced to some travel books, the idea of 'mariner's killing the Albatross and that the tutelary spirits of those regions to take it upon themselves to avenge the crime', (Hough 59) was Wordsworth's suggestion.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a truly eco-critical study in the sense that it offers a story of the loss and regaining of man's science and conscience in the lap of nature and its objects. Nature can be studied in its true manifestation in its real form and its vagaries and auguries cannot be studied in modern day labs and coffee houses. The mariner's idiosyncratic behaviour and later his encounter with the inevitable facts of life as well as his recuperation symbolically hint at a greater reality which we, in our flesh and blood often ignore. Those who look at the poem only as a story of crime and punishment and rank it as a supernatural poem skip the fact that nature cannot be circumscribed only to have a surface reality. The narrative can be studied as Coleridge's intuitive approach to let the human world realize the state of persecuting horrors and enchanting beauties. C.M. Bowra observes the poet's prophetic vision when he says :

For him life had its dark and its bright sides : it's haunting responsibilities and ravishing moments of unsullied delight. He saw that the two were closely interwoven and that, if he were to speak with the full force of his genius, he must introduce both into poem (72).

The narrative is divided into seven parts and these parts represent the different stages of human life. The first part, which is entrenched in an atmosphere of joy and camaraderie, is a background of some evil likely to stall the sanguine mood. An overweening and bearded mariner went to tell his story suddenly stops a wedding guest. As the mariner opens his story, he becomes successful to

captivate the curiosity of the guest who gets interested but suddenly questions the fiend look of the mariner. The mariner wants to relieve himself by unburdening his heart loaded with the guilt. The atmosphere of cheer that helped the ship run with the good south wind is suddenly reduced to a gloomy one. We can find the blithe atmosphere and the usual order of Nature receive a sudden jolt when the mariner says; "With my cross bow / I shot the Albatross" (Part-I).

The second part depicts the mariner's narration of the consequences of the crime. Things take a different turn. The mariner and his fellow sailors are stuck in the midst of the sea and the atmosphere becomes frightening. The 'glorious' sun becomes 'bloody' and movement comes to halt. All around there prevails sullenness and some evil spirit seems to dog them. The mariner realizes these as the after effects of the bird's killing. The fellow sailors first laud the mariner saying it was good to kill the bird that brought fog and mist. But as Nature starts offering its malignity, they begin cursing the mariner. Considering him guilty and responsible for inviting this untoward situation, the shipmates tie the dead Albatross around the mariner's neck. This shows the innocent sailors sudden realization of the mariner's mischief. Their flexible opinions get reversed to see the inclemency of nature. The Ancient Mariner too starts feeling his act as hellish and feels degraded :

Ah well a day ! what evil looks
Had I from old and young !
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung (Part - II).

The mariner's travails seem interminable amid the atmosphere of fear. Everything appeared weary and all people on the ship had a tough time. Everyone's throat parched and they simply looked at each other in awe and wonder. The mariner suddenly saw something approaching far off in the sky. What seemed to be a ship, which could rescue and pull them out of their crisis, was nothing but a

hallucination. It was nothing but the skeleton of a ship, which appeared a spectre woman and her death mate. Everyone frightened with the sinister look of Life in death could find the stars fainting and darkness deepening. The fellow sailors died with curses in their eyes and the ancient mariner found himself besieged with agony on all sides. Nature seems to have deprived him of human company because he had killed the bird, which once had come to give mariners the company. We can find the ancient mariner's estrangement in the following lines :

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
 Alone on a wide wide sea
 And never a saint took pity on
 My soul in agony (Part-IV).

The Ancient mariner's alienation reminds us of Alexander Selkirk's isolation on an island where, though the monarch of all he saw and surveyed, yet longs for human company. Selkirk spent four years as a castaway on an uninhabited island; it is probable that his travails provided the inspiration for Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The following lines very much resemble the ancient mariner's loneliness :

Society friendship and love
 Divinely bestow'd upon man,
 O had I the wings of a dove
 How soon I would taste you again !
 My sorrows I then might assuage
 In the ways of religion and truth,
 Might learn from the wisdom of age,
 And be cheered by the sallies of youth.

(*The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk*)

Guilt ridden and grief-stricken mariner full of sin and regret finds the dead sailors more blessed since they were freed from the tentacles of living death. The mariner too longed for death but could

not die because of the hatred the sailors left for him to suffer with. As night descends the mariner feels envy and yearning for the water snakes in moonlight. This seems to evince a new longing for life which the mariner had killed in cold blood. The germination of compassion for the tiny creatures seems to bring a sort of redemption. This new fond love for the water snakes symbolically suggests Coleridge's eco-centric vision that Nature expects mankind to treat every creature with love and sympathy. Since all great and small creatures are part of nature and also thus of Almighty. The emergence of love for the slimy creatures symbolically suggests the spiritual awakening of the mariner and the token of this awakening is the falling of the dead albatross from his neck. This is a moment of slight relief from guilt, a movement from stillness, a motion for the motionless and the birth of a new love in an atmosphere of aridity. The description of this kind makes Coleridge's poem not only a poetry of simple natural landscape but,

a poetry in which natural description has a psychological, a narrative and dramatic function. Nature appears beautiful or ugly according to whether it is looked upon with love or hatred, and the descriptive passages far from being merely decorative, play a part in acting out the spiritual drama which the story, at its deepest level symbolizes, (Raymond XXXIII).

Serious readers of Coleridge's poetry discover the mariner awakening as the poet's romantic vision. Profounder and perhaps more God-fearing than other romantics, Coleridge seems to follow the dictum of beauty with strangeness. The mariner develops a penchant for the 'water snakes' which earlier were only the slimy things crawling on the slimy sea that did rot. Rama Kundu aptly remarks :

But after the terrible seven days and nights of penance
the scales fall from his eyes the beauty of these creatures

is revealed to him. It is basically a romantic epiphany that makes him see the beauty hidden so far from the commoner's vision (ALR 5).

The mariner's watching the water snakes with a longing and reverence has been called '*the turning point of the poem*' by Graham Hough. If it's love for these creature, it's self-pity for his own and seemed to bless them unaware. The mariner who had killed the collective consciousness and liberty represented by the bird suddenly pines for love. His pining exhibits a therapeutic effect on his own nature as well as the external Nature.

O happy living things ! no tongue
 Their beauty might declare :
 A spring of love gushed from my heart,
 And I blessed them unaware :
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
 And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;
 And from my neck so free
 The Albatross fell off, and sank
 Like lead into the sea (Part - IV).

After the fall of the dead Albatross from his neck, the mariner receives the gentle sleep which brought him dreams perhaps to purge him. Nature seems to relax the agitated and agonized soul of the mariner who experiences a change around himself. This change is a welcome sign since the arrival of rains and meandering course of stars allows the moon to mark an atmosphere of light which makes the mariner foresee the dead sailors rise. Some spirit seemed to chase the ship as no breeze was blowing but the ship moved. The sun suddenly stopped and the spirit cast the mariner in a swoon. He could hear two voices which seemed to recognize the man who shot the albatross. But the other voice tries to normalize the situation by saying. '*The*

man hath penance done, and penance more will do. The mariner's ship moves on softly and he sees the places of his native land in his dream of joy. He prays to God either to let him remain awake or to sleep always. He is shuddered to see that the rising dead sailors appeared lifeless again and instead there seemed a seraph band bringing the Hermit good along with the Pilot and the Pilot and the Pilot's boy. The mariner becomes hopeful that the hermit would shrieve his soul and wash way the Albatross's blood.

The mariner could hear the pilot and the hermit discussing the disappearance of fair lights and the mariner's ship. The ship is drowned but the mariner's body is found in the Pilot's boat. The mariner ultimately entreats the hermit to shrieve him. As the poem ends, the mariner admits that he had learnt a great lesson and his wide experience; his long journey had enabled him to recognize his hearer who could pay heed to his experience and not commit the crime which made him suffer interminably. The lessons that the mariner learnt by the commission of his crime had become an obsession and had made him understand the true value of human company which is sweeter than the marriage feast. He wants the wedding guest to remember and act on what may appear sententious but the seminal truth :

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small :

For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all (Part - VII).

If H. A. Beers considers *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as 'a baseless fabric of a vision', he fails to forecast what the human world of today is living in. The crime of killing the harmless creature, though in vision, now has dawned upon us as reality and we are in

the midst of mariners galore yet are short of the realization or say of penance. What to say of birds and beasts, we are depleting even their habitats. We are busy clearing forests, cutting trees, throwing garbages in rivers or seas just to make our life more beautiful and all by destroying the beauties and the bounties of Nature. What makes it paradoxical is that we are bent on organizing seminars and conferences in five star hotels with billboards and hoardings of eco-awareness and eco-consciousness as themes.

The mariner's fall is a metaphor for human beings' gross injustice to Nature in general. The killing of bird without assigning any solid reason subtly hints at our allegiance to short-sightedness and impatience. It also shows our selfish attitude, which is bent on seeking reasons in favour of our deeds performed reluctantly or unreluctantly. We can also unearth man's killing instinct, a weapon to symbolize his superiority over birds and animals. This animal instinct may have layers of interpretations hidden underneath. The bird which is gifted with the power of flying and its wings which symbolize freedom seems to burn human beings with jealousy and as such might have compelled the mariner to take such drastic and unbecoming step. The longing for a carefree and independent life, a theme common with the romantics may also seem to work upon Coleridge in the composition of this narrative. But unlike his contemporaries, Coleridge did not find in nature only blessings galore, rather he found in it innumerable messages which men have often ignored.

Coleridge's Albatross tempts and poisons the mariner to such an extent that he's compelled to kill the bird. Keats makes the grief personal in "Ode to a Nightingale" while Coleridge gives it an impersonal touch by making the mariner and the other sailors suffer the outcome of callous killing. Critics after critics have found in Coleridge's poem a spiritual and a supernatural message. But it can be understood as a plain fact that man who learns order and discipline

from nature has got no right to destroy or destabilize the natural order. History has the evidence that man and animals lived in communion with each other and any attempt to impair this harmony will bring catastrophic consequences. F.Marsh in a study compares Coleridge's narrative to Eliot's *The Waste Land* and finds the protagonists in both the works recovering from a living death, from spiritual dryness. He is of the view : "The Ancient Mariner, in addition to being a story of crime and expiation, takes us on a Journey of psychic exploration where natural and symbolic co-exist" (EC IX).

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is very much an eco-critical study in the sense that the poet through this narrative wants to lament over the loss of man's regard not only for nature but also for other living creatures. Coleridge was more of a visionary than a poet and critics feel satisfied with his opium eating habits, which might have enabled the poet to see what others could not. He could visualize man's ever-increasing need to extirpate others to carve out a suitable niche for himself. The fast moving wings of science might have created in the poet the visions good or bad appearing silhouetted though in the form of man waging a war with nature. The poem might have been written with the purpose of intimating the human world with the intimidations echoing in the seeds of time. A profound and a detailed study of the narrative can make a modern day reader realize what Glen A. Love advocates in favour of ecological awareness :

Literature involves interrelationships and, ecological awareness enhances and expands our sense of relationships to encompass non-human as well as human contexts. Ecological thinking about literature requires us to take the non-human world as seriously as previous modes of criticism have taken the human realm of society and culture. That it seems to me, eco-criticism's greatest challenge and greatest opportunity (561).

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner encapsulates the notion that we should love nature in all its forms and function. The readers are able to familiarize themselves with both natural and supernatural objects, living and non-living creatures, silence and sound, company and isolation, suffering and triumph – all inevitable components offering a binary principle of life. Nature encompasses congruity and incongruity and the violation of natural rules, which though not having any written constitution yet does not let the culprits, go scot-free. What makes Coleridge score a point over other romantics is the visionary's innovation that albeit not as retributive as mankind, nature allows the human world to admit their offence and learn a lesson. Coleridge's eco-centric vision is more of a reminder than that of Wordsworth's, which proclaims :

Nature never did betray
 The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead
 From joy to joy : for she can so inform
 The mind that is within us, so impress
 With quietness and beauty, and so feed
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
 Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men
 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
 The dreary intercourse of daily life,
 She e'er prevail against us, or disturb
 Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
 Is full of blessings. (Tintern Abbey)

Coleridge, on the other hand, seems to warn mankind by making the accomplices of crime suffer in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. And this suffering should awaken them and make them wary. We can also see this as a device to stop the human world from further oppression of the non-human world.

The *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* truly stands as a narrative depicting the ecological awareness in the sense that it hints at the crisis of water, a modern day menace. The presence of the vast expanse of water but not potable may indicate a suffering for the mariner and his sailors but the lack of water today is rooted deeply in man's excessive thirst and hunger. The lines of the poem sardonically suggest a perpetual message :

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink. (Part - II).

Man's disregard for the flora and fauna, his ever-growing needs compelling to the merciless felling of trees and rapid industrialization add generously to ecological imbalance.

The mariner has to pay for the crime in a variety of ways. It is not only the shortage of water because of the ship being stuck and winds being stopped. The worst happens when his fellow sailors die of thirst and the mariner cannot shirk himself from owning the responsibility of their death. He is alone, deprived of the company of his fellow mariners who in a duality of mind appreciated and criticized the killing of the bird. Living a sequestered life, he understands the worth of companions who now are dead. The death of these sailors because of thirst even amid the vast expanse of water opens the sealed conscience of the Ancient mariner. Water, the great source of life becomes the taker of human lives. The abundance of sea waters is a reminder of eternal truth that all material possessions which human beings hanker after throughout their lives become futile since they offer no happiness because of the fear of losing them. Material possessions may offer comforts but they have a water-like quality. The flow of water if constricted may take the shape of deluge and debunk everything. These prized possessions are to be used in time lest they become a scourge with wings of time. Modern day man may find layers of meaning in this water symbol.

The narrative may invoke various interpretations but it is out and out a poem describing Nature and man's tumultuous treatment to Nature. The poet not only chooses natural symbols but he also brings into discussion heavenly bodies such as sun and moon. The implication though may be manifold yet we can trace these heavenly bodies responding to the call of Nature. There is no exaggeration if some critics find some religious message in the poem. Like all great poetry, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* can have multiple appeals though Nature stays in the background.

Besides telling the story of crime and punishment, Coleridge makes the narrative more eco-centric the way he makes use of literary devices. The comparisons made in the poem are all natural such as 'red as rose', 'as idle as a painted ship', 'sail like restless gossamers', 'sailors passing away like the whiz of cross-bow', 'sky and sea like load on his weary eye' etc. The use of many words repetitively shows the natural cycle and the process. Nature's repetitive process hits at the order as well as its crotchety behaviour at times. The different voices of joy and sorrow appear in the form of some natural celebration of an upheaval. The rising of the sun, the fainting of the moon, the silence of the sea, the blowing and stopping of the wind, the appearance of phantoms, the cracking and melting of ice, the burning of water like witch's oils, the sounds of splashing and finally the gushing of love in the mariner's heart are all natural and seem to have a spontaneity. C.M. Bowra rightly recognizes Coleridge's eco-centric approach when he remarks :

Coleridge used Nature to give colour and music, solidity and perspective, to his creations and it is one of the chief means by which he sustains the enchantment of his poem (64-65).

Thus we find that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which the critics interpret in different shades and colours may continue to remain a poem that is purely based on the simple and elemental truths of

nature. There is no harm in considering the poem as a lesson in awakening the moral of the masses. If the poem has a moral, it is more closely related to Coleridge's views on "Life in Nature" and the essence and function of poetry. The poet himself believed in "One Life" and often felt the need for compassion. What he wrote in one of his letters to Sothby on September 10, 1802 : "Nature has her proper interest and he will know what it is who believes and feels that everything has a life of its own and that we are all one life." The communion of man and nature has been a perpetual truth, which the poet in one of the passages "On Poesy or Art", writes :

Man's mind is the very focus of all the rays of intellect, which are scattered throughout the images of nature. Now so to place these images, totalized, and fitted to the limits of the human mind, as to elicit from, and to superinduce upon the forms themselves the moral reflections to which they approximate, to make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought and thought nature, ----- this is the mystery of genius in the fine arts (Cross 257 - 258).

It thus becomes evident that despite all interpretations of the poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* exhibits Coleridge's eco-centric approach. The poet has been successful in addressing his readers the importance that nature holds for us. At the deeper level, an attempt has been made to underline the exigency of man's spatial relationship with Nature, the ever-growing need compelling them to devastate the ecological balance and inviting the fury instead. Man's progress in a highly industrialized world may, no doubt, put him between the two horns of the dilemma of survival. But we have always to remember that there is no limit to progress. The multi-storeyed skyscrapers with artificial amenities will keep mankind reminded of the cruelty that they have done by decoration born of deforestation. The need for an alternative is yet to be felt and implemented. It is worthwhile to note here that the threats to ecological balance were

initiated right from 'Man's disobedience and the taste of the forbidden fruit'. And since then several attempts to check our ravenous expectations have been made but in vain.

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“DRESS”, “DRESSING” AND “CLOTHING”: INTERFACING BARTHES AND KING LEAR

Angshuman Kar

The clothing imagery of *King Lear*, critics believe, primarily signifies the theme of appearance and reality. The images of rich apparel and gorgeousness in the play are in sharp contrast to the images of nakedness and poverty (Weliver1). Nudity in this paradigm becomes the conventional representation of ecclesiastical virtues such as temperance, truth and purity, whereas rich clothing stands for passing things, cunning and hypocrisy (Greenfield 282). Images of clothing and nakedness in the play, therefore, are used to serve multiple purposes¹. Not questioning these traditional interpretations of the clothing imagery of *King Lear*, this paper would like to argue that it could also be posited within the Barthesian paradigm of dress. For doing so, the paper, however, would not use *The Fashion System*, the most celebrated work of Barthes on fashion—it would, rather, focus on his early writings on clothes.

The Fashion System was published in 1967. It was a book written primarily on fashion and not on clothes and their history. Barthes, however, started thinking about clothes and fashion in the 1950s. Initially he was interested in mapping the history of the sociology of clothing. Then somewhere between 1959 and 1964 he decided to focus less on “clothes” and more on contemporary “fashion”—the result was his brilliant analysis of what he calls “printed fashion” in *The Fashion System*. The early writings of Barthes on clothes in which he “tries to establish how and why people have dressed the way they do across the centuries” (Stafford and Carter viii) were first anthologized as *The Language of Fashion* in 2004 by

Andy Stafford and Michael Carter, two renowned fashion critics of the present. This paper will especially use three essays from this book, viz. "History and Sociology of Clothing: Some Methodological Observations", "Language and Clothing", and "Towards a Sociology of Dress".

Barthes in the essay "History and Sociology of Clothing" has pointed out the methodological inadequacies of the scientific research on dress. Citing the names of renowned scholars on dress like Quicherat, Demay, Enlart and Flugel, Barthes argues that whereas the first three were interested in studying dress as a sum total of individual pieces and the garment itself as a kind of historical event, Flugel was only interested in exploring the psychological motivations behind dressing. Such studies, Barthes believes, have failed to see dress both as a historical and a sociological object. Exactly this is where, Barthes argues, there is the need to see dress as a system:

[...] we have seen how studies of dress, whether historical or psychological, have never really considered this as a system, that is as a structure whose individual elements never have any value and which are signifiers only in as much as they are linked by a group of collective norms (7).

The last part of this sentence is important since it makes clear Barthes's conviction that dress is not a *gestalt*, a sum total of the parts, but is something essentially defined by normative links which control the arrangement of garments on a concrete wearer in a given socio-historical context:

But system is completely different from *gestalt*; it is essentially defined by normative links which justify, oblige, prohibit, tolerate, in a word control the arrangement of garments of a concrete wearer who is identified in their social and historical place: it is a value (7).

Dress as a system to Barthes, therefore, is a value. This is why, Barthes believes, historians or sociologists working on dress are not to simply study tastes, fashions or comforts—they are to, rather, “list, coordinate and explain” the rules of matching or usage, of what is allowed and what is prohibited (7). In short, while establishing the relationship between dress and history, they cannot ignore normative social links that shape dress into a system. Barthes, however, acknowledges that the attempt to study dress historically as a system must face a concrete problem—the problem of following a structure through time, a system of balance whose elements are changing with time in “unequal measure” (8).

This difficulty, Barthes thinks, could partly be solved by linguistics, particularly by the Saussurian paradigm of language. Language, like dress, Barthes says, is both a history and a system, an individual act and a collective institution:

Language and dress are, at any moment in history, complete structures, constituted organically by a functional network of norms and forms; and the transformation or displacement of any one element can modify the whole, producing a new structure: so, inevitably, we are talking about a collection of balances in movement, of institutions in flux (8).

Barthes, therefore, draws the analogy between *langue*, *parole* and *language* and “dress”, “dressing” and “clothing”. For this analogy Barthes acknowledges his indebtedness to Nikolai Sergeevich Trubetskoy. It was Trubetskoy who first tried to apply the Saussurian distinction between *langue* and *parole* to the realm of clothing. Taking the cue from Trubetskoy, Barthes also says that “dress”, like *langue*, is the social institution, independent of the individual, a normative reserve from which the individuals draw their *parole*, i.e. “dressing”, which is the individual reality, the very act of getting dressed. “Dress” and “dressing” together form the generic whole what Barthes calls

“clothing” as *langue* and *parole* form *language*. There is, Barthes further argues, almost always a constant movement between “dressing” and “dress”—it is a sort of dialectical exchange. The movement from dressing to dress, however, is obviously more important than the movement from dress to dressing, since it can change the system. Barthes writes:

It must be noted that a dressing object that is at first constituted by the degrading of a dress object can subsequently transform itself once more into a secondary dress object: this occurs as soon as this degrading actually functions as a collective sign, as a value (10).

Barthes gives an example here to substantiate his point. A dress object which normally uses all the buttons on the shirt can become a dressing object the moment someone leaves the top two buttons undone. This omission can become dress again as soon as “it is constituted as a norm by a particular group” (10). “Dressing”, Barthes therefore writes, “is a weak form of meaning, it expresses more than it notifies; dress on the contrary is a strong form of meaning, it constitutes an intellectual, notifying relation between a wearer and their group” (10).

It is within this paradigm that I would like to place the clothing imagery of *King Lear*. The clothing imagery of the play, I would like to argue, shows a dialectical relationship between “dress” and “dressing” where “dressing”, when it becomes threatening to the system “dress”, is thoroughly criticized, if not put under check. The play shows an attempt to keep a balance among the elements that constitute the system “dress” at a given moment in history. Two examples could be cited in favour of this argument.

The first example is taken from Act II scene ii of the play where Kent and Oswald exchange verbal blows. Kent finds Goneril's steward Oswald dressed magnificently with a sword. This sword,

Maurice Charney writes in the essay “We put Fresh Garments on Him’: Nakedness and Clothes in *King Lear*”, is more an article of apparel than defence. Kent, therefore chides Oswald, saying—“nature disclaims in thee, a tailor made thee” (II, ii, 59-60). Kent says so because he has already identified Oswald as a “three-suited, [...] filthy worsted-socking knave”, someone who was “limited by ordinance to three suits a year and plain woolen stockings instead of silk” (Bell 56). So it is clear that Oswald’s “dressing” out of the way throws a challenge to the normative reserve “dress”, and this attempt at “dressing” is criticized immediately by Kent. This criticism has to be interpreted in the light of the Elizabethan-Jacobean sumptuary laws. Sumptuary laws were applied to things like food, jewelry and clothing. These Laws were framed to control the behaviour of the people for maintaining a specific class structure. They were used to keep the status quo in tact. During the reign of King Henry VIII the newly wealthy Merchants were not simply satisfied with their gradually increasing financial status, but tried to acquire social prominence as well. This became a threat to the notion of nobility and the existing class structure. Because of such a threat, it became necessary for the Monarchy to keep the newly risen wealthy class separate from the Upper Classes of the Nobility. Henry VIII responded to the situation and updated the existing sumptuary laws. He drafted a new series of laws on dress and personal adornment. These laws remained alive during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I as well. Elizabethan sumptuary laws on dress fixed up the colour and the type of clothing individuals should own and wear. Colour and the type of clothing, therefore, became an easy and immediate way to identify the social status of the wearer. In short, the sumptuary laws were used as a strategy to control the class structure of society which got reflected through a system that Barthes would have called “dress”. Therefore, to keep the status quo in tact, it became a necessity to nip in the bud any attempt at individual dressing that could be a potential threat to the existing class structure and the system, “dress”. In Act II scene ii of

the play this is what Kent does. He chides Oswald for dressing out of the way. Kent's voice here represents the voice of status quo, the voice that was pro-active during the Elizabethan-Jacobean period to maintain the class structure of society symbolized by the normative reserve "dress".

There is another occasion in the play where an individual's attempt at dressing is sharply rebuked too. In Act III, scene vi insane Lear appoints the bedlamite beggar Edgar as one of his hundred Knights. Lear says:

You sir, I entertain for one of my hundred; only
I do not like the fashion of your garments: you
will say they are Persian; but let them be
chang'd. (80-84)

This should not be seen simply as an insane comment of an old troubled brain. Lear's insanity, as we know, endows him with a new insight into sanity. This comment of Lear must also be seen as one coming from a King who has not been able to forget his position as the head of the state. This is then another rebuke at "dressing" since it can be a potential threat to "dress". For understanding the real significance of this comment, however, it must be placed in the proper historical context. During the early part of the reign of James I a Persian embassy arrived in London. It resulted in a craze for Persian silk fabrics and costumes² in England which encouraged the English people to flout the sumptuary laws and to dress ignoring class distinctions. Lear's dislike for Edgar's imaginary Persian robe is actually a criticism of the liberty that Persian garments offered to the English people. Lear's criticism of Edgar's Persian robe, therefore, turns out to be a criticism of the liberty that "dressing" usually offers, a liberty which can dismantle the elements of "dress" and can produce a completely new system if gets constituted as a norm by a particular group.

So, on the one hand, the clothing imagery of the play juxtaposes appearance and reality and represents rich clothing as something vain and passing, on the other, it shows a respect for norms. “Dress” in the play does not simply allure to a duality: it also signifies a system that helps maintain a specific class structure in society. The dialectical relationship between the system “dress” and the individual “dressing” creates a space in the play where the social conflicts are ultimately enacted.

Notes

1. This is what Weliver writes on the multiple functions of the clothing imagery in the play: “The rich and intricate dress of Regan and Goneril flaunt their obsession with status and display their fixation on wealth and their desire to be perceived as royalty, while the more morally upstanding and loyal figures, such as Kent and Edgar, are willing to give up their comfortable or courtly attire to protect their king or save their lives and hopefully save their country. Clothing also serves as a tool to be utilized throughout the play. The Fool, a witty and devoted man, carefully disguises his intelligent observations and ironic jibes in intricate language and rhyme, just as his body is covered by the outrageous parti-colored attire of a jest. Even his head, the center of his wit, hides beneath a pointy and ridiculous-looking hat, the coxcomb. In these manners, attire is a poignant way of identifying characters on the stage, who are amoral or loyal (1).”
2. This is what Millicent Bell writes on this issue: “A Persian embassy had arrived in London early in the reign of James I; there was a “fashion” for Persian silk fabrics and even costumes, marking the beginning of the English assimilation of exotic identities. Sir Robert Shirley, who had gone to Persia with the Earl of Essex in 1598, would be painted some years later by Van Dyke in Persian robes of embroidered silk that pictorially declared the subsequent character he achieved as an international diplomat with special Persian connections. (56-7)”

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PINTER AND POLITICS

Manish Solanki

I am not concerned with making general statements. I am not interested in theatre used simply as a means of self-expression on the part of the people engaged in it. I can sum up none of my plays. I can describe none of them, except to say : That is what happened. That is what they say. That is what they did - Harold Pinter.

I'm very conscious of what's happening in the world. I'm not by any means blind or deaf to the world around me... NO, no. Politicians just don't understand me. What, if you like, interests me, is the suffering for which they are responsible. It doesn't interest me - it horrifies me ! (Pause.) I mean, Jesus Christ. Well you know, there's so much. What one can say ? It's all so evident. - Harold Pinter.

The two extracts given above from Pinter explain his stance as a playwright. The event of Pinter being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for the year 2005 has resulted in the proliferation of study on Pinter's work by critics, academicians, literary and media circles. The title that I have chosen for my paper seems to be contentious as it is incompatible with Pinter's emphatic dismissal of critics' attempts to provide allegorical interpretations of his plays. His resistance to such attempts is voiced in his famous outburst :

I think it is impossible - and certainly for me - to start writing a play from any kind of abstract idea with a

neatly built-in resolution and foregone conclusion (BBC Home service)

But if one considers Pinter's avowed interest in political issues during 1980s, one is tempted to reappraise his earlier work to solve this apparent contradiction between Pinter-the playwright and Pinter-the political commentator.

The period of mid-1980s witnessed the appearance of Pinter's overtly political plays such as *One for the Road* (1984) and *Mountain Language* (1988) which has led critics to speculate : either these plays embody a departure from standard Pinter plays termed as 'private or personal plays' and metaphorical explorations of human condition or he has been political through and through from the very beginning of his writing career.

Each of the two positions mentioned above is grounded on a different conception of the term 'political'. If one wants to discuss his earlier works in the light of his emphasis on his political neutrality, one has also to make clear that his initial hostility towards politics was largely the hostility towards institutional politics with its political agendas, governing bodies and administrative agencies and politicians. His early refusal to get involved in political matters was not born out of indifference to social problems but out of serious doubt of the adequacy of political agendas, agencies and actions to alleviate social problems. Pinter's early insistence that he found most political thinking and terminology suspect and deficient, that he disliked didactic and moralistic plays, and that he wrote not only without any consciousness that his work had any general social function at all was an insistence that led to changes that his plays had no implications beyond their own particularity and idiosyncrasy, that they could appeal only to aesthetes, and that they were socially and politically irrelevant. What an argument like this was put directly to Pinter in the 1960s, he acknowledged that he had no political arguments to make but there is a distinction to be made between the political and the social.

If I write anything in which two people are facing each other over a table... I'm talking about two people living socially, and if what takes place between them is a meaningful and accurate examination of them, then it's going to be relevant to you and to society. This relationship will be an image of other relationships, of social living, of living together... (qtd. in Sykes 101).

To think of plays providing images of social living is to recognise the way in which the local can achieve a degree of a largeness without becoming symptomatic of a preceding or succeeding form of ideological consensus. As image of social living, the plays acquire a generality of implication that follows from, rather than precedes, their local complexity. And it is in this sense that one can think of Pinter's work and Pinter's politics.

While considering his position as a playwright he disassociated himself from any explicit political ideology. This is made clear in his remark :

To be politician you have to be able to present a simple picture even if you don't see things that way. To be a successful dramatist, by implication, you have to be free to explore complex pictures that clarify without necessarily reducing the complexity of social experience
(*Parish Review* 27).

This seems to have been his own method in his plays where he examines, scrutinises and explores the local context so closely that it becomes difficult to abstract simple large-scale generalisations. The archetypal situation of a Pintersque play has been 'Two people in a secluded room' which generally seems to exclude the external world. So his plays have also been termed under the rubric of 'private or personal plays'. This poses a pertinent question : How his plays can, with this archetypal image of a room as an enclosed sanctuary,

have political resonance? Here we have to refer to a reply given by him to a critic when asked what his two people in his room are afraid of :

Obviously they are scared of what is outside the room. Outside the room there is a world bearing upon them which is frightening. I'm sure it is frightening to you and me as well (BBC Home Service).

Here where lie the political implications of his plays.

Likewise when Kenneth Tynnan reproached him for writing plays unconcerned with the ideas and showing only a very limited aspect of the life of characters, omitting their politics, ideas and even their sex life, Pinter replied he was dealing with his characters 'at the extreme edge of their living, where they are living pretty much alone'; (7) at a point when they are back in their room and confronted with the basic problem of being. He also said :

We are concerned with what is happening then, in this particular moment of these people's lives. There is no reason to suppose that at one time or another they did not listen at a political meeting... or that they haven't ever had girl friends or that they haven't been concerned with the ideas, (BBC Home Service)

On the contrary what he seems to suggest, through his personal plays, is this ; "Before you manage to adjust yourself to living alone in your room, you're not really terribly fit and equipped to go out to fight battles", (Vogue 236). What he has effectively done is transfer to the realm of larger political context the explorations of complex local social interaction. But he does not do so by simply showing that 'the personal is the political'. Rather he is suggesting its converse, i.e. the political is, among other things, the personal. Thus, in his plays, the personal is not so much equated with the political as reinstated as a form of resistance to it which has led the critics to consider him as apolitical.

Even his first full length play, *The Birthday Party* begs to be reinterpreted in this light, i.e. in terms of pressures of conformity exerted on an individual by the outside world. With Stanley - the pianist as the artist forced into respectability by Goldberg and McCann-the emissaries of the bourgeois world, the play simply evokes a complex local situation which speaks of the individual's pathetic search for security and its conflicts with the terrorism of outside world embodied in its bigoted brutality. Here where the play rises to larger political context. One of the most powerful political lines ever written by Pinter appears in this play when Meg's husband, Petey, a relatively silent character, asks Stanley, "Stan, don't let them tell you what to do! (*Complete Works*1) . This is an individual resistance in face of pressures for conformity exerted by larger socio-political conditions.

The over - (or politically anachronistic ?) reading of *The Birthday Party* makes the whole local situation analogues to a recent global - political event of our time : Invasion of Iraq by USA and UK. Seen in this perspective, Stanley Webber as an appropriated and conditioned man can be taken as defeated and captured Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, whereas Goldberg and McCann may represent the duo of Blaire - Bush. Meg-the lady-owner of the boarding-house, who treats Stanley with such an overwhelmingly motherliness that amounts to incest-may be taken as Iraq - the motherland. Goldberg and McCann's organizing the birthday party for Stanley ignoring his insistence that it is not his birthday is analogues to USA - UK Invasion of Iraq under the pretext of finding and destroying the weapons of mass destruction that Saddam possesses turning a deaf ear to Saddam's emphatic denial supported by UN's official report. The secret organization of Goldberg and McCann can be taken as United Nations though now they have the control over it.

In *The Caretaker* as well, Aston, after his electric shock treatment, is reduced to a do-it-yourself mechanic as well as a handyman and is readjusted/reintegrated into society. But this

process of appropriation has proved fatal in a way destructive for his individual traits as he also lost his hallucinations which could have also been his super lucid and transcendental vision as a poet. The poetic vision having been wiped out from his brain, he is shown as meddling with the electrical appliance all the while and thus reduced to seeking satisfaction in merely ordinary, mundane and material reality.

So though in none of Pinter's early plays we encounter characters with an explicit ideological / political position to exemplify and defend, the political is always one latent component of local complex situation. But as the problem emerges from no clearly defined political institutional base, their resolution depends upon no particular political agenda or programme.

So the dividing line of mid-1980s with the appearance of his overtly political plays should not be taken as a complete departure from Pinter's earlier technique but an extension of it. One can also conclude that his work as a whole has been political through and through from the very start provided one apply the word 'political' in Pinter's context because for Pinter, as well as for his audience, political thinking involves not so much questioning about occupying right or left position on political spectrum or commitments to one political party or another but a requirement to explore the complexities of diverse local situation to such an extent where it accommodates, by implication, larger political context.

One last comment on the crucial aspect of Pinter's art : while during 1960s, his supposedly private or personal plays are invested with political tensions whereas during 1980s and after, his overtly political plays start from the personal and work outwards. Thus the personal and the political are indeed intertwined and not just simply equated with each other in Pinter's plays.

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COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN EDWARD THOMPSON'S *A FAREWELL TO INDIA*

B. M. Ladgaonkar

Novel as a form of literature is very closely related to the upheavals in the society. It comes into existence within real social situation reflecting tensions in the life of the individuals as they face problems in their social life. However, given the density of socio-cultural life reflected in the fiction, it is directly or indirectly influenced by the ideologies which pervade the whole socio-cultural situation. This is rather true of the Anglo-Indian fiction. As a part of the ruling community, British were face to face with the ruled Indian community and had accumulated experiences of India and the Indians, favorable or unfavorable.

The British Colonial hold on India which fired the imagination of the English for almost three centuries inspired a vast body of literature. Anglo-Indian Literature, as this body of literature is known, has been describe by a few scholars. For instance, speaking about Anglo-Indian Fiction Bhupal Singh, an Indian scholar says :

Broadly speaking it includes any novel dealing with Indian which is written in English. Strictly speaking it means fiction mainly describing the life of English men in India (1).

It was M.K. Naik (1991), who restricted the term Anglo-Indian Fiction to the British writers. He says:

'Anglo-Indian Fiction may broadly be defined as fiction by British writers in which generally a British or occidental protagonist operates mostly in an Indian setting (though the scene may shift to England occasionally), and interacts with Indian and other British or occidental characters (3).

These definitions suggest that Anglo-Indian literature has been literature produced by Englishmen while on active service in India, but essentially recounting their Indian experience.

The conditions of the emergence of the Anglo-Indian Fiction were set by the closed social life of the ruling British Community, the political tension between the rulers and the ruled, the oppressive Indian climatic conditions, the necessity of building up and maintaining the empire, Indian customs and social and cultural practices, the racial prejudices affecting the relationship between men and women, and a great variety of problems arising out of these. And this is rather true about the novelistic fiction of Edward Thompson.

Indian National Congress was established in 1885. Though it could not make much impression during these early years, it gathered strength during 1920s and 1930s under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Consequently the struggle for Independence became intensified.

The relationship between the English and the Indians acquired focus in the Anglo-Indian fiction only 1920s onwards. This was poignantly realized by those writers of Anglo-Indian tradition, who were neither in military nor in civil service of India. These writers were E.M.Forster, Edward Thompson and others, who were in educational service, in church or in their private capacity in India.

Edward Thompson believes in certain ideas which govern his colonial consciousness. It, therefore, becomes significant to note

colonial consciousness which shows Thompson's point of view. In order to understand Thompson's attitude towards India, it is important to take into account the fiction of Edward Thompson.

Thompson was a liberal and a pacifist. There is no doubt about his genuine sympathy for the Indians and his sincere efforts to bring about reconciliation between the Indians and the British. But at the same time he believed in the benevolent intentions of the British in India. His liberalism, his genuine sympathy for the reforms in India, his awareness of the nationalist feeling awakened among the Indians, his critical observations on the unfeeling, ignorant and racially prejudiced British bureaucracy have been reflected in his fiction.

Thompson was considered an expert on Indian affairs and as a result he was sent to India on assignments by the British Government. He knew the nationalist leaders and had visited Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru many times. He had developed warm relationship with Nehru, which must have influenced his views on Indian politics and the Indian nationalist movement. And he himself was sometimes very critical about the Congress leadership for their incompetence to deal with the poverty in India. He felt very disillusioned and depressed by the British as well as the Nationalist attitudes towards the genuine problems of the poor in India.

A Farewell to India (1931) has a background of Indian nationalism turning increasingly revolutionary. There is political tension built up between the British and the Indians as well as between the Hindus and Muslims. Alden and Findlay, the main English characters in *An India Day* reappear here to represent the case of United English Nation, in which India should remain part of the Empire with a dominion status. Alden especially is opposed to the idea of Purna Swarajya held by the extremists like Dinbandhu and also by Mahatma Gandhi. The British - Indian relationship in this

period was worsened because of Gandhi's Non-cooperation as a nonviolent means of opposing the British Raj.

Vishnugram and Alden's college in it represent India, which is now being affected by the nationalist movement turned violent. Alden finds it increasingly difficult to cope with the violent activities carried on by the students' association. He visits the Sadhu, along with Findlay, where he meets the self-proclaimed extremist and 'arch-fiend' Dinabandhu. He is the revolutionary selflessly working for the unity between all kinds of Indians –high-caste and low-caste, Hindus and Muslims. He was against Gandhiji's method of non-violence as well as his demand for a dominion status.

This novel, in reality, is a political tract interspersed with the personal lives of the Englishmen like Alden, Findlay and others. The British – Indian relationship emerges from the heated political talk between Indian characters like Jayanand Sadhu and Dinabandhu on the one hand and the non-official Englishmen like Alden and Findlay on the other. Alden, who could understand and easily cope with the India of 1925, finds himself exhausted and impatient with the nationalist movement of 1929 with its demand of Purna Swarajya. We come across a number of new tensions developed between the English and the Indians in the wake of growing nationalist movement and the efforts of the English to keep hold on India.

Thompson's satirical narration of the prize-distribution ceremony at the school, at the beginning of *A Farewell to India* shows us Englishman's ridicule and contempt for the English language used by the Indians. Alden does not lose an opportunity to show the shallowness of the Indian officers and their weakness for listing to self-praise. Thompson is believed to be championing the Indian cause, but his characters are not free from their sense of superiority. The only Indian with whom Alden feels to be on the same level is Jayanand Sadhu. All other Indian characters presented in Thompson's fiction are far too inferior, shallow, comic and corrupt. About

Jayanand Sadhu Alden lightly observes that "By a bit of judicious buying of souls we might keep the Raj going for another century" (Thompson 23). It reveals Englishman's attitude to Indians; the best of them could be easily converted to Empire's needs.

A number of English officers believed that they were doing great favor to the Indians by remaining in India and managing the affairs of India. At one place, Alden himself feels like bragging about how he is carrying on selfless work in India.

— he was never able quite to forget that he was a gentleman giving away all he had for folk who had no earthly sort of claim upon him and were quite incapable of knowing what they were receiving – (164).

Alden is an educational missionary, not a military or administrative officer. Yet, when he says 'we', he is certainly referring to the power of the English nation, and suggests that the English can easily put down the present nationalist rising. Alden is unable to forget that he is a 'saheb' and that he is the Ruler. For all his sympathy for Indians, he sounds a false note here.

The British – Indian relationship in the twenties and thirties was greatly vitiated by the political atmosphere. When the English and the Indians meet, there is heated discussion on the political issues. Alden and Findlay meet the extremist nationalist Dinabandhu at the place of Jayanand Sadhu. During the discussion Alden observes:

there are two choices ahead of you folk... steer India— with the rest of the Empire, or... enter on the path... has always led to independence and glory before – that of assassination and guerrilla warfare (79).

Dinabandhu retorts angrily:

Peaceful partnership! ...Better rivers of blood than a nation with its soul in chains! (79).

Alden's anger and impatience with the Indian extremists is, of course, related to his sense of belonging to India. Like him, many Englishmen did not want to sever connection with India and go back. Alden looks upon the role of Englishmen in India as governors and administrators. The qualities he ascribes to the Englishmen, he finds absent among the Indians. They are not fit to police India or face the crucial situations like famine. For example, when a leopard begins to plague the hostel area, the students appeal to him to do something about it. Alden is about to say:

Write to Mahatma Gandhi. He ought to take on all these miscellaneous jobs now –tackle your wolves and bears and tigers (134).

One more irritant spoiling the British- Indian relationship was the militant Hinduism that started a Suddhi movement in the tribal area to bring the converted tribal folk back to Hindu fold. A Hindu missionary was sent to Kanthala to carry out the 'purification' of the converted Christians. This was ascribed to the possible political conflict between Hindus and Muslims for the governance of India. But it was a great irritant to the Christian missionaries like Findlay. In this relevance, it is to be noted Paul Scott 's view , "the Raj held the balance of power between otherwise irreconcilable forces that would lose no opportunity to cheat, to threaten or slaughter one another. The Raj always says it had united India. It had in the sense that it imposed a single rule of law upon all its people (Scott 83).

The English were irritated by the Indians mixing national level politics with the workings of the educational institutions. Alden, for example, fails to understand why, every year in the meeting of the trustees of the college, a telegram must be sent to Simon Commission announcing their non-cooperation. This Indian attitude was often criticized by the English. Alden cannot understand how roads, hospitals, dispensaries, village schools – "every last thing is to be held up for years, while we turn every gathering into a political

scrap" (ibid 34). But what was a mere 'political scrap' for Alden or the other Englishmen was a part of the nationalist movement for the Indians.

According to the English there is an essential difference between the thinking of the Indians and themselves. Hamar, for example, observes that in the matters of justice, Indians go by the facts while the English go by evidence.

Alden, like his mentor Thompson, would like the Indians to peacefully accept a dominion status within the British Empire. But Dinabandhu rejects it out of hand. And even Findlay succinctly points out how a decent Indian feels about the Empire. He says:

I know now how decent Indians feel about staying in the Empire. It must be the way Nonconformists feel about coming into the Church of England (92).

Alden, as a representative of liberal Englishmen, thinks that Indians do not really know their case against England. He says:

Practically nine-tenths of the things they say against us are lies. It isn't that they haven't a case against us. I've often wished the Nationalists would let me handle their brief! Just for once, to show how good a job could be made of it? (118).

He gives a lengthy catalogue of the mistakes committed by England. He agrees with C.F. Andrews that England must do 'Prayaschitta' (atonement) for the wrongs done to India. One foremost sin of the English was the 'racism', the way they always treated Indians as an inferior race. Jayanand Sadhu recalls how Indians were humiliated at Curzon's Delhi Durbar, the experience which made him quit his job. Then there are events like Jallianwalla Bagh, and General Dyer being treated as a hero in England, which is quite unforgivable. But despite all this Alden, who speaks Thompson's ideas, cannot agree with the demand of Purna Swarajya. Like

Thompson he would like to salvage India connection by keeping India within the Empire, giving India a dominion status. For Thompson the Empire meant Internationalism with Britain at the center. For him Indians' demand of Purna Swarajya was a narrow nationalism. He even tried to impose this idea on Pandit Nehru, who deplored it in his *An Autobiography* :

We are told that independence is a narrow creed in the modern world, which is increasingly becoming inter-dependent, and therefore in demanding independence we are trying to put the clock back. Liberals and pacifists and even so-called socialists in Britain advance this plea and chide us for our narrow nationalism, and incidentally suggest to us that the way to a fuller national life is through the "British Commonwealth of Nations". (Nehru 419-20).

In Thompson's opinion Nationalists are nothing but sentimental fools, who nurse personal grouse against the English.

The paper, thus, shows how the British-Indian relationship presented in the fiction of this writer is multi-dimensional and dynamic. It underwent changes during the period from 1920 to 1930 in the colonial rule. The rise of the educated middle classes that benefited from the English political thought and liberalism became politically aware and started the nationalist movement which significantly changed the relationship between the English and the Indians. The English in India had become psychologically attached to India and the Indians, and while leaving India there was a feeling of regret as well as realization of mistakes made, but for which the English and the Indians would had developed comradeship visualized by Thompson.

However, Alden, the mouthpiece of Thompson, is unable to forget that he is a 'Sahib' and that he is the British. For all his sympathy for Indians, he sounds a false note here. One wonders

how Thompson could hope to form friendly relationship between the two communities, if the best character (Alden) in his fiction brags about philanthropy and indulges in self-praise for the English.

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THE PROBLEM OF SIN IN THE SCARLET LETTER

Sanjay Kumar

The concept of sin is central to Christianity. "In Adam's fall we have sinned all". We inherit a propensity to sin from our forefathers, and by consciously and voluntarily indulging this hereditary propensity, we fall into actual sin.

Although Hawthorne did not believe in the institutionalized forms of Christianity, he did believe in its basic spirit. He was obsessed with the problem of sin in his writings. A curious aspect of his preoccupation is the frequent vagueness of sin. He seems more concerned with sin in the abstract than with particular offences. The sins of Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance* and still more of Miriam in *The Marble Faun*, though doubtlessly sexual, are left vague. In "The Minister's Black Veil" we do not know for the perpetration of what specific sin the minister assumes the black veil. "Fancy's Show Box" enforces with scriptural rigor the guilt of even uncommitted sin, "sinning in the heart."

Unlike other novels and stories of Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* deals with a particular sin – the sin of adultery and its consequences. This sin involves three characters – Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth. They are shown as representing different facets of the sin and their consequences. Hester has sinned through passion and has to wear the badge of shame, the scarlet letter A, embroidered on the bosom of her gown; Arthur has concealed participation in the sin and has suffered inwardly and secretly; and Chillingworth is the wronged husband eaten up with jealous madness of revenge.

But is it right to call the particular act of Hester and Arthur sinful? Is the action symbolized by the scarlet letter wholly sinful? To these questions *The Scarlet Letter* draws a variety of response. According to the puritan critics, Hester has sinned as she has broken one of the commandments. The romantic critics tend to absolve her of all guilt by saying that she just obeys the deepest urges of her nature. The transcendental critics come out with yet another response. According to them, going by the Minister's morality, Hester has sinned. But, then, she has a higher morality of her own and she has not violated this higher morality of hers. This rich variety of response is on account of ambiguities embedded in the text.

In the present paper I propose to attempt a study of this intriguing problem from different points of view. For the same of convenience, I shall focus on the characters as it is in and through them that this problem is manifested.

I

According to the puritan viewpoint, Hester is a sinful woman since she has broken the seventh commandment, "Thou shall not commit adultery." Hawthorne, like the puritans, believes in the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. The words of Chillingworth seem to echo Hawthorne's own views :

My old faith long forgotten, comes back to me, and explains all that we do, and all we suffer. By the first step away thou didst plant the germ of evil; but since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity..... It is our Fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may (126).

We commit sin by choice, not by necessity. But once this sin is committed, the inexorable wheel of fate takes over and there is no escaping from the consequences of the sin. There can be no redemption.

The sin of *The Scarlet Letter* is, admits Hawthorne, a "sin of passion, not of principle, nor even purpose" (143). Yet "be the stern and sad truth spoken, that the breach which guilt has once made

into the human soul is never, in this mortal state, repaired" (144). In the forest scene where Hester and Arthur meet, Hawthorne asserts, "She had wandered without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness... Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers – stern and wild ones – and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss" (143). When Hester says to Arthur – "What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so!" (140) – he bids her to hush. Around the time of his death, she begs for the hope of reunion beyond grave, "Shall we not spend our immortal life together? Surely, surely we have ransomed one another, with all this woe!" Again she is hushed. "I fear! I fear! It may be that when we forget our God, – when we violated our reverence each for others' soul, – it was thenceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter in an everlasting and pure reunion. God knows ..." (181). Hawthorne nowhere contradicts this speech of Arthur. Again, in the concluding chapter of the novel, he points towards the impossibility of her salvation :

Earlier in life, Hester had vainly imagined that she herself might be the destined prophetess, but had long since recognized the impossibility that any mission of divine and mysterious truth should be confided to a woman stained with sin, bowed down with shame, or even burdened with a life-long sorrow (185).

Hester sins and this act of hers, according to the Puritan view, denies her salvation. But her sin is the least grievous, and her punishment the lightest since she has sinned only through passion. Arthur's concealment is yet more grievous, and Chillingworth's the direst of all. Arthur says to Hester, "That old man's revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so!" (140). Chillingworth is the wronged husband, but he is seen as more sinning than sinned against, as more sinful even than the minister is. "He now dug into the poor clergyman's heart, like a miner searching for gold; or, rather,

like a sexton delving into a grave" (95). He stole into the chamber of the heart like a thief and there turned over, without valuing, "many precious materials, in the shape of high aspirations for the welfare of his race, warm love of souls, pure sentiments, natural piety, strengthened by thought and study, and illuminated by revelation" (96). As he does so, he imagines that his interest in what he finds is purely objective and disinterested, even scientific: "He had begun an investigation, as he imagined, with the severe and equal integrity of a judge, desirous only of truth, even as if the question involved no more than the air-drawn lines and figures of a geometrical problem, instead of human passions, and wrongs inflicted on himself" (95). He is aided in his rationalization by the fact that his own heart is cold like a "cheerless habitation." But all the while it is becoming clearer that he is like Ethan Brand, who with "cold and remorseless purpose" conducted a psychological experiment on a young girl and "wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul, in the process." He becomes a moral monster who feeds only on another's torment, divorced wholly from the sources of life.

While the puritans condemn Hester, Arthur and Chillingworth, Hawthorne does not stop at that, but he goes a step further and condemns even the puritans. They are also guilty of an unpardonable sin. Their dragging Hester into the public gaze and trying to extort her secret from her constitute an attempt at "violation of the human heart". He asserts, "There can be no outrage, methinks, against our common nature, - whatever be the delinquencies of the individual, - no outrage more flagrant than to forbid the culprit to hide his face for shame" (45).

Hawthorne's treatment of sin is relentless. The sinner must repent and confess. But what then? Is there no salvation? Here one group of puritan critics differs. They believe in the Christian doctrine of forgiveness of sin through expiation and atonement. They believe that Hester expiates her sin by means of repentance and a virtuous life later. Even Arthur rises through his final act of honesty and

courage. Yvor Winters says, "Hester represents the repentant sinner, Dimmesdale the half-repentant sinner, and Chillingworth the unrepentant sinner" (20).

There seems to be a consensus among the puritans about the culpability of Hester. That she herself never admits to sin, that she is never represented as acting blindly in a fit of passion, and that she never repents of her sin are facts which they overlook. Moreover, they forget that Hawthorne's condemnation of her sin is never confirmed by her own words.

Meanwhile, other faults in Hester's character are admitted by the traditional and the liberal alike. Even if she does not do what she believes to be evil, she nevertheless tempts her lover to do what he believes to be evil and thus causes his death. And because she wishes to protect her lover, she consents to a life of deception and concealment that she herself knows to be false. But for the puritans neither her temptation of her lover nor her deception of him is a cardinal sin; only her act of passion is.

Therefore Hester's passion is the fatal flaw which causes the tragedy. Her sin is certain, the law she breaks is immutable, and the human tragedy is inevitable.

II

According to the romantic viewpoint, Hester does not sin at all, or, if she does, she transforms her sin into a virtue. Does Hawthorne himself not describe the radiance of the scarlet letter, shining upon her breast like a symbol of victory? "The tendency of her fate has been to set her free. The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread" (143). She – if we discount Hawthorne's moralistic conclusion – never repents of her sin of passion, because she never recognizes it as such.

Regis Michaud has gone to the extent of suggesting *The Scarlet Letter* as a "masterpiece of Hawthorne's immoralism" (36). Not only Hester but even the puritan minister becomes "an amoralist and a Nietzschean" (44). "In truth", writes Hawthorne, "nothing short

of a total change of dynasty and moral code in that interior kingdom was adequate to account for the impulses now communicated to the minister" (155). But Hester alone becomes perfectly immoral, for "the world's law was no law for her mind". She alone dares renounce utterly the dead forms of tradition and dares follow the natural laws of her own instinctive nature to the end. She gives everything to love. When she and Arthur meet in the forest, even nature seems to be sympathizing with them : "Such was the sympathy of Nature – that wild, heathen Nature of the forest, never subjugated by human law, nor illumined by higher truth – with the bliss of these two spirits ! Love, whether newly born, or aroused from a death like slumber, must always create a sunshine" (145-6).

According to the romantics, it is not Hester who is sinful and evil, but the society which imposes tyrannical restraints upon the natural instincts of man. Hyatt H. Waggoner says, "moral law and nature's ways do not perfectly coincide, or run parallel on different levels; they cross, perhaps at something less than a right angle. At the point of their crossing the lover's fate is determined" (134). Because Hester is so perfectly loyal and loving that she will never abandon her lover, she is condemned by the puritans. Neither human frailty nor any tragic imperfection of character, but only the inevitable forces of social determinism cause the disaster described by the *The Scarlet Letter*.

III

Between the orthodox belief that Hester has sinned utterly and the opposite romantic belief that she has not sinned at all, the transcendental idealists seek to mediate. They agree with the romantics that she does wisely to sacrifice everything for love. But they insist that her love is neither blindly passionate nor purposeless. "What we did," she exclaims to Arthur, "had a consecration of its own", To them, her love is not sinful because it is not disloyal to her evil husband (whom she has never loved) or to the traditional morality 'in which she has never believed). Rather her love is purposefully

aimed at a permanent union with her lover. In fact, it has already endured through seven years of separation and disgrace. She does well to "obey her heart", because she feels no conflict between her heart and her head. She is neither romantically immoral nor blindly rebellious against society and its laws.

Because Hester does not deny the moral law but goes beyond it to a "higher law", she transcends both romance and tradition. As if to emphasize this fact, Hawthorne himself declares that she "assumed freedom of speculation which our forefathers, had they known it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter" (119). Unlike her lover, she has explicitly been led "beyond the scope of generally received laws." She has consciously wished to become "the prophetess" of a more liberal morality. According to the transcendentalists, therefore, Hester's sin is not that she breaks the commandments – for, in the sight of God, she has never truly been married. Nor is she the blameless victim of society, as the romantics believe. She has sinned in that she has deceived her lover concerning the identity of her husband. And she admits this clearly :

"O Arthur", cried she, "forgive me ! In all things else, I have striven to be true ! Truth was one virtue to which I might have held fast, and did hold fast, through all extremity; save when thy good... were put in question ! Then I consented to a deception. But a lie is never good, even though death threaten on the other side" (139).

Not traditional morality, but transcendental truth, governs the conscience of Hester. But she has a conscience, and she has sinned against it.

Indeed, Hester has sinned, exactly because she puts romantic love ahead of ideal truth. She has done evil in allowing the good of her lover to outweigh the higher law. She has sacrificed her own integrity by giving absolutely everything to her loved one.

According to the transcendentalists, Hester sins in that she does not go beyond human love. In seeking to protect her lover by deception, she sins both against her own integrity and against God. If she had told the whole truth in the beginning, she would have been blameless. But she lacks the perfect self-reliance.

The tragedy of *The Scarlet Letter* results from the conflict of the orthodox morality of Arthur with the transcendental morality of Hester. For Arthur, unlike Hester, sins blindly through passion, committing an act which he feels to be wrong. And because he sins against his own morality, he feels himself unable to grasp the freedom which Hester urges. If, on the contrary, he had conscientiously been able to flee with her to a new life on the western frontier, there would have been no tragedy. But,

It can not be !” answered the minister, listening as if he were called upon to realize a dream. “I am powerless to go. Wretched and sinful as I am, I have had no other thought than to drag on my earthly existence where Providence hath placed me (142).

IV

There seems to be not much dispute regarding Arthur's and Chillingworth's sins. They have committed sin and they stand guilty. But the doubts about the nature and extent of Hester's culpability persist. While the puritans believe that she has sinned through blind passion, the romantics refuse to believe that she has sinned at all. The transcendentalists believe that she has sinned through deception. Hawthorne supports the puritan viewpoint and imposes his moralistic conclusion. Thus he describes her as admitting her sin of passion and renouncing her 'selfish ends' and as seeking to expiate her crime. But she herself has never admitted to any sin other than deception and has never acted selfishly and has worn her scarlet letter triumphantly, rather than penitently.

To me, it is the transcendentalist viewpoint which seems most convincing. Hester has not sinned against community or her husband.

but she has sinned against Arthur. Although she has committed no evil in terms of her own morality, she has been, nevertheless, instrumental in Arthur's having committed a horrible sin against his; it is she who has caused the physical and spiritual desiccation of her lover, and for this she suffers from a sense of guilt.

As for the absolution from sin, Hawthorne takes the stand that one can not escape a sin committed, that a misdeed is fatal in its results, and that there is no redemption for the sinner. Here I tend to agree with the Catholics according to whom the absolution from sin is possible through expiation and atonement. And redemption does take place for Hester and Arthur. In the case of Hester, the redemption takes place not by means of repentance for the sin of adultery and a virtuous later life as the Catholics believe, but because she is forgiven by Arthur. Since she has sinned against Arthur, her absolution can come only from him. And this is made quite clear early in the novel. When the Reverend Mr. Wilson offers Hester the removal of the letter in return for the name of Pearl's father, she answers, "Never !... looking not at Mr. Wilson, but into the deep and troubled eyes of the younger clergyman. 'It is too deeply branded. Ye can not take it off. And would that I might endure his agony as well as mind !'" (54) Here, it is quite obvious that she feels that her sin is only against her lover and that, consequently, only he can ease her of her pain. In the same vein she later tells Chillingworth, when he assures her that the community will allow her to remove her stigma, "It lies not in the pleasure of the magistrates to take off this badge... Were I worthy to be quit of it, it would fall away of its own nature or be transformed into something which speaks a different purport" (22). Only Arthur has the power to remove the letter, which is precisely what happens several chapters later in the forest scene :

Do I feel joy again ?" Arthur cries out ecstatically, "Methought the germ of it was dead in me ! O Hester, thou art my better angel ! I seem to have flung myself- sick, sin-stained, and sorrow-blackened-down upon these forest leaves, and to have risen up all made anew, and with new powers to glorify Him that hath been merciful ! This is already the better life ! Why did we not find it sooner ? (145)

Arthur's having 'risen up all made anew' is the absolution of Hester's sin; her rebirth is her forgiveness; he has taken off the letter. Free at last from her burden of "sin and sorrow" she loosens her abundantly rich and dark hair from the nun-like cap in which she has encased it for seven years, releasing "her sex, her youth and the whole richness of her beauty" (147). It is the moment of redemption, a moment paid for with humility, isolation, forbearance and pain.

As for Arthur, the redemption takes place when he publicly confesses his sin on the scaffold. He is reconciled to God :

By sending yonder dark and terrible old man, to keep the torture always at red-heat ! By bringing me hither to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people ! Had either of these agonies be wanting, I had been lost for ever ! Praised be his name ! His will be done ! Farewell ! (181)

But, for Chillingworth there can be no redemption since there is no repentance.

The Scarlet Letter, being a complex work of art, is rich in suggestions and despite Hawthorne's own moral declamation at the end of the novel, different critics have interpreted and still continue to interpret the problem of sin in different ways. And certainly this is not the last that we have heard on this subject.

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COMMUNICATION SKILL AND TEACHER EMPOWERMENT : A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Saryug Yadav

Art of communication is an attempt to conquer death. It would be a biological disaster if men and women cease to be communicative. It is a supreme proof above physical strength and beauty that human beings exist on the earth. Communication is made through both linguistic and non-linguistic modes. It may be noted that language is the greatest achievement of human intelligence and the best means of communication in real life situations. Effective communication elevates one to an honourable height in the society. It is a fundamental attribute of cultural identity and empowerment, both for the individual and the group. Language (as a tool of communication) is an effective means of exerting and exercising power, 'power is nothing but a strategy' (Michel Foucault). Communication is a must for education. A teacher is effective and successful only if he/she knows how to communicate his ideas to the students, parents and the community at large. So, nothing is as precious as the art of communication skill for a teacher who belongs to the noble profession of teaching that teaches all other professions. Clarity of thought and suitable medium of expression help a teacher to communicate effectively. How to communicate is a great challenge for teachers living in the age of liberalisation, privatization and globalization. Why does communication fail? How should we communicate? Why should we communicate? Who should we communicate with? How will communication help the teacher community in intellectual, social, economic and political advancement and empowerment? The present paper is an attempt

to critically analyse and examine all these issues in relation to teacher empowerment.

UNDERSTANDING TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

The term 'teacher empowerment' has various meanings associated with it in the education literature. Power can be defined as 'control' but in terms of educational settings it is more useful to consider power as 'doing' or 'acting' opportunities for teachers to try out new approaches, to problem solve and to inquire, assist them in becoming empowered. Empowerment of teachers occurs when they have opportunities to create meaning in their respective schools and institutions. It may be stated that school administrators have the resources and the opportunities to empower teachers. They can provide leadership opportunities for outstanding staff members. They can increase opportunities during the school day for teachers to interact on teaching problems (Nias 1990).

It is significant to note that teachers can and do identify problems and progress to defining them and seeking resolutions. Teachers are dedicated, responsible and morally committed professionals. They are empowered to inquire into matters critically in order to improve their own practice. Ideally teachers can be empowered by (a) working together on Joint projects (b) talking to one another at a level of detail that is rich and meaningful (c) shared planning or evaluation of topics (d) observing their colleagues in peer observation arrangements (e) training together and training one another (for example, teaching others about new ideas and classroom practices and (f) having access to appropriate level of material and human support and resources (Little 1990). The three major factors that facilitate empowerment include acquisition of support, information and resources.

Some scholars consider that teachers are not interested in empowerment because of limiting factors in the culture of teaching. Hargreaves (1989) believes that teachers are present-oriented, conservative and individualistic. They tend to avoid long term

planning and collaboration with their colleagues. Teachers are trained to survive in the system as individuals. Teachers have few ways of sharing their experiences. There is little opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practices. Major problems for teachers are problems of organizations.

THE GLOBAL EDUCATION SCENARIO

It is disheartening to learn from the World Education Report (1998) that 57 million teachers all over the globe lack the resources and support they need to work effectively. It would not be an exaggeration to state that it is the teachers in the poorest countries who face dire shortages of basic necessities in their schools. Their economic and social status leaves much to be desired.

The average teacher's lot even in the most developed countries has not improved in recent years. The Report points out that the majority of the existing school buildings are not equipped to integrate the new information and communication technologies. It has put the focus on teachers and teaching in a changing world and laments that while the pressure on the mentors to help improve students' results and 'learning outcomes' has grown, the teachers' income and status have either stagnated or even declined. There is no doubt that teachers today 'constitute the largest single distinctive category of professionals', and in their hands lies the responsibility of moulding the young ones into good citizens of a global society. But are the authorities at the helm exerting themselves to ensure a fair deal to teachers? The answer does not sound encouraging (*The Hindu*, April 9, 1998 : 10).

EDUCATION IN INDIA

Education in India is riddled with several inherent paradoxes, contradictions and controversies. India is still struggling for education for all even after sixty years of independence. In the current process of industrialization and globalization the country requires a quality education system which is closely related to teacher empowerment. Of all the different factors, which influence the quality of education

and its contribution to national development, the quality, competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant (Education Commission, 1966). The National Curriculum Framework (2005) says that 'No system of education can rise above the quality of its teachers, and the quality of teachers greatly depends on the means deployed for selection, procedures adopted for training, and the strategies used for ensuring accountability.' There is no wonder that the untrained or partially trained, under paid, and over worked teachers can contribute precious little expected of them.

THE TEACHER AND THE LANGUAGE

Education is a process of human enlightenment and empowerment for the achievement of a better and higher quality of life. A sound and effective system of education results in the unfoldment of learners' potentialities, enlargement of their competencies and transformation of their interests, attitudes and values. It is the art of utilizing knowledge for moral and material development, a fundamental means to bring about any desired change in the society. Education is essential for all as Kenneth Galbraith rightly says, 'No literate population is ever poor/No illiterate population is other than poor.'

About education it is said that the teacher must teach, the student must learn and the system must work. If the teacher does not come to school or does not find time to teach, then expect the students to come and learn is day dreaming. If the teachers do not know the languages of the learners nor of the community, then there is very little communication and consequently very little teaching and learning (Pattanayak 2005).

What is our expectation of a teacher? We expect the teacher to be a good communicator. A teacher should know how to communicate effectively, for teaching is a kind of creative dialogue. Without adequate command of language the teacher might feel uncomfortable and often miss the basic points or even dabble in irrelevant issues. Precision in use of language adds clarity to thought. It is a basis for the development of the teacher's professional

personality and a major contributor to the teaching-learning process. The contribution of language to formulation and clarification of concepts needs not to be emphasized. Language is the real asset of an effective teacher. It strengthens and empowers the teacher not only academically, professionally but also psychologically and socially. Language is a powerful tool in the hands of a teacher who wants to have professional expertise and wish to rub his shoulders with his/her national or international counterparts/fellow brothers.

In the active process of constructing knowledge the teacher has a significant role to play despite the revolutionary changes in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), since neither the television nor the satellite transmission of knowledge can dispense with the age old oral discussion and interactive presentation. Teaching, in other words, is a profession where the teacher interacts with fellow human beings. His role is that of a catalyst agent, a facilitator in teaching learning activities. His task is to transform his student into a fellow seeker of knowledge rather than make him/her a helpless suppliant. A true teacher encourages every positive move on the part of the students in the classroom. Effective teaching and dynamic communications are the synonymous, for good teachers are clear communicators, and good communicators are effective teachers. To be able to communicate effectively it is necessary to have proficiency in basic language skills, namely, LSRW.

COMMUNICATION AT THE HEART OF EDUCATION

Communication is a sine qua non of teaching learning process. Effective communication is the core of education. In fact, teaching is an interactive process, primarily involving classroom talk, which takes place between teacher and pupils and secures during certain definable activities (Amidon and Hunter 1967). Communication is defined by Edgar Dale as 'the sharing of ideas and feelings in a mood of mutuality'. We communicate in order to get, give or exchange information. We communicate in order to do things and get things done. It would be interesting to quote A.G.Smith who remarks about

importance of communication in these words, 'Living is largely a matter of communicating. The husband kisses his wife, the customer looks at the price tag; the pupil raises his hand, the little girl smiles. They are all communicating. People communicate from morning to night, particularly in the modern world, where most people make their living communicating. Authors and actors, preachers and teachers are professional communicators. Most other people also make their living communicating as salesmen, policemen, secretaries or psychiatrists.'

What Smith wishes to convey is that communication is part and parcel of our life, and success of our life depends on how effectively we communicate. In a world where spoken language is perhaps the dominant means of communication, speech is at once an art and science that education dare not neglect. Communication, a key to management, is a must in education. The way we communicate with someone expresses and develops our relationship with that person. Learning takes place in an environment of confidence and cordiality and positive emotional involvement leads to effective learning because the secure and motivated learner is prepared to make a personal investment in learning. A teacher should understand that learning means the students need to know to get his message across, get things done, be polite, avoid judging other people according to their (students) own values and deal with the unexpected rightly and brightly. A teacher has to ensure that students can use the language in real life situations without any difficulty. And all this can be expected from a teacher who himself possesses the art of effective communication skills, one of the major demands of the noble profession which we call 'teaching'.

TEACHER EMPOWERMENT AND THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION

Teacher empowerment is a process of cultivating ability, capacity, imagination, management, self evaluation and self control of teachers. The need of the hour is to lay emphasis on determinants of effective teaching and the methods of making effective teachers. It will

automatically result in development of teacher empowerment because teacher empowerment is ultimately, directly related to the capacity, efficacy and effectiveness of the teacher as teaching professional. 'If teachers acquire professional competencies and commitment, and if they are enabled and empowered to perform their multiple tasks in the classroom as well as in the school and the community in a genuinely professional manner, then a chain reaction can begin starting with a sound teacher performance and culminating into a high quality learning among increasingly more students in cognitive, affective and psychomotor areas of human development.' In fact, power is commanded not demanded and an effective teacher always enjoys this privilege of social status. Power comes from the strength of his personality, his commitment to his teaching profession. It goes without saying that a teacher's performance largely depends on how she/he communicates with his/her students. We cannot imagine a teacher who has no command of communication skills. A good teacher is always an effective communicator. In teaching learning process 'how' is more important than 'what' and here lies the role of effective art of communication leading to interesting and interactive dialogue between the teacher and the taught. Nothing is as precious for a teacher as the power of communication because it is the quality of communicative competence of a teacher that determines largely the quality of teaching learning activity or the transactional methods of a content irrespective of any subject and discipline. The greater the command of language, the powerful the transactional process and learning attainment. Let it be remembered by every teacher that communication is the life breath of effective teaching and it is because of his/her ability to communicate meaningfully he is held high in the society. It is the ability of his linguistic communication that provides him the knack to use language as a strategy of power in society. In this context I feel inclined to quote Michel Foucault who rightly says that power is exercised rather than possessed. It is a strategy in which both the dominating and the dominated are jointly engaged. Power can never be thought of in

isolation, it is exercised through social practice and production. It is not applied externally through coercion or force but is circulated by practices which influence people to think, act and behave in particular ways. Hence, power constitutes a way of social cohesion, a way of life. Power is part and parcel of our life. It is indispensable to our existence. It operates in an impersonal way, not through an external agency (Nagarajan).

It is quite evident from the foregoing discussion that power is indispensable to our existence and it is exercised rather than possessed. Power is nothing but a strategy (Foucault). In this regard it may be noted that if power is a strategy, then, there is nothing more powerful strategy than power exerted and exercised by means of language. Words have tremendous power to influence the listeners. Power is the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others (Mr. Wrong). Intended power is exerted in the following ways : (i) authority : legal, administrative, (ii) manipulation: media (iii) Persuasion : Education and (iv) Force : physical. A teacher who is blessed with art of communication skill can attain and secure his status and power in society through good education/constructive persuasion. It is because of this persuasive and communicative power that Lydia Haward Sigourney holds a very high opinion of teachers and expresses his views in such eloquent words : "Teachers should be held in the highest honour. They are the allies of legislators; they have agency in the prevention of crime, they aid in regulating the atmosphere, whose incessant action and pressure cause the life blood to circulate, and to return pure and healthful to the heart of the nation'. Moreover, the teachers' place in society is that of a visionary architect whose mission evokes universal respect. Let every teacher work with the conviction that associates with the teacher :

I also build but not with steel or stone,
 But with the shadowy bricks of innocence
 And mortar that the heart has made her own

And what I build has neither roof nor fence that can deflect

Evidently, teaching is a living and breathing profession, the profession that teaches all other professions. It is undoubtedly a noble profession but it has certain demands as well. The emphasis on the calibre of teachers requires immediate attention in order to live up to the aspirations and expectations of a global society. In fact, the pedagogues in the twenty first century have necessarily to function in such a way that they become facilitators for effective learning rather than regular instructors. One should remember that the learning needs of students have also diversified in recent years. There is, in addition, an international dimension of quality and relevance which the educational system of any country must reckon with (*The Hindu*, April 9, 1998 : 10). Consequently, only competent, capable and committed teacher who has command of national and international language of communication will be able to compete in the race of quality teaching and exhibit his professional expertise culminating into powerful place in society. Status, by reason of a title or position will become increasingly difficult to come by, we feel. Status, in other words, will have to be earned by teacher, as by any other professional worker ... the closer the teacher is able to link himself and his vocation with the mission of the nation, the more relevant he will become and the more revered by students, parents and community (The National Commission on School Teachers 1983-87).

The importance of language in the life of any human being needs no emphasis. Language plays a very important role in the all round development and empowerment of a teacher. Language is the heart of education, so is the heart of teacher and taught. The teacher has to be fluent in the language being used and can handle it with ease. Proficiency Language is a must for every teacher because of its seven functions (Halliday 1975 : 11-17) which include :

1. The Instrumental Function : using language to get things.
2. The Regulatory Function : using language to control the behaviour of others.
3. The Interactional Function : Using language to create interaction

with others.

4. The Personal Function : Using language to express personal feelings and meanings.
5. The heuristic function : Using language to learn and discover.
6. The Imaginative Function : Using language to create a world of imagination.
7. The Representational Function : Using language to communicate information.

NCF 2005 AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Language education is not confined to the language classroom. A science, social science or mathematics class is 'ipso facto' a language class. Learning the subject means learning the terminology, understanding the concepts, and being able to discuss and write about them critically. In addition, language as a constellation of skills, thought encoders and markers of identity cuts across school subjects and disciplines. Speech and listening, reading and writing, are all generalized skills, and children's mastery over them becomes the key factor affecting success at school. In different situations and circumstances, all of these skills need to be used in day to day life. This is why it is important to view language education as everybody's concern, and not as a responsibility of the language teacher alone (NCF 2005 : 40).

Keeping in view the importance of language in the scheme of education NCF 2005 suggests that language proficiency of the teacher needs to be enhanced as the existing teacher education programmes do not recognize the centrality of language in the curriculum. It is assumed that links between instructional models and teaching of specific subjects are automatically formed during the programme. But most teacher education programmes provide little scope for student teachers to reflect on their experiences and thus fail to empower teachers as agents of change (NCF 2005 : 107). In fact, language plays a very constructive role in development of life skills such as critical thinking, interpersonal communication, negotiation

skill, decision making, problem solving and self management skills which are so critical in dealing with the demands and challenges in everyday life. No knowledge is constructed without language. The, NCF 2005 gives a fresh impetus to language education and it does rightly so because education sans language is no education at all.

TEACHER, LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

Who am I as a teacher? Who are my students? How do they experience my teaching? Do they easily understand my language? Do I use too many technical words? Do I follow known conventions of language? What are the consequences of my language abilities on the students? How is my tone in the language? Do I maintain the rhythm of the language? What sort of change do I see as fit for my own teaching? The teacher has to reason with himself/herself about their teaching which they have been constantly improving through reflection. The answer lies in the ultimate question : will my teaching improve with better fluency and appropriate use of language? Today, proficiency in the language is a skill, liquid assets and financial gains for educators in India and abroad (Sunwani 2005).

What is remarkable to point out is that language makes it possible for individuals to live in a society. Linguistically speaking, language is a social activity/affair rather than as a means of individual self expression. Speech is the instrument of society (Ben Jonson). There is a very close connection between the two facts that man is a speaking animal and that he is the social animal par excellence. The definition of language as a 'means of communicating thoughts' is now a days commonly held to be, as a partial truth, more misleading than illuminating, a more fruitful definition is that, language is a means of social control'. Men do not speak simply to relieve their feelings or to air their views, but to awaken a response in their fellows and to influence their attitudes and acts. This profoundly social character of language should constantly be borne in mind by every teacher if he/she is really interested in his empowerment English is the language of power and wealth in India. Those who do not speak and write

good English will be inaccessible to the power increasing Information Age.

COMMUNICATION AND LIFE

Communication is a process in which a communicator sends a message to the communicant through the means of a medium and gets the feedback so as to ensure that the message has reached from one end to the other. Successful communication takes place when the listener understands the speaker as the speaker intended.

Communication fails for the following reasons :

- aim not clear
- language difficult to understand
- clumsy and difficult construction of sentences
- poor organization of ideas
- inappropriate tone
- poor grammar/spelling/pronunciation
- poor presentation
- Boring style.

As a matter of fact, an effective communicator should take necessary precaution to avoid these above mentioned hindrances that destroy the purpose of communication. A teacher should well remember that there are nine essentials of effective oral communication which include facial expression, eye contact, tone of voice, physical touch, appearance, body posture proximity, physical gesture and head position. Meaning is the sumum bonum of communication. Accuracy, brevity and clarity are cornerstones of effective communication. Intelligibility, appropriacy, accuracy and fluency are the four commands of oral communication. Art of communication colours life as the sun colours flowers. In true communication, the hand, the head and the heart of the man go together.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above discussion, we come to the conclusion that communication skill and teacher empowerment are intimately related. The greater the communication skill of the teacher, the better the status. Art of communication elevates a teacher to an honourable position in society. It is a sine qua non for each and

every effective teacher who wants to enjoy academic applause and social position in an age of liberalization, privatization and globalization where everybody wants to communicate but does not know how to communicate. Let every teacher remember the pronouncement made by Alan Warner : "Words are the tools of thought. If they become rusty and dirty, and lose their sharp points and cutting edges, thinking itself becomes less keen and efficient. Man needs language for the control of his environment, and the cleaner his language the better his control."

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THE USE OF THE PERFECTIVE IN INDIAN ENGLISH : IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING

Madhuri Gokhale

In the twentieth century, English acquired the status of an International language and the extensive use of English has resulted in an adaptation of English to the cultural and pragmatic needs of the speakers of English in various countries. Since the 1950s the non-native varieties of English have been growing in importance and productivity. Kachru comments, "A significant segment of the World's population uses it as their other tongue (as a second or foreign language)... It is this side of English which has actually elevated it to the status of an international and universal language" (2).

In the colonial days, Indian English was considered to be a sub-standard variety of British English. However, today, it has become an important component of the linguistic repertoire of Indian speakers and it is considered to be one of the prestigious languages spoken in India. It is indeed a matter of pride that at present India is the third largest English speaking nation after the USA and the UK. The term 'Indian English' as used in this paper may be interpreted as 'Standard Indian English' i.e. educated Pan Indian variety of English.

Schneider has pointed out that nativization is of great significance for the emergence and further development of New Englishes. According to him generally nativization takes place 'when varieties of English develop and adopt distinctive linguistic features of their own on all levels of language organization' (229). With respect to Indian English, large scale studies have been carried out on the

lexis and segmental phonology of Indian English. But, in spite of the claims regarding the grammar of Indian English, a detailed grammatical description of Indian English is not yet available in a systematic form. The present paper attempts to examine the Perfective in Indian English as a sub-system in its own right.

The English aspectual system has been analysed in different ways, but it is generally agreed that the Progressive and the Perfective constitute the two main sub-categories of aspect in English. This paper aims at exploring the formal and functional features of the Perfective in Indian English on the basis of the data collected from scientific, journalistic, official and literary registers. It also takes into consideration utterances used in real contexts by speakers of Indian English.

As in British English, the Perfective is sometimes used elliptically especially in informal contexts. For example, 'Submitted your project?' It is also found to be ellipted in non-initial co-ordinate clauses. For example,

State BJP leader Narendra Modi has politicised the issue and interfered in the smooth distribution of aid (Letter to the Editor, *Outlook*, 26 February, 2001:1).

The use of the Passive Perfective and Perfective along with the modal auxiliary verbs is also frequently made in Indian English. Incidentally, all these patterns also exist in Standard British English and so it seems that there are no formal differences between the Perfective in British English and Indian English.

The Perfective performs a variety of functions. According to Krusinga, the resultative perfect is the most frequent function of the perfect. In British English when the action indicated by the verb takes place at an indefinite or unknown time, the Perfective is used and when the action is made definite by an adverbial of time, the simple past tense is used. However in Indian English, the Perfective is frequently used with the past adverbials. The following examples illustrate this point.

- Dr. Anil Kakodkar, Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy, and Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission has laid the

foundation stone on 11th October, 2002. (Report on Achievements, Plans and Programmes of the University of Pune, 6 January, 2003 : 6).

- ICICI bank has revised its rate for corporate lending a few weeks ago (*The Economic Times*, 14 January, 2006 : 1).
- We have built this headquarter in the year 1967 (Singh : Tehelka. Com., Z.T.V., 24 March, 2005, 9.00 P.M.)
- He has completed the work last Monday.

If we consider the last example, in British English the completion of the work at a specific point of time in the past and the current relevance of this cannot be stated simultaneously. However in Indian English we find relaxation of rule restriction as in Indian English it is possible to combine two pieces of information in a single phrase.

The Perfective is also used to describe an action that begins in the past and continues right upto the present moment. For example, 'I have been working on this project since 2001'. It has been observed that the combination of two aspectual categories - Perfective and progressive which is found in British English is less frequent in Indian English. Indian English tends to favour the use of the Progressive for the Perfect Progressive and does not maintain any marked distinction between 'since' and 'for'. The following examples illustrate this point.

- Shri P. B. Gambhir is working as a reader in this scheme since last six months in a temporary capacity (Letter of the Finance Department, University of Pune)
- I am suffering from this illness since the past three years (*Good Health*, February 2003 : 22)
- Since two years we are facing a drought (*Star News*, 17 May, 2001, 3.00 P.M.).
- Since today morning I am suffering from headache pain (R. Parthasarathy : What is Your Good Name, Please ?)

Thus, the above examples show that the distinction between the Present Progressive and the Perfect Progressive is neutralized in Indian English. Another tendency noted in the analysis is the use of

the simple present to express the meaning of a persistent situation where the native varieties prefer the present perfect. For example,

- Mr. Chandrashekhar Tilak is the President of NSDA since 1998 (said by a lecturer in a formal function, BMCC, 3 March, 2006, 10.15 A.M.)
- The Warje Water filtration plant which will have a capacity of 100 MLD is under construction since 2000 (*The Indian Express*, Pune Newline, 24 October, 2004 : 1).
- Scientists engaged in the application of radioisotopes in human health meet in Badgastein once every year since 1975 (Nair : *Current Science*, 25 January, 2000 : 203).

In British English in an example like 'There has been no letter from the UGC since 1997', there is an element of redundancy as both the verb phrase and the prepositional phrase express the meaning of a persistent situation. On the other hand, in Indian English, simplification is achieved by reduction of redundancy.

Adverbials like 'today', 'this week', and 'this morning' can be used both with the perfect and the simple past. In British English, 'I have seen him this morning' is a possible utterance only if it is still morning. However Indian English does not impose such a constraint. For example,

We hope you have enjoyed the game this morning (Shastri : *Cricket Commentary*, DD1, 12 December, 2002, 5.15 P.M.).

It has been observed that the distinction between the simple past and the past perfect is also neutralized in Indian English. In British English the past perfect is used to refer to 'the past in the past', but Indians frequently make use of the past perfect even when two points of time or two actions are not referred to. The following examples illustrate this point.

- I had given it to her yesterday.
- Animal lover Joshi had visited the Corbett National Park in 2004 (Maitra : *The Indian Express*, Pune Newline, 17 May, 2005, :10).

The preceding discussion reveals that in spite of some differences, there is a close relationship between the distinctive patterns in Indian English and the core grammar of British English. The two varieties share a lot in common and so the patterns in Indian English are not likely to lead to any 'long term negative consequences for global English' (Svartvik 34).

The expansion of English and the recognition of other varieties of English make questions about correctness more problematic. In our present education system, when a student writes a sentence that does not follow the norms of British English, it is considered to be erroneous. It is felt that when students write sentences like 'I have completed the work yesterday' or 'He is learning music since 2000', teachers can initially passively accept them, as these patterns do not seem to hamper intelligibility. This will liberate them from 'linguistic schizophrenia'.

Students make different kinds of errors and it is not possible to correct all the errors simultaneously. Therefore, it is essential to distinguish between 'errors to be rectified' and 'errors to be tolerated'. This would enable the teacher to pay greater attention to more serious errors.

The question of a model for English has acquired immense pedagogical importance. The exonormative approach expects all users of a language to follow the rules set by the native speakers. On the other hand, the endonormative approach believes that norms can be found within a country and that external norms are unnecessary. The advantage of the endonormative approach is that it is possible to expand the notion of correctness within this approach. Thus, a sentence like 'I am learning music since 2000' may be considered as perfectly grammatical in this approach.

Traditionally in University examinations sentences like 'He has completed the work yesterday' or 'He is working on this project since 1999' are given and students are asked to correct them. Most teachers of English in India mark these sentences as wrong when they themselves make use of such sentences in their communications.

It is felt that only those patterns that are unacceptable in British English and Indian English must be given in the examinations.

It is also felt that when the deviant patterns with respect to the Perfective occur in different kinds of texts, in optional and special English classes the teacher must draw the students' attention to such deviations. This would enable the students to understand the fact that Indian English has its own distinct identity.

Today research in Indian English is taking place in different parts of India. There is a dire need to bring these researchers together and arrive at a comprehensive grammar of Indian English. Grammar books of Indian English would enable us to use Indian English as a model for all ELT purposes and therefore work in this direction must be taken up at the earliest. It is also hoped that teachers of English in India would become more assertive about the variety of English they speak. I would like to conclude this paper with Kachru's comment.

'The acceptance of a model depends on its users. The users must demonstrate a solidarity, identity and loyalty towards a language variety' (50).

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**CRITIQUE OF POSSESSION AND OWNERSHIP :
A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE MOVIE,
MATRUBHOOMI - A NATION WITHOUT WOMEN**

Malati Panga

Can you imagine a world without women? If statistics is anything to go by, some of the states in India are faced with such a future. The decline in the child sex ratio has been notable in Himachal Pradesh (897), Punjab (793), Chandigarh (845), Haryana (820), and Delhi (865), the classical region of the north and west referred to as the Bermuda triangle for missing females. Mr. Mohan Rao in his editorial article in *The Times of India*, "Karva Chauth Capitalism" notes that some of these areas have also seen import of women for marriages. In Haryana, it is reported that girls are brought in from as far away as Orissa and Bangladesh. These girls, apparently referred to as lesser wives are sometimes married to more than one husband, who due to poverty and lack of brides, cannot obtain a bride of his caste. Thus, we see the emergence of new forms of sex slavery, along with polyandry which apparently claims the sanctity of tradition.

Cinema has always voiced the concerns of the people and has drawn its raw material from the specific milieu in which it is located. *Matrubhoomi - A Nation without Women*, produced by SMG Production, written and directed by Manish Jha, is one such movie.

The opening shot of this movie begins with a man waiting for the birth of his baby. As soon as the cries of the baby rip the air, the men of the village break into a celebration. But the peals of happiness turn into a silence of doom as soon as they learn that it is a girl. The camera takes a wide angle shot as it pans the village and

then closes in on the little baby being drowned in a cauldron of milk. Thus this is an act not confined to one home but is carried out in the entire village.

Gradually, in this misogynist "Matrubhoomi", women become extinct. As one of the character puts it, "Barah saal ki ladki to chod, assi saal ki budiya tak nahi bachi" ("Forget about a twelve year old, even an eighty year old woman has not survived"). But the void left by women, especially as objects of the male gaze, needs to be filled. So we have men dressed in drags gyrating to the latest Bollywood numbers. As men gather together and have the much anticipated weekly porn film screening, the camera focuses on their lecherous looks, sexual curiosity, starvation and desperation.

No different from these men are Ramcharan and his five sons. Except for the youngest, all the other sons want to know whether they would ever get married. "Humari shaadi hogi bhi ya nahin?" ("will we ever get married?"). But in a world bereft of women, asking for a wife is like asking for the moon. There has been no marriage in the village for the last 15 years. So finally when a rich boy announces that he is getting married, it astounds everybody and touches the jealous streak in them. On the day of the marriage we, the viewers, are introduced to the fact that it is the bride's father who gets the dowry - a custom that is in sharp contrast to the existing norms. During the pheras, much to the shock of the bridegroom and the amusement of the villagers, it is brought to light that the bride is actually a boy masquerading as a girl.

It is in such a barren scenario that the village pandit spots a girl, Kalki, singing by herself in the woods. Shot in soft focus, she looks ethereal and nymph like in the sylvan woods. We get a foreshadowing of the commodification of the woman when the village pandit breaks this news to Ramcharan - "100% pure laadki wajib daam mein" ("100% pure girl available at a reasonable rate"). Without wasting time, Ramcharan along with his youngest son Suraj

rushes to Kalki's father with his eldest son's proposal. Kalki's father prefers the sober youngest son to the eldest one whose gun toting picture is shown to him. Finally, it is revealed to us that a compromise has been made and the deal which started with 1 ox and 1 lakh Rs. settles at 5 lakhs and 5 oxen.

It is during the marriage, when the camera moves from one bridegroom to the other, that we realise that she is being married not to one but to all the five brothers. Thus Kalki's sexuality and reproductive potential is a commodity bought for the service of the entire family. This "exchange of women", even in a negotiated marriage, has been identified by the anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss as the leading cause of female subordination. Levi Strauss says :

The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman ... but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners (115).

Levi Strauss reasons that in this process women are thought of more as things than humans.

Now that Kalaki has been bought, her body and sexual services are at the disposal of the five brothers. All the brothers get together and decide to have her one night each by turns. This still leaves them with two nights in a week and they are determined to make the most of them too. The eldest brother asserts, "Itna paisa diya hai ki na insafi hogi agar inhe akele sona pade to". ("So much of money has been given. It would be unfair if she has to sleep alone") At this point, their father interrupts. Being the patriarch and the one who has bought the "object", he wishes to assert his right on Kalki

first. The brothers have to bow to the hierarchy first and the father gets to spend the first night with Kalki. As each of the men in the family march into Kalki's bedroom at the appointed night, she has no choice but to submit to the sexual oppression night after night.

Kalki's enclosure within the patriarchal structure is complete and she leads a peripheral existence. Many feminists and anthropologists have shown that the male need to control women arises from his fear of her "otherness". Thus while everybody treats her as someone to be enslaved, it is only Sooraj and a servant boy Raghu who treat her like a human being, offer her companionship, share a few laughs with her and lend her a hand in the domestic chores. Kalki finds herself getting more comfortable with Sooraj and this incites the jealousy of the other brothers. Just as Draupadi was denied entry into heaven because she had loved Arjuna more than others, Kalki is pushed into hell when Suraj is killed by his own brothers. Kalki writes to her father pleading for help. When the father, in turn, learns that her father-in-law too is sleeping with her, he further uses her marriage to consolidate his own economic power by demanding 1 lakh more. Thus he gives a seal of approval to this arrangement.

Women under patriarchal rule have no right to complain and decide for themselves. Kalki's autonomous act of informing her father infuriates her husbands and they physically batter her. As a final act of stepping out of this feudal formulation, she tries to escape with the help of the low caste servant boy Raghu. But on the way Raghu is shot and then hacked to death and Kalki's attempt to break free is aborted by her husbands. As Gerda Learner in her book *The Creation of Patriarchy* puts it, "while men 'belonged in' a household or lineage, women 'belonged to' males who had acquired rights in them" (77). Thus Kalki's act of outstepping the confines of a marriage amounts to a violation of the property rights of her husbands. Just as cattle are domesticated, a recalcitrant wife needs to be tamed and

so she is clapped in iron chains in a cowshed. Her isolation and helplessness only increase her captor's sense of power. She is raped not just by her husbands and father-in-law but also by the low caste men when they discover that she is lying helpless in the cowshed. This is their way of getting back at the men who killed Raghu. As Sara Mills puts it in *Feminist Readings/ Feminists Reading*, "Within the patriarchal social order, women become tokens in the battle for power between men" (136).

When Kalki finally becomes pregnant, everyone claims paternity of the child. This triggers off a caste war in the village in which practically everyone is killed. As a catharsis of all her abuses, she gives birth to a baby and it is a girl.

Written and directed by Manish Jha, *Matrubhoomi* leaves us shocked, jolted and aghast but not touched or moved. Most structuralists and post-structuralists have attempted to show that the author is effectively dead. However, many feminists disagree with this type of theoretical position, since the gender of the author is of vital importance especially in the way the female experience is projected (Mills 72). Similarly, the audience only sees what the filmmaker wants it to see. With typical androcentric lens, Manish Jha focuses only on the moral depravity and instability that men plunge to when denied a normal family life. We are seldom given a peep into Kalki's mindscape and the psychological effects her circumstances have on her. All the men in the movie except Sooraj are shown to be unidimensional black characters. It is hard to understand how Kalki's father, who had the pluck to protect his daughter when everyone else was killing his, could turn so mercenary and be blinded to his daughter's plight. Even Sooraj, for that matter, is weak and does not ever question the hegemonic discourse and try to rescue Kalki from the damnation. Ironically, in this "Matru" bhoomi, women are missed only as sexual objects and not as factors that make a family complete.

Kalki is projected as nothing but a victim throughout. Her acceptance of her subordination is almost fatalistic. Throughout the movie, Kalki is given just 2 lines to speak. Although she lends a shoulder to Sooraj to cry on when he fails in his exams, she never expresses her feelings, not even to Sooraj. Why is Kalki so repressed? It would be pertinent to quote the two anthropologists, Shirley and Edvin Ardener here. The Ardeners analyse society in terms of 'muted' and 'dominant' groups. They argue that : "Whilst ever group in society generates its own ideas about reality at a deep level, not all of these can find expression at a surface level because the communicative channel is under the control of the dominant group". Women are in this relatively inarticulate position; they constitute a 'muted group' whose reality doe not get represented.

With the birth of the baby girl, the movie ends on an ambiguous note. Will Kalki's daughter be another Kalki and will she transgress against this world of dominance and hierarchy? She can - but only if she rises above her gender defined role and gains access to education and economic independence.

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RESEARCH NOTE

**ON THE DARKLING PLAIN : RETHINKING
INDIAN RESEARCH IN ENGLISH STUDIES**

M. S. Kushwaha

And we are here on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

- Matthew Arnold.

Whenever I think of Indian research in English studies, I am reminded of these lines from Arnold's "Dover Bench". They vividly describe the present state of research in English studies in India : there is a lot of feverish activity but no clear - cut direction or goal. What has always worried and still worries me is the way it is handled in our country both by administrators and academics. Far from according it any special attention (which it rightly deserves), both treat research casually and indifferently. While at the administrative level no pains are taken to maintain a systematic record of the research - work completed or in progress, at the academic level research is pressed almost mechanically. The topics are chosen in an arbitrary manner, and approved (and sometimes rejected or modified) without sufficient consideration. Same is the case with selection of supervisors or examiners of the dissertations / theses. However, I do not wish to dwell on these topic presently, my only intention is to point out the apathetic - almost irresponsible attitude of our colleagues

★ This is the revised version of a paper originally presented at the national seminar on "Research in English Studies in India. : Issues and Prospects", organized by the Department of English, University of Delhi, 2-4 March 2000. However, my basic stand remains the same - The Author.

in this regard. Whereas post-graduate and undergraduate courses of study are frequently reviewed and revised, no serious attempt has been made to re-examine and re-assess the system of research that has come to us, like many other things, as the legacy of the Raj. It still remains substantially the same; only the scope has widened. Once it was confined to British Literature, now it includes also American literature, Indian English literature and other so-called new literatures, Comparative literature, applied linguistics and ELT. But there is no change in statutory requirements of the Ph.D. thesis which still insist on originality. The Ordinance No. 19 of CCS University, Meerut reads: "The thesis submitted by the candidate must be original contribution to knowledge characterized either by the discovery of facts and their significance or by a new interpretation of facts or theories. In either case it should evince the candidate's capacity for critical examination and sound judgment". In the case of English studies, however, there is hardly any scope for 'discovery of facts'. So research for us means practically reinterpretation or 'new interpretation' of facts and theories. In other words, research is just a form of criticism. But this criticism must be characterized by originality.

Research in English Studies in India, by and large, has failed to measure up to these tall expectations. It is mostly 'derivative and unoriginal'. As Prof. V. K. Gokak rightly observes, "research students in our Universities frequently spend their years on preparing theses which are hardly anything more than a collection of available critical data and a contribution, not to knowledge, but to a whole heap of type - scripts piled up in a University library (143). This disparaging remark, it may be noted, was made way back in 1963 when the standard of University education was fairly high, and research was not a common activity. In the subsequent years there has been a gradual decline in educational standards all around. Things have come to such a pass that it is rare to find a postgraduate student of English literature who studies the original texts. His/her study is not only lamentably selective but based largely on bazaar notes. The

result is that he is neither sufficiently conversant with his subject nor efficient in handling the English language. Yet, thanks to our examination system, such students often succeed in getting good marks, and become eligible for admission to Ph.D. And when they join research (which they often do), they aim only at getting the doctor's degree. In fact, for the majority of students, research is not a pursuit of knowledge but just a 'degree-getting' exercise. This has led, on the one hand, to a further dilution of the quality of the research-work, and on the other, to corruption and manipulation. How far these evils have eroded research may, perhaps, be gauged from the fact that a clerk working in the research section of a University has succeeded in obtaining the degree of D.Litt. in English literature. Lately the situation has taken a far more sinister turn that threatens to destroy the entire fabric of research and reduce it just to a farce. It has come to light that some unscrupulous research scholars rehash or simply resubmit an already approved thesis under a different title. As thousands of dissertations lie buried in Central libraries of the Universities / institutes all over the Country (and there is also the possibility of procuring them from foreign countries), there is no way of detecting this kind of piracy or wholesale plagiarism. It is almost impossible to check this practice which is bound to grow with the passage of time. However, some of our colleagues are also to be blamed for this state of affairs. Motivated by petty considerations, they connive with or actively help the undeserving students in getting their doctorate. Sometimes it takes the form of 'ghost-writing'.

The U.G.C. tried to contain this downtrend but failed. It first delinked the Ph.D. degree from appointment to lectureship, then fixed up arbitrarily a deadline for recognition of the degree (which led to the production of the worst of thesis) and finally restored it to its original position by equating it with NET. This decision, which smacks of defeatism and desperation, is likely to aggravate the situation. The panel of academics, appointed by the U.G.C., has

made some interesting suggestions, but they happen to be more idealistic than practical.

In fact, both the U.G.C. authorities and the academics think within the existing framework of the Ph.D. Programme. They do not realize that it is this framework that is the root of all evils. So long as this pattern continues, no improvement is possible. For, as I have hinted earlier, it is highly unrealistic to expect that a fresh postgraduate research scholar would produce a work of original merit. Even seasoned scholars are not always original. As V. K. Gokak says, "It is given only to a few to sense a new interpretation and to develop it cogently" (144). A Ph.D. student is not only callous but also has no opportunity of improving himself, there being no regular instruction at the Ph.D. level. He is bound to produce a thesis which has no intrinsic value. Nor does this thesis help him in his teaching work. In almost ninety-nine cases there is no correlation between the subject of the research and the courses one has to teach in the class-room. Moreover, this type of research adds nothing to the researcher's knowledge of his subject. By the time he is able to complete his thesis, he forgets ever what he knew before. Thus the existing Ph.D. programme is not only irrelevant and meaningless but also academically detrimental. It is the sheer waste of one's energy and time.

But this does not mean that the Ph.D. programme in itself is worthless and unnecessary. It cannot be replaced with NET which is just a super-examination. Ph.D. programme is basically a training programme, and it has to be re-defined and re-structured in that light.

Presently we have three research programmes : M. Phil. (M. Litt), Ph. D. (D.Phil) and D. Litt. Of these, only M. Phil is a regular course. Both Ph.D. and D. Litt. have no provision for regular attendance or instruction. What I wish to propose is that M.Phil. (which is a half-way research course) should be replaced with a two-year regular Ph.D. programme. The present-day thesis - based

Ph.D. programme should be converted into a full-fledged teacher-oriented Ph.D. Course. After all, the object of obtaining a Ph.D. degree is to get a teaching job in a University or degree college. So why not to keep this objective in mind while devising a Ph.D. course. Originally the Ph.D. degree was not linked with job-requirement. Only a few teachers who had some literary ambitions used to go for it voluntarily. It was virtually an ornamental and not a pedagogical degree. The trouble started when the UGC, without realizing this, made it mandatory for appointments to lectureship. Of course, there was nothing wrong in doing it, it is definitely a better choice than NET. All that was needed was to re-structure it according to our needs and requirements. No course of study is sacrosanct or immutable. They are revised and changed periodically according to the expectations of the changing times. The Ph.D. programme is no exception to it. In fact, it should have been revised long ago.

The new Ph.D. programme would retain 'thesis' but just a component of the course that includes 6-8 papers, seminars, term-papers and rudimentary computer education. It would shed its pretensions to originality, and aim at information and scholarly presentation. The paper should include such subjects as are either untaught or insufficiently taught at the postgraduate level. I would like to suggest the following subjects : research methodology, literary appreciation and interpretation. Indian aesthetics, classical literature (Indian and Western), regional literature, Indian thought, Comparative literature, translation studies, and English language teaching. However, the Universities are free to decide the number and subjects of the papers according to their individual needs. The underlying purpose of this new programme is to prepare knowledgeable scholars - cum-teachers who are also grounded in their indigenous literary and intellectual traditions.

The Ph.D. degree should not be considered a badge of scholarship but a passport to it. Those who have higher ambitions

should further work for the D. Litt. degree, which may be pursued with or without the guidance of a supervisor, and which is solely based on the presentation of a thesis.

To conclude, I would like to sum up my suggestions as follows :

- (1) M. Phil. degree should be scrapped and replaced by Ph.D.
- (2) Ph. D. should be made a two-year full-time regular programme. The degree of Ph.D. should be mandatory for appointment to lectureship in universities and degree colleges.
- (3) The UGC should select a few university departments of English for the teaching of Ph.D. courses in each region, and strengthen them with financial assistance.
- (4) The existing pattern of the D. Litt. programme need not be changed, but no candidate should be allowed pursue it until he or she has obtained the Ph.D. degree.

It is hoped that under the new scheme the evil of bogus or phoney Ph.D.'s would automatically be eradicated.

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NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS

C. D. Narasimhaiah

This is a moment of which I wish I could say I have found my fulfillment as teacher of English, because it has come from my own fraternity as a gesture of goodwill. Between the wish and its fulfillment, however, falls a shadow, and I know not whose is the kingdom ! It is fortunate the spirit of place can in a way serve as a point of intersection and put me in tune with those 'monuments of unaging intellect' that have drawn to its bosom teachers of eminence like C.V. Raman, B. Ramachandra Rao, Bhagavantham, T. R. Seshadri, Radhakrishnan, C. R. Reddy, C. Kunhan Raja and K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, the last a teacher of English, still happily with us and still engaged in his prodigious labours with exemplary devotion to the life of the mind. The theme of this Conference is in the nature of a tribute to Dr. Iyengar who has nurtured it in its infancy.

No university, not even Oxford and Cambridge, the pride of English civilization, can ensure a succession of great teachers, but what it can do is to create an atmosphere which fosters greatness of mind and spirit and takes pride in pointing to examples of excellence by which we as teachers live. Precisely what a Conference like this ought to strive and achieve for any branch of knowledge, each year serving as a milestone along memory's corridors. Failure to do so is to do violence to the Muse herself.

What, one may ask, are my credentials to speak so loftily from this pedestal ? My colleagues, do you realize you have in your

★ This paper was delivered as the Presidential address to the 38th Session of AIETC held at Andhra University, Visakhapatnam on 27 December 1989 by Prof. C. D. Narasimhaiah.

generosity, allowed an interloper to take this place? That is a way of saying what must remain unsaid! And what I do say here is far from being a 'Presidential address', for I had to make these disjointed notes between a couple of some-what demanding commitments and piece them together; and get a formless *draft* printed in record time for which I apologise, though I know I can't forgive myself.

Standing before you my mind goes back to the first conference of this Association I attended in Karnataka University in late fifties. There I saw one I had met earlier, I forget where or when: that was Professor Deb of Allahabad University, looked upto by everyone of us for his learning and character. Like many others of his acquaintance I gravitated to him and our eyes met when this kindly man queried half in jest, "O Naroshingiah, I hear you are now Dean of Maharaja's College. Very good, very good! We should meet and talk about it all, Will you remember to see me before we leave on the last day?"

"Yes, Dada" (the name by which he had endeared himself to us). The fateful day came and it was not I, but dear Deb that was looking out for me. He took me by the hand and we ambled along to a quiet corner when his compassionate hand moved up to my shoulder. I felt like the Mariner in Coleridge's poem and I knew I had a pettiness to expiate.

Naroshingiah (Deb started), have you heart of R. P. Paranjpye?

Yes, the Senior Wrangler? (later, better known for his book, *84 and Not Out*).

You see, (I quote for memory) Deccan Education Society sent him to Cambridge to do the Mathematical Tripos. He topped the list of successful students and became Senior Wrangler. It was national news. The Governor General wrote a personal letter inviting him to join the Viceroy's Secretariat on Rs. 1,500 a month, a fabulous sum for a young man to start on, in those days. Naturally he felt attracted. But he had given his word to Deccan Education Society to serve it for so many years on Rs. 75 a month. He thought of its academic

implications to the Society and its moral implications to himself. Finally, he declined the Viceroy's invitation. (Printed accounts don't mention this; and so I am subject to correction though Deb might still be right) Now, Naroshingiah, what did he lose ? He became Vice-Chancellor of two universities, Minister for Education and Indian High Commissioner in Australia. And saved his soul !

As if that didn't touch the right chord in soul-making, Deb followed up with another anecdote, this time of a young Indian who went to Cambridge to work with the well-known economist, Pigou. His work over, the Indian expressed a wish to Pigou to meet his teacher, Marshall. Pigou knew Marshall was ill, very ill but was so touched by his pupil's earnestness that he decided to take him to Marshall's place. Mrs. Marshall told them in so many words they could not see him. Old Marshall who had overheard the conversation shouted to his wife from within to let them in. The Indian's presence put Marshall in mind of his many Indian students of great promise and so enquired after them. One was Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, another was Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India and a third Member of the Tariff Board, and so on. No one was teacher. Marshall grew visibly emotional as he raised his voice to say "Betrayal, Betrayal !" Deb made no comment. Comment was superfluous. We walked back to the Conference venue, he in silence and I in shame. He looked me in the eye as we parted and that look has haunted me.

To complete the story for what it is worth, on the very next day of my return to Mysore I went to see the Maharaja - then Chancellor of the University and he knew me a little. Pleasantries over, I sought leave to resign from the Principalship of the College - one step more, I would be Vice-Chancellor of the University, for that was the convention. He said in his deep controlled voice, "It is my college and my grandfather founded it. I want you to continue. Let's talk about it, perhaps two years later." It was not for me to bandy arguments with my monarch - I have been an ardent monarchist !

And I left it at that. I can't swear the Maharaja didn't kindle my ambition to be the youngest Vice-Chancellor of the University, the reason why I hadn't said No when the Principalship came a year before. In a simple phrase, it was just lack of character.

Two, three, four years passed and I couldn't last in office longer without compromise at every turn. It was a humid August night when I was reading Thoreau's *Walden*, a favourite I returned to, like Antaeus to the Earth. My eye chanced upon the sentence 'Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts'. I felt cool all over. At the crack of dawn I was on my feet, but kept my thoughts to myself till I went to the office. Those good folk in the office pleaded like angels but I overcame the 'last temptation' and have remained a teacher, except that Membership of this Association has eluded me !

Why this self-congratulatory reminiscing ? I know I am vain enough in many ways but I hate to show off where teaching is concerned. Recent buffetings have moreover cured me of whatever illusions may have remained. But what if I try and assume a virtue I don't possess, for the young fellows' sake ? I would, for their sake, go out of the way, if that isn't my habit, to be seen reading in the library, or entering a bookshop to buy a periodical; would share responsibility with other colleagues for directing a play, organizing a debate or seminar, editing the college magazine, writing the annual report and make it a point not to go on leave in term time unless I can justify it to my conscience. If I can't write a learned book or paper, I should be content with a mid-brow effort like collaborating with colleagues to edit anthologies of prose and verse for our students rather than indulge in running down existing text books as unsatisfactory. A young teacher taking me around the University of Edinburgh pointed to the Medical School at a distance and said, "Blokes there don't *buy* a single book. They *write* their books !" Why are we at the receiving end so long and at the mercy of baby sitters ? I wouldn't mind, for students' sake, denying myself and my family some marginal comforts if by so doing I can vindicate my

self-respect and the honour of my profession, for I shall not forget I am the distant descendant of teachers to discourse with whom kings and emperors journeyed to their forest hermitage; indeed, if a crisis drives me to a corner I hope I shall seek to defend my discipline and the dignity of my calling by a readiness to invite hardships, which others in society may not risk; and at all costs not degrade it by joining demonstrations to claim such undeserved benefits as 'automatic promotions' which the worst of student groups haven't to this day asked for. Burning issues like bad textbooks, unimaginative question papers, unconscionable marking of examination scripts have left me cold while there *was* so much I could do it I felt a pang in the heart for my hapless charges. How then can we command their respect? It seems in the worst days of Naxalite menace young rebels would skirt their teachers rather than walk brazenly in front of them. Learning is still respected in this country, perhaps more than anywhere else – where else is the word teacher uttered in the same breath as one's mother and father as embodiment of divinity – *acharya devo bhava* ! A teacher stands or falls by his *practice*, hence the name *acharya*.

For my teacher, J. M. Narasimhalu, in Fort High School Bangalore, the one consuming passion of his life was to read all the magazines in the Public Library as they arrived. And his small salary of Rs. 60 in his 50th year wouldn't dampen his intellectual passion.

At Maharaja's College in Mysore, a teacher of mine, H. Subba Rao, was retiring as Lecturer on Rs. 200 a month after 30 years of service – promotional opportunities were very few – there was no 'merit - promotion' scheme ! At a felicitation ceremony to bid him farewell while we were feeling ill at ease about his designation and salary he said without a touch of cynicism that *he* should have paid for the privilege of teaching – if the Lord God had been kind to him. He meant teaching like singing, dancing or painting, was not labour, but made for all-round expansiveness.

Again, there at Maharaja's – it was a century-old college with

wonderful teachers who had built up a tradition – an Englishman, J. C. Rollo was Professor of English and Principal of the College, both of which I became later. But unlike me he would correct 150 – 200 compositions of I.B.A. students every term and hand them back with witty comments to take off the sting (while one or two of the other teachers wouldn't return class exam. scripts, because white ants had eaten them away !) I have never known another professor, the senior-most in the University, who invited upon himself the composition hour and made it so lively. He did the same with mid-term exam scripts so we could profit by his labours. He, a childless European, when he came to the scene of Sakuntala's departure from Kanvasrama in Kalidasa's play (he had included it in the Comparative Drama course for English Honours) we could sense the catch in his throat – differences in culture and imperial status were no barriers to literary experience.

Another Englishman, William Hastie, a teacher of English in Calcutta did one better when young Vivekananda was a pupil. He was teaching Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' and as he came to the lines 'That blessed mood in which the burthen of the mystery our corporeal frame almost suspended and we become a living soul', he said it was difficult to explain the passage adequately because : explanation was no substitute for direct personal experience and so asked those interested to go to Belur Mutt and watch old Sri Ramakrishna, lost in ecstasy having got into a state of *samadhi*, 'the corporeal frame suspended'. Then poetry would cease to be black marks on a white sheet of paper for the student but becomes *swanubhava* one's own sensation 'felt in the blood and felt along the heart'. We now appreciate Keats's contention that axioms of philosophy are only axioms until they are tested on our pulses. I should value such effort in training the sensibility of the young, as more important than teaching grammatical correctness, an infantile activity in comparison.

My own teacher at Mysore, again an Englishman, W. G. Eagleton, a Cambridge Tripos First who, like Stanislavsky in the Moscow Arts Theatre, made us read scenes from Shakespeare in the class in different ways to bring out different meanings. It is old John of Gaunt in *Richard II* declaiming the glory of England : 'this precious isle set in the silver sea ?' What do you think of it ? he would ask the class. 'Fervent patriotism', was said in a chorus ! Hm ! Patriotism, not jingoism ? And pass on without labouring at it. Or Milton's sonnet beginning "Captain or Colonel ... spare the Muses' bower," which he would read and smile his quarter – smile with a sparkle in the corner of his eye and mumble parenthetically, "Because John Milton's house was there!" My first insight into Milton's 'egotistical sublime!' Shakespeare and Milton were big names for the English but right response, he felt, was even bigger for a teacher.

This is where I find it hard to forgive. I.A. Richards who told me during his visit to Mysore in 1954 in response to a query how he would teach poetry : "I ask my class of 15,20 or 25, to read the poem before them and state their reactions." "And leave it at that ?" I said questioningly. What if some of them missed the image and symbol here, allusion there, didn't notice the rhythmic beauty of certain words or phrases or read the lines without proper emphasis ? (What is a teacher for, he the seniormost member in the class ?) as Richards himself was guilty of in his reading of Keats's Grecian ode. 'In the presence of a poem like this judgement is presumptuous', he said at the end of his reading and sat down. And yet as he knew the last lines have puzzled many readers, certainly a professor friend of mine (with a book on Keats) who thought that Keats should have ended the poem with

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty',

But suppose, I put it to him, he read the last two lines after a pause, take breath, look inwards, reflect for a while and intone with a shrug of the shoulder as if some inward illumination clarified to

him the meaning of the line when he felt he was in possession of this experience which has a universal validity – the lines warrant it.

that is all

Ye know on earth and all
ye need to know

It can be a particular reader's realization as here the poet's endorsement of a transcendental experience pass on to him as the urn's exhortation to the poet when he reassures himself he has had the vision *sakshatkara* beyond which there is nothing more to look for, nothing has a value after that experience, 'all ye need to know'. There is support for it else-where in Keats.

Stand alone and think

Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

But see how such an experience can meet with resistance, from one Englishman, while another was thrilled at a similar experience as he read Vaughan's, 'I saw eternity the other night, like a ring of pure endless light,' as the poet has made his apprehension comprehensible in the simile which here serves as *vibhava*, 'objective correlative' of the vision. Leavis might think that a man who says this may say anything and get way with it, for mystic experience can elude those who, like Leavis place their faith in positive knowledge. Leavis's disability for the metaphysical was a handicap and hence I fear his focus on the presence of the Evil.

He seemed to me to miss the meaning of Blake's 'Tiger' because of his obsession with Evil, a general obsession if I may say so, of the Western man with Evil thanks to the categories of Good and Evil which govern his socio-moral universe but not the metaphysical world of the Indian in which even the *Rakshasas* demons are worshippers of Siva and they are Evil because of their *avidya* ignorance, hence the supreme importance the Indian attaches to Knowledge with K capital, to ignore which is to go against the grain. Here clearly is an opportunity to relate one's response to an English poem to an Indian centre and recognize the value of *Swadharma*.

Actually in Blake's poem (against the background of his reading in Indian thought) the poet seems to be less concerned, if at all, with Good and Evil than with the mystery of the universe :

'Did He who made the lamb make thee ?'

The poem's greatness consists in this sense of mystery which teases the poet thus generating in him *vismaya* a sense of wonder, the cause of *Adbhuta rasa*, considered to be the highest kind of *anubhava* experience in a work of art – 'experience' rather than that inane word 'enjoyment' which distorts experience. Now this is what T. S. Eliot meant by the 'Common pursuit of true judgement,' for it is given to few men to perceive Truth in all its completeness, and so what each man sees is truth to him (the story of the Seven Wise Men in search of the Elephant) but interacting with like minds is a help to see more of the truth. That is what Mammata, a 10 century critic pleaded for in

Sakala sahradaya samvada baja

A work of art is a common property and its understanding a social activity; let everyone bring his understanding of it and interact with others in the common pursuit. This is how I would use the opportunity of reading a poem together with others seriously involved. And so I was intrigued : by Richards's pathetic confession that 'teaching poetry to undergraduates at Cambridge broke' him. I should have thought Cambridge which draws the cream of England's youth, should provide unparalleled opportunities for the Leavisian kind of 'completeness of response'. That is how Indian scholars functioned at their periodical conferences in centres of learning. Can't we revive a fraction of that great tradition at our annual conferences ? so we can say

I peel and portion

a tangerine and spit the pips and feel

The drunkenness of things

'the drunkenness of things' is what in Poetics we traditionally call *rasaswadana* ! The Upanishads describe God Himself as *resovaisaha*.

It was a different Leavis, the Levis we are generally familiar with on his home ground, when he came to Othello's.

Think of me as one who loved not wisely, but too well. He penetrated beneath the seeming sincerity of the self-centred hero drawing attention to himself having been callous to poor Desdemona's vain entreaties.

Let me pray to night.

He was the first to notice this false note while all the blame for the tragedy had been thrown on Iago's villainy by critics. Here is also an opportunity to win attention to the language - literature controversy as I once happened to do at a senior colleague's rapture over Othello's line. 'My God, what language !' Language was all. The meaning didn't trouble him. Would he have rejoiced over Othello's 'Language' if the strangled young woman had been his near or dear one ! 'you hypocrite !' would have been his first reaction. If only he had heeded Leavis's 'Language creates what it conveys !'

I see I have dwelt a little too long on the Teacher making too many digressions but I can't separate the teacher from his teaching. The teacher makes teaching an experiences of a lifetime, might sometimes change the course of a young man's life, as in Vivekananda's case and through him the history and destiny of a people, of mankind. If a teacher kindles one heart like that in his life-time, leavens the lump, ignites dead wood and produces a spark by his touch, he has earned his *moksha* ! And if he thinks this is not teaching because it won't help the student to pass the examination and so should give him all the information relating to the poem and the poet, I would say 'close the classrooms, open more libraries'. But let it be known a hundred well - stocked libraries are a mighty bloodless substitute for one great teacher. I can't conclude this section without telling you of such a great teacher it was my privilege to know, F. R. Leavis. Leavis had to fight his way to a lectureship at 50 and on the eve of superannuation a Readership was bestowed on him by those whom he had long eclipsed in the Faculty. Perhaps a

professorship would have been a tame end to a tempestuous career as I have said so often, more so when so many of us profane the name professor. He could have been professor anywhere in the world – he had turned down tempting offers from American universities, because he had faith in what he was doing at Cambridge, despite all the odds against him. Students flocked to him and he sat in their midst talking away. Some one would come up with a reservation. He would say ‘ I don’t know, I don’t know’, a mode of putting the questioner firmly on his feet, in self-reliance and enter into a dialogue with him. At term-end he was taking us through previous Tripos papers. A last question in the paper : Write short notes on the following (a sure sign of the unfurnished chambers of the examiner’s mind when it is not fatigue !) One of them was : ‘Sincerity in Literature’. Leavis swooped down on it to exclaim ‘We are all sincere – aren’t we ? Does it guarantee genuine writing ? (That spoke volumes to me ...) He said : I should rather rephrase it : ‘ Insincerity in Literature.’ For if you are insincere, whatever your other credentials, you can’t make it sound *authentic*. I could see at once a vast chunk of ‘sincere’ literature like Eliza Cook’s poem on a Broken Armchair mercifully eliminated from my consideration. He would enliven it with an anecdote to bring it home to us. A French woman went to have a meal in an English restaurant. Madam, how do you like our food ? *Tres sincere* very sincere ! The vegetables were cooked till all taste was drained out ! He could have added “The way to hell is paved with sincere intentions !”

Scholars from everywhere in the world came on pilgrimage to his rooms in Downing College. And yet he had to ride his half-rusted rickety bicycle 5 miles each way between home and college, buy fish or whatever after work in the college, may be, cook it himself for lunch, because his wife was ill. He had ruled out dinner for years, but next morning did jogging braving English cold. He *wrote* all his letters because he couldn’t afford the services of a typist. I can vouch for it because he wrote his essay ‘ Integrity in Criticism’ for *The*

Literary Criterion 20 pages long in his own large legible hand on the backs of Tripos answer scripts which I have treasured. His faith did tell when the University of York invited a Reader in retirement to be Visiting Professor – with freedom to teach *what* he liked, *when* he liked and *whom* he liked. It did tell when a Conference of Professors of English in the United Kingdom met at York to hear this retired Reader *repeat* a talk on Blake he had first given two years before. It certainly told when the Cambridge University Press decided, as if to redeem the honour which the, university had lost by its shabby treatment of a great teacher and critic to reissue his *Scrutiny* a major force in the world of letters. He who had earlier written he didn't know what would happen to his family when he retired on a paltry pension, could now take back his words as he said 'Several thousands of pounds are down and I don't know what to do with the money'. You can't suppress genius for ever – it will surface if not now, some time later, if not here, somewhere else !

On the other side of the Atlantic another teacher and critic of formidable stature, R. P. Blackmur, had done all his reading at the Harvard Bookshop and let no university take the credit for giving him a degree – he had none. One day as we were partaking of the general *bonhomie* the get-together exuded I felt free to have a joke and so put it to him with tongue in cheek, 'R. P. why don't you send some less known book of yours (he had just two well-known collections of critical essays and a couple of relatively unknown ones) and acquire a D. Litt. to fling it on faces of the jealous ones who poked fun at a mere matriculate who could be professor at Princeton. 'Oom, who is there to adjudicate it ?' Quite right, no man in his senses would have agreed to be examiner if R. P. chose to play a practical joke like that.

I mustn't forget to mention his Indian connection, though as he said he 'came to Delhi, not to India !' There is a neglected essay of his, 'Between the Numen and the Moha ! Towards a Theory of Literature' in his collection, *The Lion and the Honey-comb*. In his

own words, 'Both *Numen* and *Moha* are fundamental terms, one Latin, the other Sanskrit, both very old words for ever present things'. 'Numen' is Divine Will (*Daivechha* ?) Religion has taken it, not as action but as spring of action. *Numen* enters behaviour and gets transformed, deflected, degraded into that privation of humanity, *Moha*, the cow which has the right of way in Indian traffic !

Moha is the damned spot that will not out. Because of it man goes wrong, without which he cannot survive. *Numen* penetrates *Moha* and *Moha* envelops *Numen*. Divine will enters human behaviour and *Moha* chills it or sets it on fire. It ravishes reason's judgement and reminds reason of its role. Literature it will be seen, is the struggle between *Numen* and *Moha*.

It is incredible that a Western man who had no knowledge of Sanskrit or Indian thought, and got the word from a physicist friend who was learning Sanskrit to relax himself during the last war, itself an example of *Moha* – could put it to such penetrating use in the effort to offer a theory of literature. Actually, much of the world's serious literature can be understood in terms of *Numen* and *Moha*. What a scintillating mind this ! And yet we in India cling to Aristotle – his claim on us for chronological reasons ! – who reduced Greek tragedy to a tension between Pity and Fear and the outcome their purgation while what happens in art experience is a certain teasing, an inexplicableness. His simplistic analysis misses the mystery of life in Greek tragedy – he mentioned it nowhere. And thus rendered Tragedy the last word in art experience. And our endorsement of it in the face of untapped wealth lying in books of Indian Poetics, like museum pieces is pathetic. The nine rasas, corresponding to nine primary emotions in man (endorsed by modern Western psychology) are all active in different degrees in the presence of a great work of art, which means of *hridaya samvada*, dialogue between the work of art and the reader, cause engagement of the many sides of our personality and bring about *tallinatha*, absorption. Hence the transcendence of the reader's ego when it lasts and the detachment

that ensues – Arnold's 'Indian virtue of detachment', a state beyond *sukha* and *dukkha*, joy and sorrow or what Keats calls 'evaporation of opposites' which both religion and philosophy on the one hand and art on the other pursue in different ways to bring about what W.B. Yeats calls 'the dolphin torn, the gong tormented sea' in 'Byzantium', a poem which resonates in the ear of the ear (*dhvani*) and becomes the cause of *rasa*, the soul of a work of art, while for Aristotle *plot* is 'the soul of a work of art' hence for him the value of *Oedipus Tyrannus* !

The Indian world is different from R. P.'s. It is ironic that while we believe that the universe is created out of *Sunya* Nothing and returns to Nothing and we offer worship to images as only symbols of godhood, in effect, however, the essence disappears, the shell remains. Our all-consuming craze for degrees at all stages of life can be ludicrous. But where masses of our people have been denied opportunities of education, and while learning is held in such high esteem, the desire to acquire a degree is understandable. A middle aged teacher came to me from this part of the country when I had just started as professor in 1950 to work with me for a Ph.D. He didn't care what he worked on so long as he was sure that when he died it was inscribed on his tomb, 'Here lies Dr. R.' ! His earnestness was touching, if comical. Now if this type did succeed in getting the degree which often happens in our set-up the degree becomes a virtual tombstone, not the corner stone on which the edifice stands.

Some innocents come with a blank mind to ask you for a Ph.D. topic, understandable in a set up where arranged marriages are the order of the day. And so much care has gone into most arranged marriages that they can even endure. I once interviewed a scholar for Readership. He had a Ph.D. on Sean O, Casey. How did he come to choose Sean O, Casey ? Oh, it was a gamble. He arrived in London on a Sunday, bought the day's paper and there was a picture of Sean O, Casey to go with a review. Next morning he went to see his future guide in Leeds with the paper still in his hands. The

supervisor's eye caught the picture. Looks like Sean O, Casey? He went through the write-up, looked at the candidate and said 'Why not Sean O, Casey?' 'Why not? the candidate murmured in agreement' 'Look, for the next two weeks, don't see me but let yourself loose in the library and read up Sean O, Casey's plays and report to me on what you think of him. It worked out very well. And he stood his ground. If only we can emulate this example with the innocents who come in search of a topic!

The more interesting, if also distressing, instance is of a candidate who had spent 7 years working on X's (or call its Y's) 'Theory of Poetry'.

'Do poets have theories of Poetry? was the Vice-Chancellor's opening question. I forget the answer, indeed forget much of what went on at the interview. What I do remember is the fatal fluency with which the candidates spoke. He was a man of supreme self-confidence; and he *was* intelligent. When my turn came I said 'Take any three poems of your poet and tell us how his theory of poetry gets enacted in them. As he slowed down somewhat I thought it fair to help him with three titles chosen from three well marked phases of the poets career. Besides they were among his most anthologized poems. How does this one begin? the second incorporate those tensions into the structure of the poem? And the third differ from the other twin? No answer or 'I don't exactly remember' – a stock answer for virgin innocence. I asked him to wait for me till after the interview to ask how he came to write the thesis: 'I read and re-read the entire body of criticism on the poet'. He had, as A. N. Jeffares has said elsewhere, 're-cycled old material'. The guide was a noted scholar, the two other examiners were both renowned scholars but perhaps a bored lot. And where Indians write on Western Literature, the overseas examiners can be very patronising because the preface pleads 'what with the paucity of material in Indian universities' etc. The degree gets awarded! Where both guides and researchers often fail is to minimise the importance of *close study* of the author's work till each possesses the other.

One who had done a good Ph.D. on Wallace Stevens, came for the Viva. Suppose, I said, I want you to bring out an anthology of American poetry, where would you start so as to place your poet in perspective? The candidate had heard of Edgar Allan Poe, Whitman and Frost (again, all favourite poets for Ph.D. at one time) but not read any one's poems well enough to talk about them. Which half dozen poems of Stevens would you include in an Anthology meant for post-graduate students? Poor response, while what one expected was a passionate involvement with the poet having worked on him for 5 years. He couldn't even quote 4 lines from any poem. This is true of most researchers.

I am wholly with the UGC which insists of M. Phil. for Lecturers and Ph.D. for Readers for the discipline research instils in the potential teacher and researcher but if we do not ensure competent guidance (so many of us just lend names; matters not if the candidate is truly mature and himself or herself in a position to guide others), books and periodicals in one's own library and elsewhere (to be identified) and opportunities to interact with senior scholars who share the candidate's interests. Actually a Conference like this is a wonderful opportunity to explore mutual interest in research, to exchange notes on things pertaining to one's area and keep in touch later. Perhaps with a little care and planning in advance we could ensure the presence of teachers with expertise in different, areas and notify aspirants to research in advance, attendance at the conference can be truly rewarding. For what young people are in need of is direction. Don't blame them if their M. Phil, or Ph.D. is a hoax.

From the teachers, I should like to proceed, not to English teaching (I should invite you to read, when you have the time to waste, a talk I happened to give in Mysore to a UGC seminar on the topic), but English writing which Indians have created – what was miscalled Indo – Anglian writing ; Dr. Iyengar who at one time gave currency to it perhaps in the absence of anything ready to hand, later preferred to call his book *Indian Writing in English*. Indian English is now used as noun and adjective. Even the Sahitya Akademi seems

to have found the term inexact and inelegant and so endorsed "Indian English". Let us adhere to it. Now I do not wish to revive forgotten controversies on why write in English? Why not? I ask. Leave it to the writer. Can anyone prescribe to a writer? For so often he doesn't seek the medium, the *medium* seeks him; they tease each other like lovers during courting and lo! creation results. The Polish Conrad had answered it for all of us as he wrote 'If I did not write in English, I would't have written at all'. And yet he confesses Polish continued to be the language of his heart, He didn't write even in French which he seemed to know better than English. Our business as readers is to read the writing if it is good and reject it if mediocre for we can only find the time for the very best in the busy world we inhabit today. Radicals among our patriots have blamed poor Macaulay for imposing on Indians a language which has only made us fit for being clerks. If anything, it the lack of it that confirms us in the position today! Let me try and set the record right and I shall only try to outline the distinctive aspects of Indian contribution to English which makes it worthy of being this conference's topic. And I propose to take up a few writers of prose who are virtually unknown in the world of writing, for others are common knowledge.

The East India Company didn't want to teach English to the Indians but servants, errand boys, butlers, barbers, shopkeepers and clerks in the service of the British learnt it casually, not in the way the elite among us learnt Persian, because it was the court language. Persian was with us for 400 years and disappeared like the dew after sunrise with the coming of English. The lesson: If a language has vitality and functions at various levels as English does, you cannot wish it away. English has today become the only world language with French and Spanish slowly receding from the front rank. Within India too, the process has begun in Tamilnadu after realizing the futility of the three - language formula. We shall pick up the link-language we need-films can teach it to those who wish to watch the T.V avidly - but focus on the language of the region and English, for the more important things of the complex world of today.

It was a far-seeing Indian, Raja Rammohan Roy, himself well-read in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and Bengali (and edited magazines in them) who petitioned the Governor General to instruct the Indian youth in European science through the medium of English lest we left behind in 'a world which neweth every date' – this was in 1821, 13 years before Macaulay arrived in India. The Orientalists and Anglicists were equally divided and Macaulay wrote his Minute of Dissent in favour of English, motivated, if I may say so, by greater disinterestedness and a sense of history than Dr. Rajendra Prasad when he gave his casting vote in favour of Hindi. For a young Englishman who was brought to India as President of the Board of Education, to say in 1834 that 'the Empire will go' (a 100 years after, in 1934, this prophetic assertion would have sounded like a joke, not for an Englishman but for Indians). There is another empire, he said, 'the imperishable empire' of ideas, language, literature, laws, religion and he invited everyone to work towards that end. For he would rather 'trade with free people than govern savages'. Even the much maligned Penal Code, his making, has been found indispensable by free India. And 38 other countries have adopted it. And his penal code was born of concern for the underdog: he thought it unfair to arm the administrator with powers and 'leave the native unprotected'. It was born of the same vision that pleaded for the entry of Indians into the Civil Service. For all the imperialistic ambitions of the Raj, there was and still is among individual Englishmen a remarkable sense of fairplay, the same which compelled an Englishman in charge of the Railways in South Africa to send a telegram to the wayside Stationmaster (where Gandhi had been pushed out of his compartment) to 'Let Mr. Gandhi travel First Class'. Which was the making of the future Gandhi. English language in India has no origin of which it can be proud in our modern linguistic context, and its growth too marks the translation of Macaulay's hopes, indeed has gone beyond.

Gokhale, Gandhi's Guru in politics' has somewhere observed 'you cant' say a slavish thing in English'. Rabindranath Tagore who did all his creative writing in Bengali except for a solitary poem *Child* in English, admitted English Literature which nourished our minds in the past does even now convey its deep resonance to the recesses of our hearts. And Jawaharlal Nehru writes in his *Discovery* : England came to India, the England of Shakespeare and noble speech and the England of the penal code. Which of these two Englands came ?" It is a sign of his profound perceptiveness that he should have singled out 'Shakespeare' and 'noble speech'. I have often wondered if instead of Shakespeare, the Romantics and the eminent Victorians, the British administrators had brought with them that 'great Age of Prose', of Addison and Steele, Dryden and Pope (who have, over the years, consistently received only marginal attention at the hands of our students and teachers); And for Aurobindo it is not the gold of poetry for all that, but it is well gilt copper coin of a good currency', 'turning everything to monotonous brilliance'. Or worse still, if they had brought with them the British Council (not of today with the lesson come home the hard way) of the past three decades with its ELT specialists and their language skills, what would have been the course of modern Indian history, the nature of Indo-British relations, our place in the world of thought ? Someone will do well to pursue it as a topic of research. Why, Nehru was quick to add that English ' brought a widening of the Indian horizon, an admiration for English literature and English institutions and a growing demand for political reform' which language experts wish to destroy.

One of our first men to whom the language made an extraordinary appeal was a monk, Vivekananda, who thought the Anglo-Saxons had given him a machine to broadcast ' the most wonderful truths' of the Vedas and Upanishads to the world and he would use English to make his ideas ' run like fire' – a very vivid image, poetically conceived because he believed he was ' first and

foremost a poet', Romain Rolland perceived a 'tongue of flame' even in his printed word. He was probably the first man of religion who dared to employ the terms of science to mediate spiritual experience : the rajasik (the eagle) and the sattvik, (the swan). Hence *The Swan and the Eagle* !

"A straight line infinitely projected becomes a circle We are all projected from a common centre, which is God and will come back. Each soul is circle ... God is a circle with circumference nowhere and centre everywhere. Death is but a change of centre'. While Christian saints were content with the 'sweetness of believing' without having to see, touch, feel (Even Einstein argued he arrived at his theory of Relativity because he was 'strongly convinced of the harmony of the universe'), and scientists were afraid of bringing matters of the spirit into their province, Vivekananda argued it is possible to *show* what he *saw* – the business of a poet, hence the name *Rishi* or *seer*. He astonished Western religious and philosophical thinkers when he affirmed that it is 'better mankind should be destroyed by following reason than blindly believe in three million gods on the authority of anybody. It degrades human nature'.

Look, how he employs a scientific analogy to explain a profoundly mystical experience :

'If you put a simple molecule of air in the bottom of a glass of water it at once begins to struggle to join the infinite atmosphere. So is it with the soul'.

But he could also convince the scientist himself of the limitations of science : Science can explain the evolution of amoeba into man, but does not explain the Buddha man or the Christ man'. Vigour of the body, vigour of the mind the vigour of the spirit are what he pleaded for. No man before Gandhi – indeed he paved the way for Gandhi – helped to stiffen the backs of a demoralized people as he did. Suffice to give just one example to exemplify his faith, courage and capacity to make reason his guide : To the critics who poked fun at him as a meat - eating monk his robust reply was

'Is God a nervous fool like you that the flow of the river of His mercy would be damned by a piece of meat? If such be he, His value is not a pie....'

As Jawaharal Nehru was to say later every word of this monk 'dripped with energy'. For the first time perhaps in world's history, certainly in our times, Vivekananda demonstrated convincingly by employing the language of science, the immediate validity of spiritual truths of India for the world. He put science to the service of religion and vindicated its supreme importance for our times.

Even a Gandhi tells us he learnt his English 'carefully and prayerfully'. Parenthetically, I might add his discerning mind described English as 'three parts Bible and one part Shakespeare. (Not bad for one who didn't the structure of the English language from Language Pandits trained in CIEFL. Not bad at all for one who didn't learn phonetics that he took care to pronounce the consonants distinctly!) He exemplified that poetic and religious inheritance, when he said eloquently. "Let all the winds of all the lands blow over my house but I shall refuse to blown off my feet", a sentence which at once liberates and vindicates – liberates from narrowness and vindicates one's own national honour. Or that other stand of his: 'I shall not make England's difficulty my opportunity' as he suspended Civil Disobedience, because Hitler bombed St. Paul's Cathedral – a charity of thought and expression which not only civilized us but civilized the British and ennobled their language. And going into the British prison as late as 1942 he told his followers 'not to look at the world with bloodshot eyes though the eyes of the world be red'. If Tagore was reluctant to boycott British goods or burn them because it was a negative approach, Gandhi could transform it to something positive as he exhorted, 'Let the poet bring his bucket of water, India is a house on fire'.

When those fire-brands who called themselves socialists meant to pursue a different course from his, Gandhi would use the resources of English language to express a very Indian stand : Don't I know

your sacrifice? I am with you there. I want to build a staircase to Sirius. But I say to you I am old, I am weak, stop for me, collect me and take me along with you'. One extended metaphor, which the socialists for all their differences, because they shared the same sensibility, must have found irresistible.

If his long waiting brought no results the English language could accommodate an extreme position – of courage and firmness, but without crudity: 'Leave us to anarchy, but for God's sake, get out.' And if that didn't suffice he would coin a catchword which the masses could take up: 'Quit India', a position he had recourse to at the very end of his 50 years' struggle against British rule, after exhausting every possible alternative. Indeed his approach, was, 'one step enough for me', a phrase he took over from his fond poet Cardinal Newman who figured in his prayer meetings along with the Bible.

Here is a singular instance of a political rebel against a foreign power using civilized language in his dealings with those against whom he was waging a relentless war, very different from 'you taught me language and the profit on't is I know how to curse you': That it was profoundly spiritual can be seen from his astonishing affirmation:

'If God should appear before me with Truth in one hand and Indian Independence in the other I know which to choose'. Hence his term 'spiritualize politics'. It is a very Indian stand and a lasting contribution as much to political thought as to the English language itself.

'The language of politics, said Chomsky, narrows the area of the thinkable'. One is familiar with rigid positions among politicians everywhere including India but Gandhi believed in exploring alternatives lest it do violence to the spirit of 'the other'. And he knew its potency when he claimed 'The Rishis who practised non-violence were greater geniuses than Newton and greater warriors than Wellington'.

But is truly in Jawaharlal Nehru we can see the language of politics at its best because of his singular sensitivity to the English language. His English private tutor, English governesses, education at Harrow and Cambridge, wide reading in English literature and personal contact with Englishmen, all helped to fertilize his language and his integrating Indian sensibility did the rest. It was he who helped Marshal McLuhan win world-wide attention as he quoted his 'Medium is the Message' on the floor of Parliament. Not surprising that alone among world's statesmen he should have registered his response to it first. He, more than anyone of his countrymen in public life, more than most Western statesmen too, if I may venture to add, who had realized 'words are very tricky things, words rule the world'. If politics is the art the possible, it followed, for him, that civilized behaviour make contact with the other man's point of view and accommodate it if possible or make the other appreciate his difficulty. Hence his observation that Truth is not absolute but what each man perceives to be Truth and so the door is ajar. His grievance against the Liberals led by Srinivasa Sastri is not against their politics but their linguistic and aesthetic impoverishment as they glibly mouthed 'Patriotism is not the monopoly of the Congress'. Could they 'not vary the phrase a little !' was his grievance. Indeed could well have asked them to see how he could ignite the cliché as he said obliquely 'If Judas had been alive today he had no doubt he would function in its name'. Of Sastri and his associates who were untouched by those human earthquakes like the French Revolution or the Russian Revolution Nehru's understatement, 'For them the Bastille had not fallen', must have been devastating if, that is, it was not lost on them.

Scientists everywhere including India spoke of the 'conquest of Nature' and Nehru would intervene to say, 'I should like to put it slightly differently: We seek to understand Nature, co-operate with her and understand her mysterious workings'. He would go so far as to deplore that modern man has lost contact with Nature. He does no hear her whispers close to his ears. Is it any wonder that Nature looks down upon him as her step child ?

When Independence came his classic utterance 'Tryst with Destiny' resonates in our ears like the other 'When the world sleeps India will awake to life and freedom.' He asks his country-men to dedicate themselves to the service of India and to 'the greater service of mankind'. Not a 'holder than thou' approach. Indeed when a Member of Parliament speaks of recovering the 'greater India' of history he warns the Member against the language of Bismarck, but Bismarck is dead and his politics more dead'. Similarly in matters of foreign policy he finds it obnoxious to deliver homilies to the world just because we think we are 'spiritual' people. And even in respect of the so-called 'American materialism', his advice is that even material prosperity does not come without character. His message to the Department of Tourism 'Welcome the foreign visitors (not the offensive word 'foreigners') you find at customs barriers in airports), as friends'. Extension of the same civilized stand as at home when, soon after partition, there was a demand for making India a Hindu State. He called it a barbaric approach, because 'if we don't practise tolerance at home how can we preach against Apartheid in South Africa and elsewhere' ? Even before Independence, as leader of the National Movement he had the generosity to call Nationalism an 'anti-feeling'.

On assuming office as Prime Minister of India he announced he was 'the first servant of the Indian people' and that he had 360 million problems. Which was an indication of his respect for the dignity of the individual – he was in tune with the Kings of India who had invariably practised *abhaya*. Hence for him a vote is ' a message of farewell to ease and comfort and domestic happiness and the intercourse with friends and invitation to lonely days and nights and physical and mental distress'. The involuntary insistence of 'and' intensifies the sacrifice in store for the vote-getter not arm him with power for self-aggrandizement. He would accept this position with equanimity, because for him ' this generation is sentenced to hard labour' and they have only laid the foundation

and the edifice has to be built by their 'children and children's children'. Hence also his assertion in Parliament 'we can't sell our tomorrow in the interest of today' while democracy wants the good things of life today. And it is a source of great satisfaction for him that 'for all the mistakes it has made his generation has saved itself from inner shame, cowardice and triviality' – an awareness which represents the finest achievement in the texture of political thought. His message to the people was to work with the 'Upper lip firm' while the idiom is to work with 'upper lip stiff' The word 'firm' was meant to take off the stiffness ! Not for him to mouth the prosaic phrase 'tighten your belts', both because it was banal and because in the Indian context what with millions of half-starved people around it would be callous to ask them to 'tighten' the belts. As Prime Minister he had a hard time converting Gandhi and Gandhi -ites to his persuasion regarding the necessity for factories and big industries and so he sought to minimise their resistance by his magic touch as he called them 'the temples of our new Age'.

If Gandhiji, as sole representative of the Congress entered into a pact, the Delhi Pact with the Viceroy conceding what Nehru had most dreaded, namely separate electorates for the ethnic groups, he retired without saying a word only to write in his Autobiography :

'Was it for this that our people had behaved so gallantly for a year ? Were all our brave words and deeds to end in this ? The Independence Day resolutions of the Congress, the pledge of January 26th so often repeated ? So I lay on the March night and in my heart there was great emptiness, as of something precious gone almost beyond recall'.

His tormented mind invokes the lines of T. S. Eliot

This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang, but a whimper

which might be called (T.S. Eliot's) 'objective correlative' of his state of mind but for him, also the much needed emotional relief which is poetry's prerogative to provide. And this by a hardened public man and in India too, where it might be claimed for him that he said what was evidently beyond many professors of English as so few of them had read Eliot, if they had heard of him.

At the time of Chinese aggression his harshest phrase was 'the opportunistic mentality' of a trusted neighbour, for a few miles on the mountain top this way or that did not very much matter to him. And when the free world frowned on him for not denouncing the Chinese in strong terms he feared 'the language of cold war would only lead to confrontation' while what the world was most in need of was the touch of healing.

It is remarks like these that must have worried Mr. Attlee the Labour Prime Minister and led him to pay a qualified tribute to Nehru, a very characteristic Western attitude which falls into the either – or category, while for him all 'inclusiveness is a sign of culture, all exclusion is want of it' :

"Mr. Nehru, said Attlee, was a poet in politics but he did not know where poetry stopped and politics began." Precisely *that* was Nehru's strength; to suffuse politics with poetry or think political thoughts poetically, 'full of variousness and possibility' as John Stuart Mill said of Coleridge's politics, because it was a poet's politics. Open any speech of Nehru as Prime Minister and see how his speeches abound in if-s and but-s, however-s and although-s, rather-s and nevertheless an answer – seeking interrogative while generally most English - speaking statesmen, can't help categorical assertions, born of the rightness of their stand. Hence the glib accusation of him as 'A Hamlet in Politics' which showed lack of appreciation of a statesman's predicament in choosing between two difficult alternatives. Precisely which made Tom Wintringham observe :

'Some of us in Britain who have read these *Glimpses of World History* and Nehru's *Autobiography* feel envious of India. And it is not easy to see why; our own past rulers taught despair and greed. Our present leaders take a tepid pride in persuading us to endure without hope or aim, great enough to stir us, some inconveniences. It is natural we should envy a nation led by a man aware of the whole world's agony, past present, yet inspired by its possibility of infinite advance. Some of us, if we felt our right equal to our need, would claim Nehru as a world's leader rather than a nation's.

And Vincent Shean was even more eloquent when he claimed for Nehru :

We are willing to wait for him to make up his mind – a privilege we are reluctant to accord to any other head of a Government on earth; because we know he is struggling honestly, sincerely to reach a decision. Others crackle and snap or fizzle down... Jawaharlal thinks, feels, suffers, finds his way and the whole world is willing to wait until he has done so. During the present century there is nothing at all comparable to this phenomenon'.

While Nehru didn't Indianise his English he made Standard English accommodate his Indian sensibility and enlarge, not narrow, the area of the thinkable. For example the opening sentence of his *Autobiography*, among the greatest of its kind in the English language. I have often compared it with the first sentence of Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in both of which marriage, family, fortune figure prominently pointing to the density of socio-moral pre-occupations of the English novel. Now consider the first sentence of Nehru's *Autobiography*.

'An only son of prosperous parents is apt to be spoilt, especially so in India'.

In what sounds like a portentous beginning, because the author expresses a fear of the threat that birth and fortune pose to the inner life of the individual, a traditional Indian preoccupation with the egocentric predicament of man *avidya kama karma* to get over which he seeks to cultivate detachment, the *parama purushartha* for an Indian. As the autobiography progresses it engages him increasingly: A friend staying with the family asked if he didn't like hero-worship. He admits it got into his head a little – conceit like fat grows without our being aware of it – and he became a shade dictatorial. But a habit of constant introspection – the worldly man's equivalent of the saint's meditation – saved him, a singular gift of his *Autobiography* to the readers. In fact, for me at least, Nehru has done in prose, in incomparable more trying circumstances of public life what T.S. Eliot did in poetry. Interestingly they were born almost at the same time and the two birth centenaries were celebrated equally widely in this country about the same time.

It is particularly sad therefore that his *Autobiography* should be less known abroad than that unreadable *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* by Nirad Choudhuri, even as his *Glimpses of World History* ('better history and better English' according to Tom Wintringham) virtually unknown in relation to the immense reputation enjoyed by H. G. Wells's *A View of History*, a best seller. I should ask you to compare their accounts of Napoleon, as a sample of the texture of their prose : the one resembles an Encyclopaedia article, while the other (in two letters to a girl of 13) is a tragic enactment. A common enough discrepancy between the actual and the popular positions. Must one necessarily go to England in search of fame, because the *Times Literary Supplement* is the arbiter of literary reputations ?

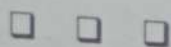
What Nehru's works have suffered at the hands of reputation makers, our novelists yes, novelists more than poets, have in different degrees shared. We have before us a respectable volume of work by our novelists, who have made a difference to the fictional scene of the world as much by their spiritual pre occupations as by their handling of the English language – they have extended the frontiers of fiction and its medium, a service which Aurobindo, only he among scores of critics, has done to Criticism, a direction which we have thrown away in our ignorance of that magnificent work *Future Poetry*, an unusual work of Criticism of English Poetry by an Indian, marvellously gifted for his function.

Aurobindo's revaluations of English poetry have preceded, not followed, Leavis's work in criticism. It is there that reading his *Future Poetry* can be most salutary to Indian scholars. And Indian scholars today have what Aurobindo didn't have, the benefit of literatures from outside England. English Literature declined in the 20th century – such prestige as it has is the work of the Irish and American expatriates : W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, Bernard Shaw and Synge from Ireland, Henry James. and T. S. Eliot from the United States. Joseph Conrad is Polish. Kipling who through his preoccupations with the Indian scene could have added a new dimension to fiction, Britain virtually disowned pushing E. M. Forster to the front. And we in this country took him over to the neglect of Kipling, a much greater novelist.

But I am really thinking not of them but of the new literature from the erstwhile British colonies now known as Commonwealth Literature which I would like to call 'humanity's heirloom' or as Doris Lessing calls 'a house of many mansions' to which we should address ourselves in a central way in our departments of English, not by excluding English Literature, on no ! but by abridging English literature radically. It should be possible to abridge it to 4 papers at the post-graduate level, if not less, by making what Leavis calls, challenging discriminations. It should be far more instructive to us in India to have an intimate contact with our neighbours in South Asia, the Africans and the West Indians (I wish I could and Latin Americans) who have created major literatures could and Latin Americans) who have created major literatures in the English language. They should put us in touch with what was unfortunately suppressed by their loss of freedom. Even Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders, cousins of the British, have given the world better writing in poetry, fiction and drama than what the English have done in the 20th century. May be, England was demoralized by the loss of the Empire as one of their better known poets, Philip Larkin, has said in a poem of his.

English Studies in India had virtually come to a dead end with Tennyson, Browning and Hardy in the middle of the century. First, American Literature, then Indian English Literature, followed by the Literature of the Commonwealth, have widened our frontiers. They have opened up entirely new areas for research in our departments and provided us opportunities for comparison : and the future of English departments belongs to Comparative Literature. They lend support to the exhortation of men like Gunter grass :

For God's sake, open the universe a little more.



JAYANTA MAHAPATRA IN CONVERSATION WITH BIJAY KUMAR DAS

(Recipient of the first ever Sahitya Akademi Award for Indian English Poetry for his book of verse, *Relationship* for 1981, Jayanta Mahapatra is India's best known poet abroad. He has sixteen books of poetry in English (the last being *Random Descent* 2005), eight books of Poetry Translation, a collection of short stories, a book of prose titled, *Door of Paper* (2007) to his credit. He won several awards at home and abroad. Utkal University, Bhubaneswar conferred on him D. Litt (Honoris Causa) in recognition of his contribution to Indian Literature in 2006)

BKD : I would like to begin by quoting the opening sentence of your latest book, *Door of Paper*, "There is a door in the heart of man which never opens" and asking you to open it for a while. Could you please tell me about the atmosphere in which you grew up during your childhood days ?

JM: In the brief autobiographical piece I wrote for the Gale *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* (1989) I did mention about the pain that goes with childhood. At least there was some pain in mine. But I have talked about this a number of times and it is turning into a cliché. The point is, beginning with childhood, as one grows up, the outer world affects him much. It is hard to come to terms with the indignities, the cruelties he faces for no fault of his. And if you are somewhat shy, this takes on huge proportions. I suppose one has to find solace in some corner of his own. And then, perhaps both outside and inside yourself, the "door" never opens. This much I can say now : I was never comfortable at home. My father was away most of the time, and there was my mother and

younger brother. The unhappiness at home smothered me. To confess, I ran away from home twice, but eventually came back. I don't wish to speak about this past now.

BKD : You had your education in English Medium School and were fond of fiction in your school days. How did you start writing poetry?

JM : Well, perhaps I would never have gone into poetry. I don't know. Fiction has always interested me, and all my spare hours went into the reading of novels. This became a strong habit I haven't been able to give up. Reading is fascinating, besides the good it is supposed to do. Maybe I thought I would write novels when I grew up. But that did not happen. When I began to write at first, and I was twenty one, I started with fiction. But the stories I sent out came back with rejection slips. I realized painfully I was destined *not* to be a writer. It hurt. But there are many things in the world one can do. I could savour life at its fullest. I had never ever imagined I would be able to write poetry one day. I was aging fast.

And poetry. This came to me much later, when I was approaching forty - an age when poets have finished their strongest work. But some things happen in life and reasons are not always easy to find. Something could have triggered my emotions, and I was swept along this new, strange path. When I sent my new, fumbling creations to different periodicals, I found some were accepted. It gave me a direction for living.

BKD : You began publishing your book of poems in the nineteen seventies. How did you feel when your poems were published abroad in literary magazines like *Chicago Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Poetry* and *Sewanee Review* in U.S.A., and *Critical Quarterly* and the *Times Literary Supplement* in England?

JM : It was like treading on unchartered territory. These were significant periodicals in which the best in England and USA published, so the satisfaction was immense. Here I was a physics man, and then I lived in a remote place in India, away from the standard centres of English poetry. The publications brought me a

sense of confidence I had sorely missed in life. I knew I could write poetry.

BKD: I think your fourth volume of poems, *A Rain of Rites* is a turning point in your career as a poet. Your reactions, please.

JM: Yes, it was a turning point in my poetic career; I'm sorry I missed that until you pointed it out to me. *A Rain of Rites* was published by the University of Georgia Press, USA, in 1976, and was my first volume of poetry to be published by an American University Press. The manuscript was selected from a large number of manuscripts submitted to the Press, and both readers' and the editor's comments were really good. It was on a hunch that I had submitted the manuscript to The University of Georgia Press, and to have your book win this poetry contest was something unforgettable - more so because I lived here in Cuttack and had no contacts with the centres of poetry. And this too, after reviews of my first two books in India were damning. I had no encouragement at all from my peers in India. It was just my will to write well that led me on. It was a good feeling. Later on, some excellent reviews of this book appeared in places like *The Hudson Review*. It gave a boost to my career.

BKD: How did you feel when you were given the prestigious Jacob Glatstein Memorial Prize in 1975 ?

JM: Living alone, here in Cuttack, with nobody to help me with my craft, the news of the Award reassured me as nothing else could. I knew that I could write, and write well. The Award was given for eleven poems of mine that had appeared in *POETRY Magazine* in the year - in two instalments, there were 4 poems in one issue and 7 poems in another. It was something for me to be happy about. It made me really happy.

BKD: Mid-nineteen seventies seem to be the blossoming of your talent as a poet. You were chosen by Paul Engle, the Director of the International Writing Program at Iowa for the year 1976-77. What was your reaction then ?

JM: Yes, the mid-seventies were good for me. To publish seven poems in one group in *POETRY* was something that never happens every day. *The Sewanee Review* published 4 poems that very year, I think, and I could feel the momentum of these publications. And when the Director of the International Writing Program at Iowa, Paul Engle, sent me an invitation to attend the Program for 1976-77, I was thrilled. More so because I had not applied, nor did I know anything about this Program. Paul had invited me to Iowa on the basis of the Jacob Glatstein Award and because of the poems that had appeared in significant Journals in the United States. I was truly happy.

BKD : Do you believe that writing poetry can be taught in the true sense of the term ?

JM : The answer to your question would be "No." None of the great poets had ever attended a creative writing class. Poetry is a subjective response. Certainly there are bound to be influences in one's poetry, but eventually one gets over them and develops one's own. When I was in the Program at Iowa, I had the opportunity to attend a couple of creative writing classes, but I didn't find anything to excite me. The results of these classes were monochromatically uniform. I remember the American poet, Rita Dove was there, and she went on to win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry after some years.

BKD: It is true that your poetry was accepted and appreciated in the West much before it was recognised in India. Did anyone in India encourage you to write and publish poems ?

JM : Perhaps I wasn't writing that kind of poetry which academics and editors would encourage. My poems were complex, and their abstract quality deterred them. I think I can't say. But I didn't get any encouragement here in my country. On the other hand, editors like Professor C. B. Cox of the *Critical Quarterly* wrote to me that it was the first time he had published anyone from India. Again, it was the Winter 1974 issue of the *CQ* where he published 7 of my poems.

BKD : Let me turn to your poetry. In India, Indian English poets are broadly divided into two categories : One, those who identify

themselves with the landscape of the place and contemporary India, and two, those who acclimatize the indigenous tradition to English language. I think you belong to both the categories. What do you say?

JM : Look, I live in Orissa. So it is but natural that I write about what I see and what I hear and feel. There is nothing else to my poetry. I haven't studied any poetry so I would know what I am doing. It is the place which chooses me to write, because I live here, and the air of the place is under my skin. That's all. I'm sorry I cannot talk about categories. As a critic you have to decide which of these two categories suits my poetry. Or whether I belong to both categories.

BKD : Tradition, history, myth – all these form the thematic content of your poetry. *Relationship* is a milestone in Indian English Poetry. No wonder that it earned you the first ever Sahitya Akademi Award (National Academy) in 1981. On receiving the Award you said : "To Orissa, to this land in which my roots lie and lies my past, and in which lies my beginning and my end, where the wind keens over the great grief of the River Daya and where the waves of the Bay of Bengal fail to reach out today to the twilight soul of Konarka, I acknowledge my debt and relationship". My question is, like T. S. Eliot, do you emphasize 'time' and 'history' in your poetry?

JM : I should like to answer your question by stressing what poetry does, and not by my pursuits in my poetry. Great poetry has always chosen and preserved experience, and this is not something easy to achieve. As a poet one tries to do this, to give life to what has touched him most in myth or legend or even, fact, and bringing these into timeless proportions. But as I said, this is difficult. Perhaps in this way poetry helps to protect our civilization; this urge to preserve the past and also to look into the future becomes a true requisite for good poetry everywhere. Poetry's concern is with the art of life, to provide us with the means to live fully and truthfully. So, as a poet, how could I not be conscious of my past and of the history which has shaped me, both personal and racial? I suppose any feeling

Oriya would be moved by the massacre of a hundred thousand Oriyas in the war which Asoka waged against our fore-fathers in 261 BC? Therefore, isn't it but natural that I should make poetry out of these historic happenings? So also about society which has influenced my consciousness and my life?

Emphasizing history is but natural; it shows how the bones of history are made up of time.

BKD : There are a number of ways in which a poet can give a distinct touch and an identify to his poetry. He can do it by acclimatizing an indigenous tradition to a language other than one's first language (in your case, English) and by way of evocating the place to which he belongs. This commitment to locale is seen in the poetry of Robert Frost (New England), W.B. Yeats (Sligo), Nissim Ezekiel (Bombay, now 'Mumbai') Can we take the golden triangle - Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Puri - as the locale of your poetry?

JM : This place, Orissa, its earth, its air - - all of these have shaped my growing up. So I would write about it, which I do. Orissa is for me an exciting and attractive field of a sensibility. Instinctively I write about the traditions, the myths and the history of Orissa. And this local colour is very important for me; it is the local which powers me into new outlooks and ideas.

Of course Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Puri are near to me; but probably nearer emotionally than their geographical distances. My personal history has something to do with this. And my own makeup, my growing up in the rural Cuttack of my childhood which was just a weedy, malarial, overgrown village. But I would say the whole land of Orissa sustains me and my poetry. Take this land away, and I'd be lost somewhere!

BKD: You have written sixteen books of poems and never looked back since you received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1981. You have a great sense of movement in your poetry. You write poems about the past and present (i.e, the contemporary scene). Do you look at the world as a flux that undergoes changes from moment to moment?

JM : Of course. This movement, seen or unseen, hangs there, in front of you, behind you, breaking and building your dreams. Eventually your life and your poetry. The movement is hard to see: at times it breathes blood, it does not allow us to distinguish human beings from animals. I suppose this chaos seeps into one's poems.

BKD : In your essay, "Face to Face with the Contemporary poem", you have written that, "the relation between a poem and reader is a reversible process, a two-way affair". Would you kindly elaborate it?

JM : I'd like to think that a poem hasn't done what it is supposed to do unless it touches a reader. If the poem is left to itself unattended on a page, unread, then the poem is almost meaningless. But if its reading touches a reader, and he is moved by the feeling (and language) in the poems, it has done its work. I didn't have any high and mighty ideas in mind when I said that the relation is "a reversible process." I simply wanted to stress that a poem should be able to move the reader, similar to the charge accumulating in a condenser — which only if it is enough, can pass over to the other plate of the condenser as an electric spark, enabling the process between reader and poet to be complete. Therefore, the strength of the poem supports the reverse process.

BKD : Poetry is broadly divided into two types : "Direct poetry" and "oblique poetry". 'Direct Poetry' is that kind of poetry in which the surface meaning is the meaning of it, while in 'oblique poetry' one thing is stated in terms of another (ie, through images, metaphor and symbols). Which kind of poetry do you write ?

JM : My preference is for poetry which uses symbols, metaphors and images to state the poem's concerns. Not that I have anything against direct statement in poetry, but I like to use or write "oblique poetry" (your words). It's my choice. But if I could, I'd write both types of poetry.

BKD : In your essay, "Freedom as Poetry : The Door", you have stated that; "one tends to feel that there are two kinds of poetry

being written today, in almost all countries of the world - The one which caters more or less to the establishment, and which is relatively safe poetry because it carries no sort of risk or danger to the poet. The other, and this type of verse has been written in other times as well and in many places including our own, becomes a dangerous occupation - because generally such poetry is critical of the establishment and therefore is against the well being of the poet". The statement seems to be true. Which kind of poetry do you prefer?

JM : Look, it's not a question of writing safe poetry or anti-establishment poetry. One doesn't deliberately do such things. If one comes across injustice or unnecessary violence in the society in which the poet lives, then one is forced to write about this. I write about whatever hurts me, social or political.

BKD : In "Silence : Poetry's Last Word", you have stated that "a poet, is first of all responsible to his or her own conscience, otherwise he or she cannot be called a poet". Do you mean to say that the poet has to be honest to himself or herself?

JM : This is what I believe in : That a poet, first of all, should be responsible to his or her own conscience. In other words, the poet should be basically honest. At times, one feels, romanticism could lead the poet toward a kind of insincerity, which does not seem proper for poetry. Let the poet not succumb to the superficiality of poetry, abandoning himself to a false sincerity where the poetry loses its value. It is but proper that the poet should look at the world with his inner conscience and talk about those things which he feels mar it. I feel that way. I would like to make myself worthy of poetry. I try, but I can't say what I have been.

BKD : You have written a few poems on Gandhi. Do you intend to create a living myth out of Gandhi, as R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao have done in fiction?

JM : No, there's no question of making a myth of Gandhi. I have immense regard for him, having grown up with his thoughts, and his courage has been exemplary. One usually does not come across that

sort of courage today. To go to a Round Table Conference in Britain, clad in a thin dhoti, takes on high and noble proportions. I could never do that, but wear my best suit to sit with all those people. And then, I was fortunate to attend his prayer meetings at the Bankipur Maidan in Patna, where I was studying for my M. Sc. There is so much to be learnt from his life. Regard for him has come about naturally. My writing is not deliberate.

BKD : You have written a poem, "Madhuri Dixit" in *Random Descent* (2005). Do you want to emphasize the dance tradition of our country through her character ?

JM : Look, I am a simple man. Madhuri Dixit held audiences in sway with her looks and her acting. It was but natural that I admire her. And it is a consequence of this admiration that I wrote this poem to her. She was all woman. The dance tradition of which you speak did not enter my mind.

BKD : Some lines of your poetry seem to be prophetic. Take for instance, the line "But life is always something else" ("Re - enacting an Old Play"). Would you please explain that line ?

JM : Prophetic ? Well, I can't answer that. Take the human mind, for example. It is packed with feelings we know nothing about, besides other unknowns: like images of people we have never seen, sounds of voices we've never heard, and places we have never ever visited. So it is extremely difficult to give a precise or absolute meaning to any of our thoughts or actions. Can I say that poetry is the end all in my life ? It is not mathematics that I would insist : This only is what matters to me in life. I would like to believe life is something else besides the statements I make at times in my poems. And this is true. The workings of the brain are so complex that it is hard to make generalisations, and order is not easy to achieve.

BKD : Having asked you a few questions on your poetry, let me turn to other aspects. That is, who are the writers and poets you admire ?

JM : I can single out poets who are writing in different languages, writers from various countries — whose poems have come to me in English translation. Among novelists I would mention Jose Saramago, Garcia Marquez, Haruki Murakami, Elias Canetti; there are many others. Among poets, there are Salvatore Quasimodo, Cesar Vallejo, Pablo Neruda, to name a few. Well, there are so many who I look up to; it's difficult to give names.

BKD : What do you think about the reviewing of your books in India and abroad ?

JM : I'd say this much : I have had more problems getting my books reviewed in India than in other foreign countries. But some of the fine reviews have been in the United States. I don't know if you remember the review that appeared in 1978 (I think) — of *A Rain of Rites* in *The Hudson Review*, and it was done by the critic Vernon Young. It really gave me new life !

But I got scathing reviews of my first two volumes of poetry. Even *Relationship* got a damaging review in the Sahitya Akademi Journal, *Indian Literature*. Well, my luck ! On the other hand, I've been fortunate in getting letters from some editors in the US. I'd like to mention George Core, Editor of *The Sewanee Review*, Brian Cox, Poetry Editor of *Critical Quarterly*, and from the Poetry Editor, *The New Yorker* — who have been publishing me regularly through the years ; their letters have always inspired me.

BKD : Now there are quite a few books on your poetry (both written and edited). Do you think these books really help the readers in understanding your poetry ?

JM : The books should be of help. My poems are generally thought of to be abstruse, and not many students or readers would have the patience to read them. Certainly, yes. These books should help readers.

BKD : After having achieved success as an Indian English poet, you have started writing poetry in your first language (ie, Oriya). Why did you turn to writing poetry in Oriya ?

JM : I had been writing poetry for about twenty five years or more in English before I thought of starting out in my mother tongue, Oriya. Frankly, my experience with English poems had revealed that local colors hadn't got into the poems. I felt I could speak in a more colloquial manner if I wrote poetry in Oriya. And then, I thought the common man would read my work; the fast - food vendor for instance, or the boiled - egg seller. It was a sort of challenge, and I am happy I took it up. I discovered too that the English and Oriya poems complemented each other; there were certain poems I could have written in Oriya alone. The fact remains; I am an Oriya poet, whichever language I might use.

BKD : You have achieved numerous awards both at home and abroad. Are you really affected by them ?

JM : A few awards, yes. The answer is NO.

BKD : The last question. Apart from poetry, you also write short story and essays. Your latest book, *Door of Paper : Essays and Memoirs* came out in 2007. How would you like to be described : an Indian English poet and writer, a bilingual poet and writer or an Indian poet and writer ?

JM : I suppose the label of an Indian poet would suit me. That's all.



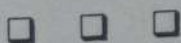
BOOK REVIEW

**Sunny Singh. *With Krishna's Eyes*.
New Delhi : Rupa & Co, 2006, pp ix + 293**

Sunny Singh's first novel *Nani's Book of Suicides* (2000) is a tragic tale of the young generation, and her second novel, *With Krishna's Eyes* (2006) in a sense is a continuation of her first novel. The novelist is especially gifted in bringing to focus the incongruities between the stories of the past and real life in India now. Almost always there is an element of sadness in women writing and Sunny Singh's novel is no exception. *With Krishna's Eyes* is a tale basically about the identity question both at personal as well as collective levels. The novel is also a memory novel, based on the childhood memories of the protagonist – Krishna – Krishnakali, the well heroine from the pages of Shivani's much celebrated novel by that name. Naturally, the narrative pattern is studded with anecdotes, stories, myths from India and Indian past trying to concentrate on the cultural history of Rajputana, the region belonging to the ruling clan of India in the past. The novel is also heavily autobiographical – family members, friends shaping the characters in the novels. The change is perhaps, in the name only. It is interesting how young generation is frequently challenging the mother figure and seeking a surrogate mother in the grandmother – the Nani of Sunny's first novel reappears as Dadi in her second novel carrying the legacy of the same name – Abha. Actually, the story is about the young narrator's, Krishna's, encounter with her Dadi – her grandmother at every juncture in her life. After Krishna's grandmother is gone memories play tricks on her – everyone sounds like Dadiji to her, everywhere she turns, her grandmother flies past, her sari trailing and her gait tinkling heavily with keys secured around half her waist. Krishna is her Dadi's miracle, "wrought by her hands, demanded and received from the gods by

her will alone". Krishna says, her mother might have borne her from her womb, but Dadiji conceived her, willed her, nurtured her into her existence. Because Dadiji believed that souls with *great karma* had daughters, on the flip side souls with awful deeds in a pervious life were born as daughters. Krishna returns to India, to her village, feudal, almost medieval in its ways. Krishna's Dadi, even after her death, directs Krishna to enact her *dharma* which is a document on film the last days of Damayanti who is a strong minded lawyer, who upon the death of her husband, will commit *sati*. The novel is dealing with *sati* in an astonishing manner. Krishna could not believe that Damayanti has joined the legions of women who are worshipped as *sati matas*. After the incident, villagers thronged at the site to seek her blessings; thousands and thousands came there to carry off handfuls of the ashes from Damayanti's pyre. Women travelled for hundred of miles to the spot simply to offer prayers. The policemen cordoned off the area and shoo off anyone who came there to pray; still people came from all over, sneaking to rub a pinch of dust on their foreheads because the mother earth was sanctified. The policemen look the other way allowing people pray. At times, some journalist would come and the devotees were pushed away by them. The scene is straight from Roop Kanwar episode. It is strange that Krishna, rebel, has to confront the fact that her *dharma* is an act as conforming and backward as it is subversive. In the documentary that she has filmed Damayanti does not seem like divinity. She is very human, dark, with delicate face lined with age and worry. In ultimate analysis, it surfaces that the novel deals with the rhythm of love, coming to a full circle through Krishna's urbanity, her acceptance of tradition, Damayanti's committing *sati* and through the dreams and aspirations of Krishna's Dadiji. Krishna reminisces her Dadi's words: "When you see the sun in June, you will know it's me smiling... you see, *beta*, the June sun burns the brightest, full of all the passion in the world. And because of its brightness, June sun can make dreams seem as real as life." The June sun metaphorically makes one see the world clearly or as one would want to see it exactly.

Sushila Singh



Suresh Shukla. *The Wobbling World of Kingsley Amis : A Critical Study.* Ahmedabad : Vishal Corporation, 2006, Pages 207, Rs. 225/-

Kingsley Amis's first novel *Lucky Jim* (1954) and John Osborne's first play *Look Back In Anger* (1956) with their protagonists Jim Dixon and Jimmy Porter broke startlingly new ground. Their irreverent manners and their radically new moral and political vision went a long way in ushering in "The Angry Decade" in English Literature. A new literary avant-garde noisily made its way, soon to be joined by the likes of John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, Muriel Spark, John Wain, Arnold Wesker and others. In the years following *Lucky Jim* a full flowering of the anti-establishmentarian "anger" of the 1950s was witnessed. So was the emergence of the quintessential prototype of the modern anti-hero, who laughed at contemporary English society to unrelenting ridicule and whose new-found conscience and unsparing, critical eye exposed cant and hypocrisy wherever it was noticed. Academics in India have avidly taken to the "The Angry Generation," and a steady, continuing output of critical essays, books and dissertations is indicative of their interest in the subject. Dr. Suresh Shukla's study, *The Wobbling World of Kingsley Amis*, under review, points to this trend.

Shukla starts off by considering the now too familiar epithet, the "angry young men" as it was applied, in varying degrees, to novelists and playwrights in the 1950s and with diminishing relevance in the 1960s. Now, half a century later, the phenomenon is usefully studied in the context of the immediate post-Second World War years

in Britain. The harsh realities of life were such that "Great Britain" was slowly being transformed into "Little England" (in the words of John Mander). With an intense awareness of the national anguish, a diminished and exhausted England at the end of the war, with the far-flung empire finally dissolving, the British came down with a pervasive ennui as perhaps never before in their national consciousness). Writers, and among them those cited above, responded by creating the typical angry protagonist, or the unheroic hero, appropriately ambiguous for those uncertain times. The world of Amis's creation, as Shulka has shown, comprises any number of mediocre, misfit and cranky failures. 'Lucky' Jim Dixon is a sorely misplaced university lecturer : inept, deprived and resentful (be it money, sex or success). Garnet Bowen is a frustrated novelist. Roger Micheldene's misfortune has created in him a premature but pathological distrust towards everything. John Aneurin Lewis (a "poet, visionary and wit," but, alas, in just his own opinion) is in fact a confused and desperate library assistant in non-descript provincial town. Stanley Duke is sinking into middle age surrounded by insanity and neurosis and caprice. And on and on. There are a host of teachers, journalists, as well as novelists : all unheroic, all up against the tide and none redeemed by anymore than a touch of human frailty which prompts them crave only after whatever is unworthy, whatever is in fact sure to reduce them even more.

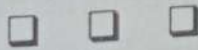
As thematic analysis and a closer look at one novel at a time is undertaken, this study does well do concentrate on substance (in terms of the developing action, the inter-play between character and character, the ethos of the time and the novelist's vision – which are among the most vital features of an English novel of manners and morals from Henry Fielding onwards) and not stray into "theory" as witnessed since the Derridean phenomenon, the potency of which might, in fact, be well on the way out. Instead , Shukla, writing in

the Indian context (and, surely aiming primarily at our B.A. Honours and M.A. students and their teachers), does well to dwell on Amis's full range of novelistic skills. If as an angry rebel Amis exploded with the rage and contempt for the established order of things, he has also displayed an intellectual's penchant for the underlying meaning. Once the rage is spent (rage at phoniness, injustice, boredom, meanness of life, deprivations of life, at America !), he is moved to record the comedy and the humanity of it all – as does Jim Dixon after his despair at being stuck in a car behind a slow-moving lorry. Having witnessed life's absurdly petty as well as profoundly philosophic tease, Amis, much like W. H. Auden, accepts the aches and agues that are a legacy of modern Western civilization. As recent scholarship seems finally willing to accept, Amis transcended his earlier Jimmy Porter - like fire, and mellowed. Like his own Harry Caldecote (*The Folks that Live on the Hill*), Amis matured into a certain moral stature and wisdom over the years. If in his angry phase he looked outward (class, society, jobs, money and success), he has, as an established literary figure, looked inward (human psyche, fears, guilt, conscience and moral qualms). In this study Shukla has carefully paid attention to all these aspects as he has looked at Amis's novels one by one. As reader and critic Shukla establishes that the Kingsley Amis corpus is formidable and that the novelist has acquitted himself with elan. So, in the chronicle of modern English letters, he has a well-deserved and distinguished place.

In these matters Shukla's critical endeavour is effective and useful. The world of Amis in its socio-political ambience is introduced. The context of the critical reception given to the corpus of his writing along with attention to the "cause" he and his fellow "angry" writers were fighting is attended to. Whatever he has contended he has tried to substantiate with quotations from Amis and the available scholarship (although the letter could have been trimmed). However,

a reviewer must also look at whatever shortcomings he perceives. First, Shukla would have done much better if he had concentrated on a few select novels of Amis instead of over twenty novels as he has done now, with no more than a review-length discussion which necessarily limits the scope for conceptual as well as interpretative analysis. Second, there is little attention paid to guidelines recommended by a style manual. The latest edition of the *MLA Handbook* should be a *vade mecum*. Third, the "production" side of this book leaves a great deal to be desired (general appearance, for example). Fourth, no studies from the 1980s and since are even listed. One hopes that in his undertakings to come he will heed these comments.

A. A. Mutalik - Desai



Amar Nath Prasad and Nagendra Kumar Singh, eds.
Indian Fiction in English : Roots and Blooms. Vol. II. New
Delhi : Sarup and Sons, 2007, Pages 259, Rs. 650 (H.B.).

The volume under review is a significant contribution to the critical study of Indian fiction in English. The papers included in the volume are on the important authors and their major works. The contributors seek to analyse critically the writers' point of view inherent in their creative works and what is more, they also make an effort to place these writers in the realms of Indian English literature and postcolonial literature. Papers included in the volume are analytical, evocative and critically authentic. The inclusion of some papers of the established scholars like R. S. Sharma and S.B. Talwar, and a few other prospective scholars provide very useful and scholarly observations on the important novelists.

The volume comprises twenty critical essays which examine the time and vision of authors in Indian English fiction. In the beginning there are three papers on Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan which deal with novelists' imagination of pre-independence social milieu in India. The papers analyse the state of untouchables, dalits and low castes in Anand's narration of Hindu Varnavyavastha and Narayan's world of Malgudi, a veritable and realistic prototype of India where there is social negligence to some and women in particular that cause a psychological wreck. M.B. Gaijan has made an attempt to analyse Anand's *Untouchable* and Joseph Macwan's *Angaliyat* in a comparative study on caste conflict, women exploitation, child marriage, infanticide and untouchability. He points

out that these factors serve a demoralising effect on human life. He evaluates the Pan-Indian caste system in which the consistent conflict between Savarna and Avarna continues to bolster the democratic values, human dignity and causes much obsession and frustration on the commonman's psyche on high caste - low caste issues. Ejaz Alam focuses on Narayan's popularity as a household name for his projection of universality in Malgudi reality. Alam's analysis of Narayan's fictional world presents the extremes of political activism, permissive sexual morals and breakdown of the traditional extended family system. Sonal K. Mehta analyses Narayan as a feminist and explores his mirroring the craze of Indian families for fertility in women under a mistaken notion of progeny. He opines that the novel narrates the revolt and consciousness for women's liberation.

There are two papers on Bhabani Bhattacharya's novels. In one of the papers Siv Narayan Dash analyses him as a prominent Gandhian. He projects Bhattacharya's configuration of Gandhian spirit as a role model that had inspired the post-independent India. Dash concentrates his views that his "every novel makes some sort of mention of Gandhi and Gandhian thought is central to characterization and plot." The other paper on *A Dream in Hawaii* analyses not only the pre-independence incidents but also many things in history as contemporary in ethos. In this paper Jitendra Prasad Singh analyses novelist's portrayal of Gandhian time, Vivekanand's philosophy and gospel of Vedanta, its impact on the super-technological society of America, East-West encounter and 'unique East-West mix'.

Papers included in the volume on Ruth Praver Jhabvala are on her early and later novels which focus on her perception of life during her twenty five years of living in India, East-West encounter, Indians' search for the path of salvation and role of hypocritical and rogue

swamis etc. Anshu Bhardwaj analyses Jhabvala's ironic vision in her novels before 1975 and portrays her as a comic novelist. Bhardwaj has a close observation on Jhabvala's attempt to satirise the degrading social and moral values, human relationship, domestic problems and inconsistencies in individual characters. M. A. Waheed's paper focuses on cultural, religious, social, educational background, psychological dissatisfaction and marital dissonance in the individual characters in her *Heat and Dust*. While Waheed analyses her perception of conjugal life where there is "Marriage without love and love without marriage". Nagendra Kumar Singh's comparative introduction to R. P. Jhabvala and Kamala Markandaya analyse many sensitive issues. N. K. Singh's paper is an attempt to portray Jhabvala's narration of some historical facts and Markandaya's narration of ruthless, selfish and rapacious class system that distort all norms and values in human existence.

Smita Jha's paper on Balchandra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* is a critical investigation on novelist's autobiographical elements, East-West encounter, search for cultural identity, partition elements and glorification of Indian womanhood. Jha focuses on intellectual, philosophical and quizzical aspects of the protagonist of the novel. Jha not only attempts to prove, "Home was beginning, no more than a point of departure," but also she points out protagonist's conflicting loyalties to the East and West in the novelist's assessment of socio-political scenario during partition and communal carnage. Dinesh Chandra Kumar's paper is a search for moralistic tone in the midst of desire and aversion in Manohar Malgonkar's *Combat of Shadows*. Kumar evaluates his exciting story of adventure, romance and lust as an outcome of profound influence on under *Srimadvagavadagita*. Kumar believes that this could have provided moral pills to his protagonist who has fallen sick with sensual pleasures.

There are two complete papers on Kamala Markandaya. The papers are on general assessment of her novels. Sudhir K. Arora critically evaluates the forbidden erotic landscapes in Markandaya's novels focusing on her observation of female hearts. He evaluates Markandaya's narration of Indian reality and Western nudity and never shying manner to narrate sex and sexuality in her novels. Mapping the erotic landscapes in Markandaya's novels, he opines that this made her novels saleable in the Western gallery. It seems that his estimation is over-rated or under-rated when he agrees with the views of B. K. Das "She only gives an artistic presentation of love and sex". Rasheeda Begum analyses Markandaya's presentation of Indian scene as well as historical pressures in *Nectar in a Sieve*. The paper is an attempt to focus on Markandaya's nostalgic idealization of traditional values, quest for modernity, scenes of economic disparity, poverty, growing bourgeois class and steady vanishing of age old social and traditional value system. She estimates how this causes social, psychological and philosophical alienations in the protagonists. However, the analytical beauty of the paper is marred due to the lack of footnotes or mentioning of source though there are many references given in it.

C. Anna Latha Devi's paper on three women novelists - Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, Anita Desai's *In Custody* and Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* is based on her analysis of wounds, hurts and shocks in their women protagonists who in their wife-role and mother - role enjoy social alienation, emotional alienation and psychological alienation. Being the victims of their physical tremors and psychological traumas they play their assertive roles with a voice of dissent and rebellion. Anita Singh's paper on Anita Desai's search for meaningful life in her fictional world explores the existential alienation and despair of her characters that lead them to an insistent

longing for death. But Desai's characters overcome the results of inherent alienations due to their inner awareness and search for meaning in life with conviction, "If reality were not to be borne, then illusion was the only alternative". The picture of New woman in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is depicted by Ajay Kumar Shukla. His paper not only estimates woman's marginalisation and oppression due to gender bias but also it presents the psychology of a girl child and the claustrophobic world of women. Shukla's critical estimation of Deshpande's new woman is free from 'ungratified ambition of parents, gender bias and patriarchal norms.

There are two scholarly papers on Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. While R. S. Sharma and S. B. Talwar investigate psychological realism in the novel, Amar Nath Prasad attempts to present her trends and thoughts. Sharma and Talwar critically estimate the individual as well as the social psychology with Freudian elements, dogmatic and traumatic practices. The paper focuses on the protagonists' deviant behaviour against social norms and methods based on sex, gender and class consciousness, which lead them pay heavy compensation for their rebellion. Similarly Prasad's attempt to explore social consciousness, class exploitation, social tyranny and injustice to the untouchables, plight of women and their search for identity, childhood and adolescence and hypocritical stand of patriarchal family. He points out that the novel heralded a revolution against the treatment of the untouchables, the God of small things.

P. Rajendra Karmakar's paper on Ameeta Rathore's *Blood Ties* examines the traditional mindsets of the people that expresses protagonist's displeasure of his wife's giving birth to a female child. Karmakar analyses the role of patriarchy and male hegemony. He seems to have agreed with the novelist that a judge cannot mend, or re-establish the blood ties.

The last two papers in the volume are on the general themes which widely cover the areas of Indian English fiction after independence. Gulzez Roshan Rahman critically estimates the novelists who have galvanized feminism in their fictional creations. Observing their creative perceptions Rahman commends the views of the modern Indian novelists that they are the 'beauty objects' or 'sex objects'. Sudarshan Sharma covers another important aspect of Indian fiction in English by evaluating Gandhian ideology starting from the great trio-Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao to the present time. He finds how Gandhian ideology has profoundly influenced the novelists who believe "Our political freedom is worth little without social uplift" and evils like untouchability, superstitions, blind faith, uncharitable rituals, orthodoxy and types of exploitation cannot pave the way for peace and brotherhood.

While selecting the papers for the volume the editor has made painstaking efforts to put them together in a book form and make it available to the scholars, teachers and students, which is impressively brought out by the publisher at a considerable price. Laying emphasis on the novelists and their works, the editors have chosen the papers on the basis of critical canons. As a reviewer of the book I find some of the papers in it are very useful and they need a sincere appreciation. But in some papers there are printing mistakes. However, I believe that the relevant aspects in the papers have the beauty in criticism due to comprehensive understanding of the texts by the contributors. The volume appears to be an addition to the critical study of Indian fiction in English.

Bhagabat Nayak



**Nikita Lalwani. *Gifted*. New Delhi : Penguin Books India
2007, Pages 273, Rs. 395/- .**

Nikita Lalwani's first book, *Gifted* was published in the second week of August 2007. Lalwani was born in Kota, Rajasthan in 1973 and was brought up in Cardiff, Wales. She stays in London and her experience in factual television and documentaries for the BBC gets reflected in her work.

Gifted depicts the life of the Vasi family with its protagonist being 'little Rumi', short for Rumika Vasi, whose childhood gets jeopardized due to an unyielding, whimsical father's determination to prove his child to be a mathematical genius. Too much restrictions and cultural bondage made the child a rebel. She could neither disobey nor break away from the monotonous routine and gluttony, trying her level best to prove her ability and to make proud her parents !

The novel has three parts. The first part has 9 chapters, second part has 7 chapters and the third part has again 9 chapters excluding the epilogue. The parts clearly demarcate the beginning, the conflict and the denouement. The first few chapters or rather the 'take off' is slow and later on it gains momentum. This novel is no different. Like the other expatriate writing, it touches base with the social assertion of the immigrant professional strata from Non-Western countries. It projects our methods of education and teaching in comparison to the British which is so fundamental and intrinsic. Therefore, geniuses like Shakuntala Devi (mathematical genius) is not believed or accepted by them.

At the beginning it was an usual expatriate family's life with Mahesh coming over from Punjab with lot of aspiration, dreams and insecurity, (prevalent among Indian diasporas), getting his Ph. D at Cardiff and deciding to stay back. He had only one friend his colleague Mr. White foot from the Ph.D. course, later on both of them join the University of Swansea as professors. Mahesh was a

loner and didn't like or allow his family to intermingle with the Britons, probably because his family in India suffered during the partition and he blamed the British for their 'divide and rule' policy. On the other hand, his friend Mr. White foot was an 'eternal' bachelor who separated from his beloved because she practised religion and he did not believe in religion !

Other than the immigrant dilemma the author expresses her opinion on various other issues like racism, partition, freedom of women and of course problems faced by children. She takes objection to the distorted view of Partition of the West. She speaks through Mahesh that-

"The Mahatma was opposed to Partition; he wanted Hindus and Muslims to live side by side for a start, without problems, without violence. This is a basic, I mean, really..." (*Gifted* 64).

"... That we lived in a refugee camp in Gurgaon ? ... We lived on one chapatti twice a day, yoghurt once a week, nothing else, months of trying to find a way to survive hungry,.... my aunt who was castrated by "friends", three streets from us, in the road itself, his children watching."

'Listen, man, all I meant that the Hindus were on the rampage too. It wasn't just one way. I didn't mean to ...' retorts Whitefoot. (*Gifted* 66).

The author not only depicts intense partition trauma, she deftly depicts cultural conflicts too ! Rumi's mother Shreene finds herself uprooted from her Indian soil and being compelled to unwillingly adjust to realities of British life and 'Foreign' culture. She blames her relatives, not being able to understand their problems. She was torn between duty to her parents, towards her daughter and obligation to her husband. She could sense of an impending danger, but could not express her fears. She tells her daughter.

"This country has messed everything up,.... 'confused you'. You don't even know who your parents are. What your country is. You are becoming like the gore. The white people ...'.

Lalwani projects the typical patriarchal family with women characters staying in shadow. But it was Shreene only, who understood her child's predicament but did not dare to go against her husband. She dreams of getting Rumi married in a traditional

way but believes that Rumi's fate will be like any other Asian alien girl.

Rumi's 'chained' life begins when her teacher Mrs. Gold announces that 'Rumi is supposed to be a 'mathematics prodigy' and needs special training for 'O' level and 'A' level examinations, Mahesh believed it but decided to tutor her himself (since mathematics was his subjects), chalking out a life of books and mathematics only, for her. Play was allowed on quota basis and emphasis was given to 'chess' to develop her 'thinking brain'. Rumi's resentment started growing, she knew she was extremely talented (mathematician geek) yet wanted to have a normal childhood. (playtime, friends, adventure novels et all).

The author writes 'Rumi did not mention how much she hated her new routine'. (*Gifted* 20). She started breaking rules discreetly and took to chewing cumin seeds to erase out tension, trepidation and isolation. Her childhood dreams appeared far fetched and disappeared. Mahesh's urge to prove his child a genius made him unapproachable and unreasonable, and dictator - like. It was numbers, equations, algebra and higher mathematics for her. Her world revolved in and around numbers only ! In a poignant moment, she calls up 999 just to hear another human beings' voice, such was her desperation. While she was driven to prove her excellence, her ebullient brother Nibu enjoyed all his freedom and childhood and was oblivious to his sister's tragic slave like circumstances. (Was it gender bias ?) Rumi felt the difference but loved her brother and bonded well with him.

Lalwani writes "she had no friends, she did not attend school any more ...". (*Gifted*)

She was withdrawn from all social acquaintances which reflected in her attraction to the opposite sex. Symptoms of Adolescenceic crush, lust and deviation away from the parents emerged. The mounting tension was aggravated by Rumi's clearing 'A' level, Mahesh's point to prove himself right and the journalists repayment by being sarcastic to Mahesh.

Mr. White foot sounded the alarm, 'I hear you, Vash, You have pulled out all the stops there, quoting the hobby book and that'. (*Gifted* 126).

The impending doom sets in when Rumi starts attending Oxford classes at the age of 15 plus and stays with Mrs. Mukherjee. She breathes in fresh air away from stifling atmosphere of her home. Her new found-freedom takes a toll on her grades. Rumi couldn't cope up, and started excusing herself from studies. Finally, she decides to break away to freedom - to foster parents - to a life of her own choice rejecting her past and her family. Her character has been beautifully sketched. (ethnically depicting nuances of girlhood and teenage).

Shreene felt all along that it would happen the 'inevitable' but the magnitude shocked her. She reminiscences Rumi's childhood, her lovable baby daughter, her daughter's girlhood days and then her teenage. Shreene blames herself for failing in her duties. She feels a child always longs the comforts and calm of the mother's love. With hope in her heart she decides to do the resurrection.

The end is a tragedy for the family, for Mahesh specially who accepts defeat in his purpose, but for Rumi, it is a new beginning, a right decision like the gossamer rain. (A touch of Upamanyu Chatterjee's *The Last Burden*). The end is also cinematic. (Like popular hindi cinemas !).

Nikita Lalwani may not be an excellent story teller because the story doesn't move smoothly but the story is ambitiously crafted. She revitalises, voices her opinions on issues of expatriatism, lost childhood, parents crazy drives, their incomplete dreams and unachieved successes which spoils someone else's dreams. She does not describe conflicts due to cultural differences but the conflicts arise because of obsessive people's motive to prove their children genius which draws a flack from western educationists. And here lies her skill.

To conclude, I should say that it is a wake up call to our generation, to stop the grind wheel and to let the children be children. Kudos to Nikita Lalwani for her extra-ordinary theme which makes her first novel immensely readable.

Mausumi Manna



CREATIVE WRITING

the killing of the innocents

R. Parthasarathy

what happened here
one Christmas night
has been long forgotten
as only a minor inconvenience
not that it mattered
that forty - four had died
inside a thatched hut
that one infant was nailed to a tree
with a knife
a handful of rice is all
that they had asked for
instead they had their mouths shut forever
by snarling torches
by morning
the wind had scattered their ashes
over field and river
as for the goons
who had torched the hut
they are gone
gone too their master the landowner
he has dispatched with a machete
one woman had sworn
my heart will not rest

till I skin the landowner alive
and make a roof for my hut
with his skin

killings such as this continue
they grab the headlines for a day or two
and are then forgotten

till the next killings that is

2006

On December 25, 1968, sixteen women, five men, and twenty
- three children, all of them Dalits,
were burnt to death by upper-caste Hindus in the village of
Kilvenmani in Tamil Nadu.

Thar Express

A nondescript rail station on the border :
bunting and flowers, a sudden burst of pigeons
and balloons to welcome the travelers.
Past tamarisks riding the crests of sand dunes
where a civilization was put to sleep once,
an express train steams in from Sindh,
the cold desert air still warm in its nostrils.

No train has crossed this parched arid land
since the fall of sixty-five when the tracks
had all but washed away in a rain of bombs.
But now this uncertain February afternoon,
like mild seasonable thundershowers
that no one had in fact expected, slowly
comes the belated green - and - yellow train !
2006

Pillow Talk

You wake up and slip quietly out of the room,
shutting the door behind you. Eyes closed,
I clasp the pillows one after another,
often press them to my nose in hopes of smelling out
the faintest trace of your body's secret perfume.

What nights we have ridden out on these pillows !
What strange cargo of dreams and memories
has washed up on these shores !
Never before have I held you more closely
as I hold you now in your absence.

But you, you hug the morning paper to your chest
in the kitchen and wash it down with a cup of tea.

2002.



Defining a Sufi

Keki N. Daruwalla

It is difficult to define a Sufi
but I'll try.

Always try.

Never say die !

(I am good at counseling myself, as you can see.
No one else would give a langur's ballocks
for my advisory dollops,
pardon the poor *angrezi*.)

A Sufi is he who as he enters
a Bangladeshi fake tandoori eatery
thinks he is in Moti Mahal or Khyber.
(He can't think of Bokhara as yet –
to think of Bokhara you have to be
spiritually very elevated.)

A Sufi is he
who as he downs one of our beers
with enough glycerine in it to embitter a jar of honey
thinks he is imbibing a Pint, mate,
at 'Fox-on-the Hill' in Camberwell.

A Sufi is he
who when he converses with long-haired Muzaffar Ali
thinks he has just spoken to al-Halaj.

A Sufi is he
 who, as he watches someone suddenly stand up
 and shout 'Haq ! Haq ! in the heart of Cairo
 falls at his feet, crying 'Master ! Show me the Way !'
 and when the master asks
 'Do you have a match and a cigarette to light it with ?'
 replies ' you mean, Master,
 'a cigarette and a match to light it with' ?
 and the master shakes his head and moves off
 saying 'you' ll never be a Sufi'.

A Sufi is he
 who when he sees others
 run away from a wolf
 knows it is just an Alsatian
 and moves forward to pat him.
 (What happened to the Sufi later
 is another story.)

A Sufi is he
 who when his acolytes confuse
 crucifixion with castration
 admonishes gravely
 'they are different'.

A Sufi is NOT he
 who, when the hand of God
 reaches out to bless him,
 thinks it is Maradona's.

A Sufi never marches
 with reality in line;
 he is always a step ahead
 or a step behind.

Five Tanka Poems

R. K. Singh

1

A mist covers
the valley of her body
leaves memories
like the shiver of cherry
in dreamy January

2

I love her undress
the light with eyes that spring
passion with kisses
she leaves her name again
for my breath to pass through

3

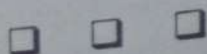
The cocktail of drink
drug and meditation --
nightly yelps
tease unshared quilts
the hell of silence

4

Short nights and long days
sleep loss rustles a friction
echoing in bed
the cycle of cravings
over and over again

5

It's prayer to sink
into her flesh and bury
myself in her breast
to escape the faithless hands
that never became mother



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