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Editorial

2011: The Year that Was

SUMAN BALA

2011 was a remarkable year –literary circles were abuzz with activity. There was an air of hope and optimism. There was all-round spurt in new writing—several new novels coming up, glamorous book launches, literary festivals, academic seminars, book club meetings and bountiful awards. A number of writers from Indian diaspora made a mark—Amitav Ghosh, Chitra Banerjee and Siddharth Mukherjee.

At international level, Julian Barnes stole the limelight by winning the Man Booker Prize 2011 for *The Sense of Ending*, which is superbly written. This slim book of 150 pages is more of a novella than a novel. It is a meditation on memory and aging; the aging narrator looks back on the travails of his youth and ponders over the vicissitudes of his own recollections. The protagonist of the novel Tony Webster is a retired arts administrator who has had a normal, peaceful life, a happy marriage followed by a reconcilable divorce, a well-settled daughter and prospects of a secure old age. The two important elements in the novel are history and memory. Tony constructs the history of his life from memories, and in doing so, he is forced to re-examine the events, especially when he receives a solicitor's letter, informing him of a rich bequest of money from his wife Veronica's mother whom he met just once. Just to make sense of events, Tony engineers reconnection with Veronica who remains elusive, enigmatic to him as before. The novel has an element of mystery too, and one has to simply read it to the end to see the mystery unravel.

In the recent years, literary festivals, film festivals and fashion shows have taken centrestage in the changing cultural scenario of India. Fuelled by an expanding middle-class and rising economic

growth, such events have assumed greater importance and substantially enhanced India's image in the world. Believing that the most accessible way to understand a culture is through its literature, international literary festivals offer a forum for people to gain greater understanding of India's heritage, culture and people. After decades of neglect, Indian literature has become the subject of lively inquiry and analysis, for both Indian and western scholars. It has drawn scholars, critics, book-lovers from all over the world to participate in literary festivals. A case in point is Jaipur Literary Festival. Asia's largest literary event and organized annually at Jaipur, is a testament to the growing influence of Indian literature and its appeal to both Indians and foreigners.

In the last Jaipur Literary Festival, January 2011, as many as 250 writers and 50,000 book lovers joined together to celebrate literature and culture. Booker prize winners and two Nobel Laureates—Orhan Pamuk and J.M. Coetzee—were the main attractions. Star-studded list included Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid, Pulitzer prize-winning novelist Richard Food and Martin Amiss. Sonia Falerio, who has authored *Beautiful Thing*, says about the job of a writer: "Writing is lonely, alienating work, and the warm and festive atmosphere of Jaipur makes you feel a part of a larger community of productive, creative people who truly get what you do." For a traveller, the Festival had additional value, Jaipur being the venue. Located on the deserts of Rajasthan and once the capital of royalty, the Pink City is known for its colours and architecture. The Jaipur Literary Festival vastly succeeded in democratizing the literary space by making the best-selling authors accessible to the lay reader.

Like the annual Jaipur Literary Festival, Delhi had its own literary festival in March 2011, organized by Penguin in association with *Mail Today* at India Habitat Centre. There were book readings, music, previews, mushaira and book releases. Like Jaipur, anyone could walk in for free and spend the day in the company of books and authors. All this encouraged the reading experience and made book reading pleasurable. One of the sessions was on "*Mahabharata*—Kal, Aaj aur Kal," with readings by Gurucharan Das, Namita Gokhale and Shashi Tharoor.

Perhaps the most laudatory literary festival initiated this year is by the reputed newspaper *The Hindu*. The newspaper offers an annual award of Rupees five lakhs for the best work in fiction. It holds literary events in different cities, organizing authors and audience. The final event and the prize-giving ceremony took place in Chennai. This year's "*The Hindu* Literary Prize for the Best Fiction, 2011" went to Rahul Bhattacharya for his fictional travelogue *The Sly Company of People Who Care*. The work is set in an obscure land and is written in somewhat obscure language. The backdrop of the novel is Guyana and it looks into the insightful delineation of the tyranny of forced migrations of rootless and disinherited people, evocating a fascinating response. Bhattacharya based his novel on first-hand experience. He went to Guyana to study the place and the people of Indian origin. Says the author: "I went there because I was curious. As a reader and a writer, I find the lives of people interesting, and people's lives are shaped by history."

Yet another literary festival that was held at the end of the year was "Mumbai Fully Booked: *The Times of India* Literary Carnival." Organized at Mehboob Studios, Mumbai, on 2-4 December 2011, it took literature out of its ivory tower and brought it into everyday life. Participants in the festival included Chetan Bhagat, Pakistani writer Mohammed Hanif, Sunil Khilnani, Patrick French, M.J. Akbar and Swapan Dasgupta. The carnival featured Mumbai's interests and their intersection with books, an array of discussions, workshops and book launches that kept the audiences fully engaged. There were panel discussions on various themes in contemporary writing. A special session was devoted to "Sex and the City" that featured Vikram Chandra, Altaf Tyrewala and Meenal Baghel. And another interesting session was on "Nostalgia and Literature" where Sudhir Kakar, Fatima Bhutto and Vinod Mehta stole the limelight. There was also a workshop on writing great non-fiction. Perhaps the most curious and lively presentations were made at the book launches. The new books released included those from sportsman Abhinav Bindra, journalists Arun Shourie, Jug Suraiya, Meenal Baghel and Vinod Mehta. William Dalrymple, the noted author on India, read excerpts from his forthcoming opus on the Afghan war.

Films are not just a source of entertainment. They reflect transition of time. They are multi-pronged tools that demonstrate the social formation of certain region, person, or group. The film festivals have a lot more to offer to the visitors, especially youngsters interested in art and literature. A number of film personalities have entered the arena of literary world. Earlier it was Gulzar, now it is Deepti Naval, who has just released her short stories collection in English, published by Amaryllis. Deepti Naval, as we all know, is an acclaimed film actor, painter, director and poet. After her schooling in India, she migrated to the United States where she studied at the City University of New York and received her Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts at Hunter College in Manhattan. The title of Deepti Naval's book is: *The Mad Tibetan: Stories from Then and Now*. Each story carries the visual and emotional impact and vivacity of a film. While the story "Thulli" draws you deep into the sordid and bleak life of a prostitute in Kamathipura in Mumbai, "The Piano Tuner" gently tugs at your heart with music from the piano that Feroze Batliboi once played. Ruth Mayberry inspires her never-say-die-spirit, yet grapples with loneliness. Her stories, "D," "The Morning After", "Bombay Central," "The Mad Tibetan," "Premonition," "Sisters," "Birds," are all life itself—each speaks in a voice that is resonant and alive with the feelings of hope, love and joy of another day.

Women's writing received a great spurt this year. Manju Kapur published her new novel *Custody*, where the subject is matrimony followed by the emotional fallout of a break-up in a wealthy extended Delhi family. Marital relations are best dealt with by Manju Kapur. The novel focuses on the central couple just as their troubles begin. Their relationship touches the lowest ebb when Shagun, the beautiful wife of Raman, falls for his far more charismatic boss, Ashok Khanna. The story takes further strides with separation, divorce and re-marriage. Manju Kapur has established herself as a potential novelist who takes up various issues related to women, especially man-woman relationship. The author addresses the gendered nature of custody battles in India—after divorce, each parent makes the claim of the custody of children.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Indo-American novelist, published her new novel *One Amazing Thing* that explores human responses in times of catastrophe. It is an amazing tale of nine persons trapped in the visa office at an Indian Consulate as an earthquake hits an American city and the abandoned men and women begin to off-load their own stories.

Having returned from London, Jaishree Misra has published her sixth novel *A Scandalous Secret*. It has a subtle story. Glamour, money and a beautiful home—the golden couple of Delhi, Neha and Sharat appear to have it all. But a dark secret from Neha's past is about to resurface, a heart-breaking moment in her past that she has tried to block out. While studying at Oxford, a naïve eighteen-year-old Neha fell pregnant and made the difficult decision to give the baby up for adoption, vowing never to contact her child again. But now, years later, her little girl Sonya is a fully grown woman and determined to find her birth mother. With the foundation of Neha and Sharat's world rocked to its very core, will Sonya's arrival in Delhi push it over the edge? And as Sonya begins to confront Neha, can mother and daughter allow themselves to forgive and forget?

Namita Gokhale's new novel entitled *Priya in Incredible Indyaa* traces the roller coaster life of Priya, a girl from India's growing middle class, who works her way up through social and professional ranks to become the wife of an Indian minister, Suresh Kaushal. Priya copes with social vertigo, infidelity, menopause and relationships and learns some vital lessons watching her new friend Poonam chase status, sex and designer shoes. The novel is also a journey into the layered core of the country's changing economic scenario and the issues politicians strive to unravel in a flurry of five-star dos peopled by networkers, operators, business magnates and social hangers-on.

Rakshanda Jalil, an English professor from Jamia Millia Islamia, has released her new book *Release and Other Stories* (HarperCollins). The volume includes ten short stories, written over a period of nearly two decades. Says the author: "In fiction you don't set out with a preconceived ideology or agenda. It is somewhat autobiographical. Indeed all fiction delves into the self."

Apart from new women's writing, established novelists like Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat brought out their new works. Adiga has published his novel entitled *Last Man in Tower*. It is a suspense-filled story of money and power, luxury and deprivation set in a Mumbai housing society. Says Adiga: "I wanted a completely normal housing society and building in the novel. Vishram is based on the real building in Vakola (Santa Cruz) where I lived when I was writing *The White Tiger*. I wanted a normal, solid, middle-class Mumbai setting for the book."

Chetan Bhagat's latest novel *Revolution 2020* revolves around the lives of Gopal, Raghav and Aarti, who struggle to find success and love in Varanasi. They go through several difficulties in a society that rewards the corrupt. While Gopal gives in to the corrupt system, Raghav fights it. The story is bolstered with Bhagat forte i.e. love when two friends fall for the same girl. However, love continues to be the medium to touch socially relevant topics. Love occupies 70 per cent of *Revolution 2020* but Bhagat refuses to call it a romantic novel: "A bulk of my readers still want a love story from me. The corruption angle is slowly sinking in to them. While there have been many love stories but what separates this book is the way it deals with corruption."

With every new book, Bhagat is strengthening his social criticism. Bhagat wants to do something which can change the lives of the people and make India a better place. After "Hello" (based on *One Night @ the Call Centre*) and the record-breaker "3 Idiots" (inspired by *Five Point Someone*), yet another Chetan Bhagat bestseller, *Two States*, dealing with inter-community romance, is being turned into a movie. Bhagat, named the most successful Indian author by the *New York Times* explains just why it is easy to make films of his books: "My readers are not just located in the cosmopolitan metros or around the affluent areas of so-called big cities but are scattered across all regions down to the small towns, in the suburban pocket and along the outskirts."

One of the most remarkable literary landmarks this year was the publication of Siddhartha Mukherjee's book *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer* that made a publishing history and was named one of the top books of the year by *The New York*

Times. The book went on to win the coveted Pulitzer award, which is indeed a feather in the cap of Mukherjee, a Delhi born cancer physician. For Mukherjee, it was a fitting end to a long journey that had started with the traumatic experience of losing to cancer his favourite English teacher at St. Columba's School, New Delhi. It was one of the early triggers that turned him to cancer research, which, in turn led him to write the *New York Times* bestseller, published by HarperCollins India. An assistant professor of medicine at Columbia University, New York, and a cancer physician at the medical centre associated with the Ivy League School, Mukherjee, 41, was given the prestigious prize for "an elegant inquiry, at once clinical and personal, into the long history of an insidious disease that, despite treatment breakthroughs, still bedevils medical science." In *The Emperor of All Maladies*, Mukherjee traces the long arc of cancer—from its first documented appearance to the ongoing battle to conquer it. Putting the narrative together was a challenging task. The story of cancer spans 4000 years, and the side-effects of researching it can mean extreme information overload. "There were 300,000 papers on cancer published in 2010 alone." Siddhartha Mukherjee has become the fourth person of Indian origin to be awarded the prestigious Pulitzer for his non-fiction book.

The debut work by this Indo-American writer has given a great fillip to the literature being produced by Indians the world over. It may be noted that Mukherjee's work has all the elements of fiction, history and deep research in the area of medicine. In this respect, he bears similarity with Amitav Ghosh. Both Mukherjee and Ghosh are based in the U.S.A. A comparative look at their writing is called for.

Amitav Ghosh's novels are based on interesting themes set against fascinating historical backdrops. His writings are rooted in anthropology and imagination. His best-known novel *The Shadow Lines* explores the author's major concern with cross-border humanity and deep insight into the issues of nationalism and communalism. In *The Calcutta Chromosome*, Ghosh takes up the issue of the malarial fever colouring it with mysticism and mystery, supernatural and superstition. The skilful blending of literature, science and history results in an attempt to survey the past in connection with the present, anticipating faint echoes in the future. Ghosh, being a stu-

dent of anthropology, uses his knowledge to unravel layer by layer the enigma related to the discovery of the malaria parasite in 1902. His latest novel, *River of Smoke*, released recently, weaves history and imagination. The work is based on an extensive research in the British political and trade adventures in the 18th century. While as Ghosh confines himself to a particular period of history, Mukherjee covers the entire history of cancer including the vast research made in this area.

While the diasporic writer Siddhartha Mukherjee won laurels at international level, S.L. Bhyrappa won the most prestigious Saraswati Samman for the year for his novel *Mandra*, published in 2002. Dr. Karan Singh, an erudite scholar himself, presented the award. instituted by the K.K. Birla Foundation in recognition of literary eminence in Indian languages. The award comprised a citation, a memento and Rupees 7.5 lakhs. In his acceptance speech on 16 November 2011, Professor Bhyrappa said his creative experience mingled with the understanding of how values of his life are concretized in the *Ramayana* ~~and~~ ~~the~~ *Mahabharata*. Bhyrappa has so far written twenty two novels in Kannada, many of which have been translated into English.

Three cheers for Indian writing!

S.B.S. College, University of Delhi

Plural Swarming: The English Teacher and Diverse Critical Approaches

C.R. VISWESWARA RAO

It gives me great pleasure that this 55th All India English Teachers Conference is being organized by the Association for English Studies of India (AESI) in association with J.K.C. College, Guntur. I thank the Executive Committee of the Association for English Studies of India for nominating me as the Conference President this year. I accept this honour with humility and with deep thankfulness.

I look forward to this Conference reflecting on the new trends in English studies consequent on borders between disciplines becoming porous and on the gradual shift of interest from theory to praxis. I am sure the Association will play a creative role in preparing the road map for exploring the possibilities for the future of English studies in India. On this occasion I feel honoured to pay my tributes to the past Conference Presidents and to those illustrious scholars who richly deserve this privilege and more.

During my four-decade old engagement with English Studies, I have had the unique good fortune of tutelage under great teachers with a holistic perspective. Their integrity of purpose and concern for the unostentatious promotion of academic values embellished their thought and scholarship. It is therefore that on this occasion my thoughts centre on the profession and practice of teaching in tune with a contemporaneous outlook so as to help us meet the challenges thrown by the ever-widening frontiers of knowledge and the societal demand for a community of teachers committed to the science and craft of teaching. Given the bewildering variety of approaches and schools of thought, it is probably incumbent on the teacher that he possesses what might approximate to what Coleridge would call "esemplastic imagination" involving an amalgamation, synthesis, of disparate elements/ modes of approach which, as we see today witnessed in the rapidity with which new theories from

out of all old ones are arising, sometimes take us back to the beginning.

I would like at this juncture to touch upon the contribution to English studies in India by the redoubtable C.D. Narasimhaiah in, among other works, his autobiography, *N for Nobody*, and by M.K. Naik in his occasional meditations on this subject in the hilarious sketches of his *Corridors of Power*. I would also refer to Elaine Showalter's *Teaching Literature* wherein there is a distillation of her half-century of teaching (along with the experience of scores of other teachers) in a jargon-free blend of manual and memoir which will appeal to readers with a general interest in education. Provocative, evocative, spirited in tone and lucid in structure, this book offers what readers might want to know about teaching undergraduates. Showalter opens with practical matters (like the seven types of anxiety that can plague teachers, lack of training, isolation, performance, evaluation), and then moves on to the theoretical, exploring subject-centred, teacher-centred and student-centred teaching theories. Throughout, she addresses nitty-gritty matters, from preparing syllabi and lectures and leading discussions to grading and "housekeeping." She offers a cornucopia of approaches, peppered with brief reflections from teachers about actual practice.

Similarly, Robert Scholes' *The Crafty Reader* is another work to which I may invite your attention. This book from the well-known literary critic deals with reading not as an art or performance given by a virtuoso reader, but as a craft that can be studied, taught, and learned. Those who master the craft of reading, Scholes contends, will justifiably take responsibility for the readings they produce and the texts they choose to read. Scholes begins with a critique of the New Critical way of reading, using examples of poems by various writers. Throughout his discussion, Scholes emphasizes how concepts of genre affect the reading process and how they may work to exclude certain texts from the cultural canon and curriculum. He advocates reading a poem first for its ordinary meaning, "situating" the poem in its historical context, and considering matters such as whether you are persuaded by the poem, and whether, in fact, you like it. He argues that "human concerns . . . are the ultimate value of poetry" and that if "poetry does not communicate, it becomes the Mandarin discourse of a comfortable elite." The diminished status of poetry, he asserts, is as much the fault of "well-intentioned teachers" as that of reluctant students.

I may also invite your attention to some discerning and distinguished scholars like S. Viswanathan, author of *Exploring Shakespeare: The Dynamics of Playmaking*, Kapil Kapoor (*Literary Theory: Indian Conceptual Framework*), and G.N. Devy of *After Amnesia* fame whose remarkable absorption of varied insights and history of ideas in a synergetic vision has contributed significantly to the profession of literary studies in the Indian classroom. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, doyen of Indian Writing in English, and M.V. Rama Sarma, steeped in Milton studies and historical scholarship, deserve our homage.

English departments have become centres where mass culture—movies, television, music videos, advertising, cartoons, and performance art—is studied side by side with literary classics and this has not been an easy transition. The novelist Richard Russo captures the mood of an old order department trying to come to terms with a rather new appointee who "wore what remained of his thinning hair in a ponytail secured by a rubber band," and who startled his colleagues by announcing at the department that he had no interest in literature *per se*. Feminist critical theory and image-oriented culture were his particular academic interests. Edward Said has caused a stir by lamenting the "disappearance of literature itself from the . . . curriculum" and denouncing the "fragmented, jargonized subjects" (*MLA Newsletter*, Vol. 31, No. 1) that have replaced it. Literature in English has been a respectable university subject for barely a century. The English honours degree was not established at Oxford until 1894. Almost from the start there have been periodic announcements that liberal education, with literary studies at its core, is decadent or dying.

In 1925, John Jay Chapman watched the American higher education scene and found Greek and Latin classics disappearing. He then proclaimed "the disappearance of the educated man." Some fifty years later, Lionel Trilling gave a paper on "The Uncertain Future of the Humanistic Educational Ideal"—(Trilling, *The Last Decade: Essays and Reviews, 1965-75* [Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979, 160-76]). For one thing, the decline in the students of humanities relative to other fields reflects the fact that postwar expansion took place especially in the previously underemphasized fields of science and technology. With increased access to college for many students whose social and economic circumstances would once have excluded them, vocational fields such as business, economics, engi-

neering, and most recently, computer programming have emerged. Many "traditional" students in the "college age" as it is called are turning away from literature in particular and from the humanities in general. Many who once might have taken time for reading and contemplation now tend to regard college, in Trilling's phrase, "as a process of accreditation, with an economic/ social end in view." It is indeed discouraging to find young people feeling they have no time to "waste." But these developments help to explain the mood of the contemporary English department. Literature is a field whose constituency and resources are shrinking while its subject is expanding. Even conservative departments are beginning to take account—belatedly—of the global literature of decolonization, which followed the Second World War. As a subject for study, English now includes more than the literature of England, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Authors from the Indian Subcontinent, the Caribbean, and South Africa now fall under the purview of faculty finding it hard and an unequal challenge to teach courses on Milton, Spenser or Donne. And if cultural studies moves to the centre, then English becomes, as Harold Bloom predicts, a minor department harbouring a few persons who like to read what Scholes calls "a foreign literature [written] in a (relatively) familiar language." Added to this we need to take into account what Kernan calls "the waning of book culture" even within the university.

Literary "science" has yielded many discoveries. Biographical scholars have uncovered salient facts about authors' lives. Textual scholars have hunted down corruptions introduced by copyists, printers, or intrusive editors into what authors originally wrote. But for most students, especially undergraduates, the appeal of English has never had much to do with its scholarly objectives. Students, at least the discerning among them, turned to English till some time ago because they had the mysterious experience, "an untranslatable order of impressions." Milton it was who said, "a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, treasured up and embalmed on purpose for a life beyond life," an objective far to accomplish.

Matthew Arnold defined culture as the "pursuit of total perfection by means of getting to know . . . the best which has been thought and said in the world." For Arnold, culture had nothing to do with the motive "to plume" oneself with "a smattering of Greek and Latin," or to wear one's education as a "badge" of "social distinction." To acquire culture was to become aware of the past and

restless with complacencies of the present. Today when students are more and more focused, the university's obligation is surely greater for in the foreseeable future the English department will continue to reflect the state of liberal education in general.

In the immediate postwar decades, university departments of English by and large were engaged in a pursuit of the New Criticism—a term that is stipulative and often taken to designate narrow formalism. The New Criticism, a reaction against certain prevailing modes of historical criticism and subjective aesthetic impressionism, otherwise called 'appreciation,' pervaded the scene from the 1920s quite as a pedagogical weapon. The works of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, R.P. Blackmur, Kenneth Burke, Yvor Winters, and later Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, William Wimsatt, William Empson, L.C. Knights, and the Scrutiny critics, to name some, with all their varying modes of approach engaged the classrooms with great fervour. The New Criticism reigned supreme in the Indian classroom even in the 1960s with attempts by teachers and critics at analyzing the complexity of a work by the use of such devices as irony, paradox, ambiguity, tension and so on in order to arrive at what may be intrinsic to the text. Wimsatt and Beardsley spoke about "the intentional fallacy" which emphasized that the focus ought to be upon the work itself a id not upon enquiries into the origins of the work and into authorial intention. The essay, "The Intentional Fallacy," explained that the poet—the mind behind the creation—remains an inscrutable creator whose intention can never be fully known, but in whose handiwork one may glimpse something of the sublime idea to which the poem gives form. The New Criticism was driven by what is expressed in the title of Brooks's notable essay "The Heresy of Paraphrase," which argued that trying to distill "'a prose-sense' of a poem" amounted to a kind of blasphemy. The New Critics regarded a work of literature—which they described in a language close to that with which Augustine had described creation itself—as "a pattern of resolutions and balances and harmonizations, developed through a temporal scheme."

Though the New Critics came under severe attack at the hands of the Chicago Critics and myth critics, it must, however, be said that they viewed the critics' function as one of seeing the work "as a totality, a configuration, a *gestalt*, a whole." The close reading of the texts that the New Criticism taught us dominated pedagogic discourse for well over four decades. However it must be admitted that

cultural awareness was to be found in certain critics of the new critical era. L.C. Knights, F.R. Leavis, and Q.D. Leavis, for example, were uncannily aware of the connections between culture, literature, and language promoting which Leavis untiringly insisted was his life's mission.

But with Structuralism opposing its focus on individual works in isolation, Deconstruction's view of language rejecting the New Criticism, emphasis began to be laid on the process by which the context of a work was formulated and realized in innumerable ways. For the New Criticism underemphasized the reader and the poet and overemphasized the poem and did not take cognizance of what Structuralists and Post-Structuralists emphasize—the flow of textuality and the idea that every text is an inter-text. But in acknowledging what every true writer knows—that words are never quite governable by the will of the author—the New Critics were planting seeds of future trouble for English studies. Paul de Man, who introduced the deconstructionist theory of Jacques Derrida to American readers after the New Criticism had become a received orthodoxy, detected in the New Critics a "foreknowledge" of what he called, borrowing a phrase from the Swiss critic Georges Poulet, "hermeneutic circularity." Writers and good critics have always revelled in language play but in the 1970s, academic criticism became a "multivalent," "indeterminate," and "undecidable" "speech act" construed differently by different "interpretive communities." This suggests that the "referentiality" of language to anything outside itself is an illusion and that sequences of words to which we assign meaning are actually "gaps" filled by the "subjectivity" of the reader.

When claims to timeless or universal truth became suspect, Deconstruction became the dominant mode. The Structuralists pronounced that the author was dead. Ronald Barthes' essay "The Death of the Author" stated that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author." Genette's contention was that the language of literature was not subordinate to the message supposedly carried by the text. Then it followed that there was plurality of meanings in a text as a consequence of the absence of authorial intention in literary works. Without the authorial intervention, the critic's job was no longer to retrieve meaning but produce one which realizes just one of the possibilities contained in the text. Structuralist Criticism differed from traditional criticism by not pretending to retrieve a single, definitive meaning from the literary text

and by rejecting the traditional ways of perceiving the word, the world, and the text.

Marxists, psychoanalysts, and feminists have expressed their reservation about Structuralism in which the signifier and the signified form a unified whole and preserve a certain identity of meaning. Poststructuralists have discovered the unstable nature of signification which Derrida described thus: "the absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and interplay of signification *ad infinitum*." Derrida's theory of deconstruction in the late 1960s took the play of signifier, of which language itself was made, as leading to a deferral of meaning. Derrida's "trace" is "an always already absent present." As Hillis Miller defines it, "Deconstruction as a mode of interpretation works by a careful and circumspect entering of the textual labyrinth. . . . Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself." This Hillis Miller demonstrates by a deconstructive reading of a passage from *Paradise Lost*, Book IV, wherein the phrase about Eve, "as the vine curls her tendrils," suggests an already fallen Eve and not Eve under subjection. Thus it indicates an interference of figuration with theology by an unmaking of the construct. This is what Derrida means when he says, "language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique." Deconstruction thus liberates a past text for present uses. Women's studies, Cultural Studies, and Minority discourses have profited from deconstructive reading of texts.

Along with its offshoot, "reader-response" criticism, it was an extreme scepticism that regarded all meanings and judgments as contingent on the "subject-position" of the reader. Deconstructionists rejected the idea that a work of the imagination manifests any "presence," and they used terms like "aporia" and "absence." One of the implications was that literature was no more or less worthy of study than any other semiotic system. Long before the rise of deconstruction, in an essay entitled "The Meaning of a Literary Idea" (1949), Trilling had remarked that "people will eventually be unable to say, 'They fell in love and married,' let alone understand the language of *Romeo and Juliet*, but will as a matter of course say, 'Their libidinal impulses being reciprocal, they activated their individual erotic drives and integrated them within the same frame of reference.'" Trilling here indulges in a parody of the Freud mode of his day. This was intended to illustrate how "ideas tend to deteriorate into ideology." If one were to speak in the voice of Gramsci and

Foucault (among the biggest post-deconstruction influences on literary studies), the Trilling parody above would read as: "Privileging each other as objects of heterosexual desire, they signified their withdrawal from the sexual marketplace by valorizing the marital contract as an instrument of bourgeois hegemony." Robert Scholes examines these questions in depth in *The Rise and Fall of English*. In *Literature Lost*, one of the important books on the crisis, John Ellis deals with the pressure to publish something. Ironically, the 'publish or perish' slogan has only increased the production of books and studies even as, ironically, the readership for what is published has declined steeply.

The process of changing the assumptions of literary studies began in the late 1950s under the name "structuralism"—a technique by which culture was analyzed as a collection of codes and rituals denoting boundaries that protect against transgression by an "other" that threatens. Words like "high" and "low" "primitive" and "advanced," or "savage" and "civilized" acquired significance, and literature, in effect, became a branch of anthropology. Paul de Man wrote that literature could no longer be understood as a body of inspired writings with discernible meanings. "It leads," de Man declared, "to no transcendental perception, intuition, or knowledge." Under these "postmodern" conditions, "there is no room," de Man wrote, "for . . . notions of accuracy and identity in the shifting world of interpretation." Against this background, in the 1970s and 1980s, the dominance of deconstruction was challenged by New Historicism and Cultural Poetics/ Materialism which valued the psychic and physical reality of language. These twin movements were, apart from being a reaction against the New Criticism, a reaction against deconstructionist criticism which in its turn functioned under the premise "there is nothing outside of the text" (Derrida), though this statement was meant to be taken "inside-out," thus letting everything outside the text into the text.

Traditional approaches have sought to understand the *weltanschauung* of the different ages such as the belief in the Great Chain of Being held during the Renaissance. Old historians believed in the progressive nature of history, in the perfectibility of man as expressed for example in E.M.W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture* and assumed that literary texts were transcendental expressions of a stable and ordered world of values. This was a deterministic view that went unchallenged for centuries. New Historicism,

which was historicist rather than historical, was interested in history-as-text and believed in subjectivity shaping culture with social formation and individual identity influencing each other. It deconstructed the traditional distinction between history and literature and considered literature as another cultural artifact, even as history is. Louis Montrose's definition of New Historicism centred upon the textuality of history and historicity of the text. New Historicism rejects the old historicism's marginalization of history and the New Criticism's fetishization of literature as beyond the realm of history. It views literary texts and their parallel non-literary texts as interrogating, contradicting, and modifying one other. Through this, the critics unfold the cultural fabric that carries the work. It draws also from Foucault's belief that social structures are determined by dominant "discursive practices."

Stephen Greenblatt's essay, "Towards a Poetics of Culture," develops the hypothesis that texts are a product of "collective negotiations and exchange." In a sense, New Historicism is an attempt at re-writing history in order to champion the marginal. In so far as it is countercultural, it tries, with its antiquarian flavour, to overturn conventional hierarchies, undermine traditional polarities, and efface the distinction between elite and popular culture. This is exemplified in one of Greenblatt's discussions of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* where he develops a link between the playwright and the investors in the Virginia colony at Jamestown. Greenblatt starts from the fact that in *The Tempest* Shakespeare displays knowledge of the reports concerning the original colonization of Virginia, knowledge that was not evidently available to the general public until after the play was produced, thus suggesting that Shakespeare somewhat had privileged access to the material. Through this, Greenblatt subtly creates the image of the playwright entangled in the web of Elizabethan capitalism and imperialism.

The cultural critics look for elements in literary works which are by way of an implicit deviation from or rebellion against the dominant culture and prevailing power. Race, colonialism, gender and class are the cardinal points of their critical compass. Perhaps the cultural critics all too often shift their focus from the text to the political, social, or economic factors, leaving the text far behind in the process so much so that till a few years ago the feeling arose that literature departments were tacitly converting themselves into social sciences departments. Cultural materialism, which is British, is an

outgrowth of Marxism and is overtly political in questioning the dominant forces and in supporting the oppressed groups. Concerned as it is with popular forms of art and culture and with what Raymond Williams would call "structure of feeling," it situates the text within the political situation of the contemporary period. Greenblatt's reading of *King Lear* as a New Historicist differs from that of Dollimore, the cultural materialist, but they both lead us in the direction of how circulation of discourses and power structures affect our lives and how our own self-fashioning influences our interpretation.

If a champion of Reader-Response Criticism like Stanley Fish says "objectivity of the text is an illusion" and that a work is not an achieved structure of meanings, if Wolfgang Iser speaks about the "implied reader," a phenomenological reader, if Jonathan Culler develops the term "competent reader," there is the Hermeneutician like E.D. Hirsch who shifts the focus from the evaluative aspect of intention to the interpretative. Wayne Booth's "implied author" might refer to an intelligence that superintends the work as different from the biographical author. We may ask a question here: Aren't the authorial notes to *The Waste Land* a necessary part of the poem? Hirsch in his *Validity in Interpretation* (1967) argues in favour of a connection between meaning and authorial intent and reinstates the author because he is the one who is the basis for determining validity in interpretation. Thus, there is a radical departure from the New Critical and Structuralist views showing how the wheel comes full circle. While Hirsch's essay, "Three Dimensions of Hermeneutics," draws the distinction between meaning and significance, Deconstructive criticism indeed maintains that it is impossible to unveil the meaning of a text.

Lacan's theory influenced by Poststructuralism emphasized a method of psychoanalysis which concentrates not so much on the psychology of the author or the characters but on searching the text for uncovering contradictory suggestions of meaning that lie beneath the overt text. Robert Car Davis sums up this method in *The Fictional Father: Lacanian Readings of the Text* wherein he refers to indeterminate elements constituted on many levels of textuality which he says enable a dismantling of standard presences in literature, such as father figures, mother substitutes, Christ figures, and so on in order to help study functions and transformations in fiction that can be examined critically within the narrative structure.

There is then Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence showing us the relationship between the contemporary poet and his poetic forefather as one governed by a love-hate relationship and indicating thereby that every text is an intertext. Intertextuality then, with its emphasis on unlayering of dormant sediments of meaning through a tracing of the traces, puts on the shoulders of the students the responsibility of arriving at a knowledge of textuality through the chimerical transformative processes the text under consideration undergoes.

With Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979), not to speak of Helene Cixous, Adrienne Rich, and a host of others, there has been a proliferation of feminist literary critical re-visionary readings positing woman as reader and as writer and critiquing patriarchal ideology and re-discovering neglected women's talents. Elaine Showalter describes the vital elements of gynocriticism as questioning the biological essentialism which is the premise of patriarchy. Patriarchal assumptions are that a woman is a womb, a receptacle for male domination, and that women are caught up in the prison-house of language that is male specific. *Ecriture feminine* as opposed to phallocentric writing is founded upon principles derived from psychoanalytic, Marxist, and deconstructionist theories.

From critical theory in which a good grounding helps the teacher arrive at appropriate enunciative modalities, we move on to postcolonialism which emerged during the 1980s or rather in the early 1990s and has attained wide currency on account of such influential works as Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1980), Helen Tiffin and Bill Ashcroft's *The Empire Writes Back* (1984). Said was drawn to Foucauldian analysis of literature and culture as a site of political and ideological struggle. The alienating process which initially relegated the postcolonial world to the margin turned upon itself and pushed the world into a position from which all experience could be viewed as uncentred, pluralistic, and multifarious. Marginality thus became an unprecedented source of creative energy, decentring Eurocentrism. The result of such writing back to the centre can be witnessed in a diaspora of writings. Milan Kundera, the Czech novelist, predicts in his *Testaments Be-*

trayed (1995) that the future of the novel lies with the countries of the Third World. Disintegration of indigenous cultures, colonial oppression, mimicry, exile, disillusionment, double consciousness, home land-alien land dialectic, hybridity—these are some of the themes postcolonial critics are preoccupied with. Subverting a text for postcolonial purposes and moving the margins to the centre gave the impetus for new readings of *Jane Eyre, Robinson Crusoe, The Tempest, Great Expectations* and *Mansfield Park*, among others. For Hillis Miller, the increasing permeability of national borders multiplies the number of cultural communities living and writing within a given region and promotes "plural swarming."

Coming to the new literatures and the unfolding critique of these, the relation between location and literary aesthetics and creativity has been emphasized by several critics. The diasporic writers from Asia and Africa moving to the west have now begun to express their dissatisfaction with the hegemonic aesthetics that they have learnt all through their lives—in their reading of literature, in the literary histories, through canonical texts, and in the principles of aesthetic evaluation they have been taught. Subsequently, there has emerged the formulation of an aesthetics of dislocation, redefining practices/ principles of reading, and critical evaluation of literature, old and new.

The generations that grew up in the 1940s and 50s in the colonized countries were taught English literature and aesthetics of the western tradition, from the classical to the modern. Arun Mukherjee reflects upon this political role of education which, according to her, completely blinds young minds to large areas of the world's geography and history. She realized how one's educational system can de-sensitize one to the really important issues in the literary texts through an over-valorization of verbal complexity and plot-construction. In *Oppositional Aesthetics* (1994), she recounts her experience of teaching the short story of Margaret Laurence, "The Sea of Perfume," which according to her contains clear political ideas. She discussed the story with her students from her point of view, but in the term papers submitted by them, she found these aspects ignored. Instead, they focused on characterization and plot. She realized that "their education had allowed them to neutralize the subversive meanings implicit in a piece of good literature, such as the Laurence Story." Emphasis on analyzing metaphors and symbols reduces the text's embedded socio-political and cultural com-

ments and realities.

Arun Mukherjee expressly rejects this condescending approach of the white critics towards literature from the Third World. Her two books *Oppositional Aesthetics* (1994) and *Postcolonialism: My Living* (1998) have become part of the diasporic exploration of the prevalent canon, literary principles and norms of aesthetics. Emphasis is laid on the specific historical contexts of the writer and the reader's attention is called to the multifaceted cultural sources rather than to the experience of one dominating hegemonic power-wielding group. As a result, one hears "dialogic, heteroglossic polyphony."

Postcolonialism and cultural studies (and to some extent, postmodernism) intersect at a number of different sites, on a number of different planes. And both face some serious challenges. Both confront the globalization of culture, not merely in terms of the proliferation and mobility of texts and audiences but rather as a movement outside the spaces of any specific language. Consequently, critics can no longer assume that they understand how cultural practices are at work even within their own territories. The new global conception of culture entails a "deterritorialization," and a subsequent "reterritorialization," and it challenges culture's equation with location or place.

Both cultural and postcolonial studies must confront the limitations of theorizing political struggles organized around notions of identity and difference. Politics of identity are synecdochal, as Arun Mukherjee points out, taking the part (the individual) to be representative of the whole (the social group defined by a common identity). Next both discourses are faced with the need to think about the possibilities of articulation which is not simply a matter of polysemy, but the making, unmaking, and remaking of relations and hence of contexts.

All these problems have emerged as cultural and postcolonial studies have attempted to confront the apparently new conditions of globalization implicating all the peoples and cultures of the world. In these conditions, the traditional binary models of political struggle—simple models of colonizer/ colonized, oppressor/ oppressed—seem inapplicable to a conception of power which cannot be reduced to simple geographical dichotomies—First/ Third, Centre/ Margin, Metropolitan/ Peripheral, Local/ Global. Even if we grant that much of contemporary politics is organized around identity, lo-

cating it within the broader context of the new global economy, we need to ask why identity is a privileged site of struggle. Arjun Appadurai's discussion of the cultural dimensions of globalization and "de-territorialized identities" and "global ethnoscapes" raises some important questions. But our pedagogy may need to recognize the impact of local cultural production. Thus we may have to examine carefully questions of the aesthetics of transnationalism in our teaching of cultural difference.

One way of re-thinking the Empire in a postcolonial frame might be to focus on the inter-connections between the histories of 'metropolis' and 'peripheries' and refuse the simple binary of colonizer and colonized. A deep ambivalence characterizes the relations between colonizer and colonized. 'The other' is both an object of desire and derision, of envy and contempt, with the colonizer simultaneously projecting and disavowing difference. He asserts mastery but constantly finds it slipping away (Bhabha, 1983, 1994). For Ahmad, Said's major flaw lies in his reconciliation of Foucauldian theories of discursive regimes with the humanist tradition of a seamless history of European thought in which Said argues anti-Orientalist features can be discerned from the Greeks to the present. For Ahmad, this is to take on board the myth of a single unfolding history which he resists. He prefers to see the humanist vision of a homogeneous European history as a collapsing together of a series of very different periods with radically different economic and social structure at their base.

Bhabha proposes the idea of cultural hybridity which is said to be specific to the migrant, especially the intellectual living in the western metropolis. The figure of the migrant intellectual comes to signify a universal condition of hybridity. It is the subject of a truth that individuals living within a national culture do not possess. Edward Said's term for such subjects of postcoloniality is "cultural amphibians." Salman Rushdie's treatment of migrancy ("floating upward from history, from memory, from time" as he characterizes it) is likewise suggestive of this idea of the migrant having a superior understanding of both cultures to what more ordinary individuals might understand of their own. In Bhabha, the idea of cultural hybridity, as it is available to the migrant intellectual in the metropolis, gains significance as detailed below: "America leads to Africa; the nations of Europe and Asia meet in Australia; the margins of the nation displace the centre" (*Nation and Narrator* [London,

Routledge, 1990]). Culture is a sort of theatre, as Edward Said says, where various political and ideological causes engage one another. Said's focus is on the point that partly because of empire now, all cultures are involved in one another, none is single and pure. All are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic. The truest eye may be the migrant's double vision. The idea of the organic intellectual, as Gramsci conceived it, has been thus pushed aside.

Now let us take the idea of comparative literature into consideration. For the pursuit of comparative literature, a field whose purpose is to move beyond insularity and provincialism and to see several cultures and literatures together, an antidote to reductive nationalism needs to be worked out. The aim of comparative literature is to get a perspective beyond one's own nation, though ironically the study of comparative literature originated in the period of European imperialism and is linked to it. To speak of comparative literature is to speak of the interaction of world literatures with one another. But the field was epistemologically organized as a sort of hierarchy, with Europe and its Latin Christian literatures at its centre and top. Academic criticism in comparative literature carried with it the notion that Europe and the United States together were the centre of the world not because of their political positions but because their literatures were the ones most worthy of study.

Partly because of empire now, all cultures are involved in one another. It is here that translation as a creative and critical activity has a valid place in the province of freeing ourselves from cultural insularity. Again, translation from English to Telugu and vice-versa should derive advantages from hybridization. The Asiatic Society under the patronage of Warren Hastings undertook translations of the *Gita* (1785) with a foreword by him and also of *Hitopadesa* (1787) and *Manusmriti* (1796). If Macaulay's infamous statement was to the effect that a shelf load of Western Literature was worth more than all the works India has to offer, Hastings equally brazenly asserted that translation was a mode of "steering and controlling the Indians within the framework of their own ways of thought." Here is translation used for empowerment. Gauri Viswanathan's work, *The Masks of Conquest*, asserts the point that what has conventionally been thought of as a discipline created entirely by and for the British was first created by early nineteenth century colonial administrators for the ideological subjugation of a potentially rebellious

Indian population, and then imported to England for a very different but related use there.

Curtis's discovery of common "topoi" in European literature and Rene Wellek's consciousness of the unity of all literatures put forth a centric theory which can be traced back to Goethe's notion of *weltlileratur* or Eliot's notion of tradition or Arnold's notion of European literature. This centric theory can be said to have sprung from the hegemonic needs of the rising industrial power that Europe was, from Europe disintegrating under the pressures of world wars, and also from a medieval theocentric world-view which envisaged the universe as structured round a centre. This theory lay anchored to a transcendental signified capable of generating stable meanings with "truth" and "objectivity." Derrida refers to the "ensemble" of signifieds or a central signified as "an absolute archia," as delimiting the play of signifiers. The post-structuralist and postmodernist notions of signifier have brought into play the possibility of understanding a literary text in a non-logocentric way. If the text has no prior Being or rules to refer to, and its signifier generates its own essence through its gay game, then the text is a decentred monad. It generates its own energy through its contextual arrangement. Though it is situated in its own cultural problematic, it tends even to "erase" it. In the light of the text's liberative effort suggested here, the focus of comparative studies on "spiritual relations," "influence," "inspiration," "unity," and so on need a careful reassessment. That is, the emphasis of the theory of comparative literature needs to shift from unity, semblance, or identity to difference and emptiness.

The idea of comparative literature will emerge only when we take into account the essential plurality underscored by the text. The English version of *Medea* does not belong to English literature, nor does it belong to Greek, though in some sense it belongs to both. The "amphilingual" status of a work in translation makes the task of critics difficult. T.S. Eliot, in his scathing review of Gilbert Murray's English translation of *Medea* complains that *Medea* in translation stretches "the Greek brevity to fit the loose frame of William Morris and blurs the Greek lyric to the fluid haze of Swinburne," suggesting the amphilingual status of a translation.

In India, a multilingual country, plurality comprises the whole of the socio-cultural fabric. The term influence has been in vogue for centuries, but we are now engaged with the term intertextuality. In use post-structuralists have made of this term, it shows that every

text is an intertext, the texts prior to it being a pretext for it. "Every text takes shape as a mosaic of citation, every text absorption and transformation of other texts." Bakhtin and Barthes both include all literary relations, including influence, within the term intertextuality. "One text contains all manner of allusions to or echoes from other texts; and the many kinds of relations that can be established between one text and others—quotations, parody, plagiarism, "influence"—are known collectively as "intertextuality." This is how John Sturrock explains the concept. Intertextuality demonstrates how a new text recycles, renews, subverts, and enriches old texts and how it is a means of interrogating the literary past. It thus paves the way for a comparative study of how texts are "manufactured," making the text meta-criticism.

There is then the issue of bhasha literatures and the idea of amnesia put forth by G.N. Devy. The plea that Devy makes for a place for *bhasha literatures* in the scheme of things in the Indian academic imagination stems from a philosophical position about the crisis that originates in the uncertainty of perspectives about basic aesthetic premises in the Indian context. He argues that colonial experience in India induced a state of cultural amnesia. Should the premises be logical and universal or should they be native and relevant? These questions cannot be easily answered with any degree of certainty in the context of a multi-ethnic, postcolonial culture in which there is a crisis in criticism showing that the Arnoldian interplay between creativity and the critical impulse seemed missing for a certain period. It is in order to address this crisis in criticism that critics like Anand Coomaraswamy, G.N. Devy, Krishna Rayan, Bhalchandra Nemade, M. Hiriyanna, K. Krishnamoorthy and others have worked with unremitting energy.

F.R. Leavis, part of the socio-cultural critical tradition from Coleridge through Arnold to Eliot, sees in language a unique capacity to preserve shared values. His ideal of the "organic community," though a much-maligned concept now, envisions a symbiosis of culture, language, and literature. This may be far-fetched now, but cross-fertilization between language and literature in the promotion of liberal, humanistic education is called for when a utilitarian spirit is apparently taking hegemonic control over the higher education system in general.

The emphasis on the dissemination of communication skills for building up a globally competitive workforce is no doubt right,

given the status of English, "the phoenix tongue," the invisible career tongue. The second identity intertwined with the second language doubtless creates an ego barrier in the learner and induces in him a fragile, inhibited response. Syllabus design and the preparation of teaching/ learning materials at the Degree level have fairly addressed this problematic and are gradually increasing the focus on receptive as well as productive skills. Hymes, Widdowson, Brumfit, David Nunan and others have contributed most impressively to the development of the CLT methodologies and their filiations. Learner friendly packages aimed at a content that is a judicious blend of the mastery of language use and mastery of language structure are being produced and experimented with and are passing through the validation exercise. But the inalienability of language education and the salvaging of the humanistic ideal cannot be lost sight of, especially when we recognize the significance of the Bakhtinian idea of the 'inter-animation' of the individual and society.

English departments by and large are engaged in an exploration of theories and subfields—feminist, gay and lesbian, postcolonial studies, New Historicism, and more recently, "eco-criticism," and so on. These yield work that illuminates aspects of literature that in the Arnoldian description could be called, "fresh and free thought" and a free "play" of the mind upon ideas. The field of English has become, to use Stanley Fish's term, a "self-consuming artifact." We are seized with the theory fascination syndrome and are riding hobby horses of our predilection and sidetracking the true objective of education: to see things steadily and to see them as a whole and to welcome "cross-pollination" of ideas. May I hope that our journey through the mazes of this life-long education takes us "tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

A Translator's Odyssey

C.L.L. JAYAPRADA

Celebrated Pakistani novelist and short story writer Intizar Hussain in his preface to *Short Stories from Pakistan*, translated from Urdu into English and published by Sahitya Akademi, makes a significant point: "that literature is not a house without doors. . . . It is a mansion with windows opening out in different directions. The tradition of Pakistani short stories is one such tradition. It is like a mansion with open windows allowing fresh breeze to come in from outside." (Preface, xii) I would like to expand his metaphor further and state that literary translation is a mansion with wider windows allowing breeze from several directions at the same time. In about twenty years of translating activity which I began as a frustrated researcher, I have learnt that translation offers multiple joys and opens vistas into other fields of enquiry. What began as a short trip then indeed turned out to be an Odyssey. The topic given to me is "A Translator's Odyssey." The term *Odyssey* settled in the English language today as a metaphor because of innumerable times it was translated into European languages as well as non-European languages during several periods. Merriam Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary* defines the term "as a long wandering or voyage usually marked by many changes or an intellectual or spiritual wandering or quest." The epic poem attributed to Homer which recounts the long wanderings of Odysseus has been translated into different languages and at different times paradoxically out of imperialistic impulses, nationalistic impulses as well as decolonizing impulses.

Practice of translation gives one the hands-on experience in the application of linguistics, literary production, interpretation and logic. In teaching and training young minds it proved to be the surest method of conveying intense enjoyment of literature to the uninitiated. In the journeys across the globe which could be quite mind-boggling initially, I became aware of the networks that trans-

lation can provide in the globalized world, those that can ease not only individual tensions but the tensions of the world. Any serious enquiry into translation theories automatically leads one into other theories related to language, society, psychology and philosophy. In this presentation I would like to talk about the multiple uses and implications of translation, I gathered through the experience of practising, teaching and researching in the field for more than twenty years.

My first step into translation activity was taken in 1989 (*Indian Literature*, 136) when I saw a touching story of an old asthmatic man receiving a little care from a neighbouring woman deserted by her husband years ago living with her daughter and son-in-law. To his complaint of loneliness in old age, she shows him women in worse situations cheerfully carrying on in life all around them. It is a tragic story with a dose of sentiment. The woman finally does not come home when she visits a temple and dips into the lake for the ritual bath. The previous evening an aggressive mother of her son-in-law had visited them and released a barrage of abuse on her including casting aspersions on her character. Curiously the translation gave me immense satisfaction when I received an encouraging word from the editor of *Indian literature*. Still it left me with an acknowledged unease. The illustration on the first page of the story in English version was similar to the one in the Telugu magazine, a confirmation that I could convey something of the original in English. If I look at the translation today, it seems I did not take the knotty areas in translation seriously nor did I pay additional attention to idiomatic expressions, proverbs and a child's prattle. Whatever my hunch told me I followed that. I used phonetic and corrupt spelling for child's prattle and explained the idiom throwing out the curry leaf used in the curry (which indicates abandoning after using). One odd expression "My lonely life is mine," which implies isolation, now strikes out as a literalism.

In search of good stories I began Telugu stories and criticism extensively. I was elated to see my name in print and did not seek reasons for lingering unease. The lingering unease, a perennial problem in literary translation, is a legitimate one and it turned into deeper anxiety when I later undertook commissioned work for the Macmillan for translating "Athadu Adivini Jayinchadu." When I

began reading Translation theory, I learnt concepts like fidelity and freedom in translation and also learnt that translation can be done in many ways with focus on nuts and bolts of language, or with focus on content which is neither fixed nor stable. At a young age I was fascinated by realistic fiction and short fiction and further work made me intensely aware of the ways in which the so-called reality can be perceived and represented. Each translation poses its own challenges and while representing a story especially the knots in it made me read and re-read, sometimes a frustrating activity, to find a creative solution. The stories I did for *Indian Literature* dealt with issues of urban middle class milieu. Preparing to publish in *Indian Literature* gave me a degree of confidence which grew out of the assurance that rest of the Indian readers are familiar with habits of food, relations in the family, folklore and mythology that Telugu stories often depicted. Apart from similar social structures, similar literary, political and cultural movements sweep across various Indian states. If not familiar, at least most readers can easily conceive the thematic matrix of the other Indian writing. This facility is missing when one is required to translate for the overseas reader. Mini Krishnan, the Macmillan editor, in her letter mentioned the kind of readership she had in mind in and outside India. She expected them to be university students and researchers as well. The Damocles' sword of accuracy hanging above one's head could not be escaped after all.

Academia would certainly look for accuracy of several kinds from linguistic, cultural and ideological perspectives. While translating a feminist story by a disillusioned former member of progressive writers association forced me to see the subtle distinctions between Marxist and feminist ideologies. Translating Volga's story "Sita's Hair" forced me to focus on these distinctions. Gayatri Spivak in her seminal essay on "The Politics of Translation" discusses the difference between different ways of translating Mahasweta Devi's "Standayani" which is available in two versions as "The Wet-Nurse" and "Breast-Giver" while the first one seeks a smooth transfer of a well-told story, the second tries to bring to focus its Marxist and Freudian undertones, subtle irony, and use of startling proverbs in Bengali. Re-presenting a story is not unproblematic for Spivak and she remarks when the two versions are read

side by side the loss of the rhetorical silences of the original can be felt. Then what must a translator do? She suggests:

> First, then, the translator must surrender to the text. She must solicit the text to show the limits of its language, because that rhetorical aspect will point at the silence of the absolute fraying of language that the text words off, in a special manner unless the translator has earned the right to become the intimate reader, she cannot surrender to the text, cannot respond to the special call of the text. (Tutun Mukherjee, 99)

The original story of "Sita's Plait" appeared in Volga's *Rajakiya Kathalu* which portrays how every part of a woman's body gets objectified in the process of gendering. This of course involved the process of othering of the self or sense of self, a complex psychological loss which the only leftist reading would not have accounted for.

When I was given the offer to translate *Athadu Adivini Jayinchadu* by Kesava Reddy, many issues about the language came to the fore, both possibilities and difficulties. It is a novel about a pig herd who goes in to the jungle to retrieve his lost pregnant sow along with its piglets. Kesava Reddy acknowledged borrowing the framework from Hemingway's *The Old Man and Sea*. But *Athadu* is an Indian novel out and out and full of folk sensibility replete with idioms, proverbs, folk songs, alternative beliefs and descriptions of flora and fauna of the land. And to add to my woes it alternates between high flown literary Telugu and a dialect used by the poorest of the poor tribes in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. The intimate reading of the text was not at all unproblematic because I was not aware of the creatures, bees, and birds mentioned in the novel nor was the dialect familiar to me. Fortunately for me, apart from the language editor Ranga Rao, Hindi translator Lakshmi Reddy and Viriyala Lakshmipathy who adopted the novel for Radio helped me in getting the meanings right. The work commissioned as a part of Macmillan Project in *Modern Indian Novels in Translation* required the translator to prepare the work with a specific type of outwork. Looking back more than ten years after the novel is published, I do say that it is a tangible way out to solve many nagging issues. We followed certain strategies to convey folk sensibility. Whatever I have learnt about translation I did on the job. After the job was done

still some doubts kept haunting me. How can one convey the specificity of one language in another, in this case a foreign tongue? What can one do with a dialect which is intimately located in a soil, in a community, its perceptions and beliefs? Does language express a concrete reality or shape it? How logically are the languages structured?

Tenali Raman, a poet in the court of Sri Krishna Devaraya, had shown a few centuries back the limits of a so-called phonemic language by reciting the following poem to be dictated by a renowned scholar in the court

> Tpruvvata babaa talapai
> Puvvata jaabilli walwam Bucata ceedum
> Miwwata Cuudaga nululu
> Kkawwata narayanga natti Haru naku jee jiee

Leaving alone poststructuralists' notion of contingency or provisionality in all language use, and the language purists' notion of impossibility of any translation, I realised through personal experience of translation that gaps between speech writing, the gaps between conception and expression, between languages and cultures exist. These make translation a challenging activity in the real sense of the term.

Next opportunity came to me in the form of translating a story for the British Council Book *Routes: Representation of the West in Short Fiction from South India in Translation*. The stories were selected on the bases of their cultural resistance to the British hegemony. In the story 'Foxtrot,' Appa Rao, a Rail drivers' assistant to Ross, a white man, tries to get one up on him by carrying sob stories about his ill-treatment of subordinates to his drunken wife Cathie on a Christmas night. He tries to evoke maternal feelings in her. He skilfully manipulates the woman's emotions through exploitation of a mixed code of corrupt Hindi, corrupt English and a Telugu dialect. It reads as follows.

> Chup raho—mat rore—Kuch Parawa naihum-tumara, master ki, bole gi.
>
> Appa Rao kept sobbing. "Raksha Karo ma, bachavo. Dekho Memsab, Master koisa mara!" he showed marks caused by Ross's blows and a big weal formed in the childhood injury.
>
> "Mom, Mom" the parrot cried.

> "Madam, aap mera ma, 'Amma,' 'Mom' 'Mom'" Appa Rao wept. Suddenly Katie felt that her son, crashing to the ground in the battlefront helplessly calling out to her. (*Routes*, 256)

There was no choice here to render the story smoothly because that would have obliterated significant differences and the story would have lost its purpose. In the story, a weak and helpless colonial controls the choices of his powerful and exacting master through ingratiating conduct and fox-like cunning. A deliberate attempt at foreignized translation is made. In foreignized translation, attention is paid to the language and manipulation of structures so that translation foregrounds certain linguistic misfeatures or what Spivak calls rhetoricity of language. A domesticated translation is for an average reader when a translated work is transmitted as an artistic work and is received in a spirit of acceptance. Here one is reminded of Rudolf Pannwitzes complaint about German translation tradition that "germanize hindu greek english instead of hinduizing grecizing and anglicizing german" (Vemuti 72). A translator is compelled to make a choice between these two types of translations where a reader is either brought close to the target culture or source culture. As I learnt many strategies in translation, an opportunity came to teach a course in translation.

A decade after I began translation, translation courses have been started all over India. In Andhra Pradesh, Andhra University is perhaps the first university to start translation theory and practice as an elective. Due to vast changes in educational scenario driven by market needs, English teaching became challenging in crucial ways. Software boom impacted English studies in two ways: by creating great demand for English teachers on one hand and by causing internal brain drain on the other hand. Students from humble backgrounds enter postgraduate departments in order "to learn English." To give them confidence in the use of English and make them respond to a piece of literature is an uphill task. Though translation as a tool for teaching English is discredited in ELT some decades ago, I feel it is the surest way to give the student the feel of the language and enjoyment of literature. Through translation, working on drafts of poems and short stories, students learn to enjoy writing on their own, to confidently interpret poems on their own and through these the base of their lexis and structures is automatically expanded. The

stricken look on their faces in the first year, the bored look in the general classes of the final year is replaced by a glow of satisfaction and discovery in the specialization class of translation. Their spontaneous comments on a poem and story show that they thoroughly enjoy reading and assessing literature.

Brainstorming sessions such as gathering, selecting and matching adverbs of frequency in Telugu and English make them aware that they are not using words precisely in the mother tongue either. Collecting synonyms in Telugu for human body like *sareeram*, *deham*, *thanuvu*, *kaayam*, and *katte* focus their attention into subtle distinctions and collocations in language use. For instance *sareeramis* used in general, *deham* is used when speaking of physical strength, *thanuvu* can only be used in romantic contexts and both *kaayam* and *katte* signify the ephemeral aspects. The students do experience the happiness in using language, reading literature intimately and translating. Teaching theories of translation has created opportunities for me to analyze my own work from theoretical perspectives and to inculcate critical outlook in students as well.

Another window that is opened by translation for me is research into unchartered grounds. Research into Indian Literatures in English translation is made possible by the concerted efforts of publishing houses Seagull, Macmillan, Katha and Penguin apart from the solid ground already provided by National institutions of Sahitya Akademi, CBT and NBT. Postmodernism and Postcolonialism have made space for different kinds of writing with varied styles, structures and world views in the academia. Indian writing in English has already received more than its share of limelight as well as attention of critics. A new body of literature of Dalits and other marginalized groups is being formed by English translations from different Indian languages like Tamil, Marathi and Telugu. A chance reading of Urdu women writers while translating some pieces from Susie Tharu's *Women Writing in India* into Telugu some years back led me to research on Ismat Chughtai and Qurratulain Hyder's novels and short stories. For Ismat the battle against social and religious oppression of women was the same in life and writing. Her passion for the issue resulted in writing that is fiery and deeply insightful. Long before Western feminists urged women to put women's bodies into writing, she did it creating stunning metaphors, racy language

and using what is called begumati Zuban, special language used inside the courtyards by women among themselves.

In a way that no other Indian writer demonstrated the ramifications of 1857 struggle, Hyder depicted in her novels the ways in which the composite culture of Indian subcontinent based on its music, writing, and architecture was destroyed systematically during the British Raj. The arts that bound Muslims and Hindus together became decadent paving the way for fractures in the Indian social fabric. She shows how women of all religions suffered increased marginalization and suppression due to increased social and religious stratification. The translation of her *Aag Ki Dariya* into English as *River of Fire* gives a new definition to historical fiction much before Postmodernists began playing with history and literature. In *River of Fire* two men Gautam Nilamber, Hari Shankar, and a woman Champak are born in four epochs during Magadha rule, Muslim rule, British rule and just after Independence. The final disillusionment of these youngsters shows that religion has nothing to do in defining Indianness and glory and decadence, individual commitment and greed and treachery were all part of the long history of the subcontinent.

It was indeed a rewarding experience to work on both these writers and much more translated work from Urdu is available in English for further research. This includes work from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. To name some anthologies *The Colour of Nothingness* and *An Epic Unwritten*.

Travels across the globe necessitated by migration of next generation can be quite mind-boggling. Many English words need to be interpreted even to the English teachers. On the flights I learnt my choice of food has to be termed as Hindu Asian meal. I learnt the man at the port of entry making me write my last name, Christian name and so on again and again was supposed to be showing off 'attitude.' Machine translation and automatically generated announcements on the flights can, of course, reduce individual tensions.

Ngugi, addressing the 2007 International ACLALS Conference in Vancouver, called translation a language of languages because it is only through translation from multitude of cultures the world stricken by fear can achieve cross-cultural understanding and harmony. The fact can be gauged by increased research on Muslim

writers in the US and the UK when the others are talking of a clash of civilizations and the division of world countries on religious lines. Research into translation is indeed a rich field of enquiry and has to be done sensitively by paying attention to the specificity of languages and cultures, and unequal relations in discourse generation. Let us not live in the houses with closed doors with whirring machines but in a mansion with wide windows in all directions.

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Translation of Poetry: Problems and Possibilities

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Translation is an important activity in life. It is inherent in all human acts. In fact, all our actions, creations and crafts are but varied sorts of translations. Translation is as old as the history of literary civilization. However, it has acquired added significance in the present age of globalization and localization, thanks to the imperatives of growing interaction among various language communities at the global level. Translation cuts short the distance and differences between countries and cultures. It breaks the narrow domestic walls, broadens mental horizons and facilitates realization of the concept of one-world. Translation is vital to achieve the goal of a global village. The introduction of comparative literature studies and modern language theories in the university curriculum shows the vital importance of translation in the present context.

Translation, in effect, is one of the means to trace the essential human spirit that underlies all literature. At its simplest, translation is a transference of meaning from the Source Language (SL) text to the Target Language (TL) text. However, translation as an activity is not so easy or simple as the word may convey. Since meaning is the main goal in translation, there is not much difficulty in non-literary translation. But the translation of literature poses lot many problems as it involves, apart from the transference of meaning, a host of associations charged with meaning to be translated from the SL into the TL. The problem is compounded in case of poetry. So much so that Robert Frost, the great American poet, once remarked that poetry itself is that which is lost in translation.

Poetry resists translation due to linguistic and cultural constraints. A translator of poetry faces the twin problems of transferring as well as translating. Jayanta Mahapatra, a practising poet and a translator perspicaciously observes in this regard: "It is generally

believed that a verse translation is itself poetry, but whether it really is poetry or not is a questionable matter. Any poem will not move fluently into translation, my own experience reveals the many hazards and difficulties encountered in the process."[1]

In translating poetry, the linguistic constraints pertain to the stylistic, structural, lexical and situational level. Rhythm, alliteration, onomatopoeia are intrinsic merits of any good piece of poetry. But these very merits render rendition at times almost impossible. Verse is the minimum requisite that differentiates poetry from prose. It is integral to poetic form. But some poems by their very versification are not amenable to translation as for instance:

A is for apple which lies in the grass,
B is for the beer which froths in the glass,
C is for curry which we love to eat,
D is for dumplings which are a real treat.[2]

Such poems where there is a verbal play on the alphabets of a particular language cannot be rendered into any other language. Again, there are poems with a special rhyme scheme which poses an insurmountable hurdle in translation. A traditional rhyme for preschool children is a case in point:

One, two, buckle my shoe,
Three, four, shut the door,
Five, six, pick up sticks,
Seven, eight, lock the gate,
Nine, ten, start again.[3]

A translation of these lines is almost impossible for obvious reason. In the above-quoted instances, the style and sense are so inextricably blended that it is hardly translatable. More importantly, a strictly personal or language based poem allows no translation.

Again, poetry, which is the most stylized use of words, evokes a visual image in the mind of the reader. Even abstract images such as 'justice' and 'mercy' become 'people' or 'objects' without any difficulty. Also, sounds, rhythms, words, images, symbols present in a poem in a particular language act on one another to produce a meaning. As no two languages function alike rendering a poem in SL into a TL text does create problems. Moreover, according to New Critics

'text' is an autonomous unit and no two readings are identical, more so in case of poetry, no translator can claim to have perceived the author's (read poet's) meaning completely and accurately. The problem is how to get at the poet's meaning and put the same to translation. Thus reading poetry is itself an act of creative interpretation. So rendering a poem into another language becomes an act of 'creative transposition,' as Jakobson calls it, rather than translation.

Language is the basis of translation. And poetry is a special kind of language. But the problems of language in poetry are not easy to overcome. Ornamental words based on lyricism, puns, equivocations, idioms and other items that operate at the lexical level are the areas where a literary translator is beset with insurmountable difficulties. Lexical gaps that exist between languages owing to cultural, social and historical background and the problem of finding one-to-one equivalents makes translation of poetry a difficult and complicated exercise. Even if one-to-one equivalents in SL and TL are available, translation of poetry becomes atrocious when it is done by precision without any imagination and context. Shakespeare's Sonnet "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" cannot be semantically translated into a language where summers are unpleasant or intolerable as in our country. Likewise, the concept of God—the Father—cannot be translated into a language where deity is female. So apart from the context, ambiguity, polysemy, opaqueness, truth, falsity and other inherent dualities and paradoxical elements which impart richness to a language, especially of poetry, add to the problems of the translator of poetry. Commenting on this problematic aspect of poetry translation, Lotfipour Saedi says: "Poetry is the most difficult literary mode to translate. . . . It abounds in figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, irony and unprecedented phonological, syntactic and semantic patterns such as rhyming, alliteration, versification, morphological parallelism (i.e. choice of words parallel in the number of syllables), syntactic parallelism (i.e. for example choice of structure with parallel syntactic features) and novel syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations between words. It is obvious that all such patterns possess their own specific communicative function; and all of them cooperate in the establishing of the communicative value intended by the poet."[4]

In the context of the above observation the pertinent question arises: Is it possible to render all these literary specialties of a poetry from an SL into a TL. In the answer to this question lie the significance as well as foretaste of the potential problems of translating poetry.

A language develops through its interaction with culture on the planes of time and space. Language is nurtured by the society and its culture. So no two languages can be so similar as to represent the same social reality. This difference and distinction between two languages poses major problems for the translator—the problem of finding what A. Nida calls "the dynamic equivalence." Words in every language embody a set of associations and connotations which are simply non-transferable in any other language. Some critics opine that as there is no complete equivalence in translation but only transpositions from one language to another, so all poetic art is technically untransferable and linguistically untranslatable to a large extent.

Apart from linguistic untranslatability, the terrain of cultural, social and historical background of the original work also creates impediments in translation. Literature is a complex expression of culture and the literary age in which the original piece of poetry is composed decides various vital aspects of its being. A work of art carries the spirit of the age and the flavour of the soil of its creation which are not easy to render in another language. So the problem of cultural untranslatability is all the more complex. A translator of poetry has to determine not only what is said but what was meant to be said in a context. Hence the cultural context of the poetic text is very important. The example of 'home' in English is a case in point. The cultural connotations and connections of this word are not easy to capture in similar or equivalent words in Hindi or other Indian languages. The phrases like 'homecoming,' 'at home,' or 'bring home to' are simply untranslatable into other TL systems from the English language. We, thus, find that structural constraints, cultural incompatibility, allusive, satirical and ironic statements, pun in the words, sound effects, rhyme schemes, emotive and symbolic references and stylistic devices are the main stumbling blocks in translation of poetry.

Formidable problems in translation of poetry notwithstanding, poetry seems to be more favoured by the translators. Rather it has become a fashion and is a matter of credit to translate poetry. It is true that translation of poetry poses certain stupendous problems. But that does not mean poetry is untranslatable. However, a translator of poetry must take note of certain things before attempting translation. First and foremost, he should know that translation is an open-ended process. No translation is final and that there can only be a good translation or a bad translation but never 'the best translation.' Further, a translator of poetry should have the 'feel' of the poem and must grasp the message it conveys. He must also understand the form of poetry—the meter, the rhyme scheme, alliteration and organization of lines. Moreover, he has to be true to the invariant core of the text namely the theme and the tone so as to transfer the crux of the poem from the SL to the TL. Above all he must be well-versed in the nuances of both the language systems.

In the final analysis, one can say that the translation of poetry is empirically possible but logically impossible. The style and sense in good poetry are so well blended that it appears almost untranslatable. That makes the translation of poetry really challenging and fascinating.

NOTES

1. Jayanta Mahapatra, "Translating from the Oriya: An Approach," *Cygnus*, 2:2 (1981), p. 27.
2. Alan Mahey and Alan Duff, *The Inward Ear: Poetry in Language Classroom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 148.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
4. Lotfipour L Saedi, "Components of Translation Equivalence," *Literature in Translation*, Pramod Talgeri & SB Verma, ed. (New Delhi: JNU, 1988), p. 128.

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Why Should Boys Have All the Fun?: Woman in Literature

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> Being a woman is like being Irish. Everyone says you're important and nice but you take second place all the same. (Iris Murdoch)
>
> I was elected by the women of Ireland who, instead of rocking the cradle, rocked the system. (Mary Robinson, First woman President of Ireland)
>
> Women are a huge powerhouse in today's India. Look around you. There are women racing in all kinds of fields . . . finance, literature, broadcasting, art, IT, design, law, science, medicine, education—and are a huge powerhouse in today's India. A powerhouse, true. And yet this is a powerhouse with over 90% of the power switched off. These are women who don't even know they have choices. (Imtiaz Dharker)

The *Bible* says the Lord God created Eve out of the rib cage of Adam, giving thereby a derivative nature to her existence. There is an equally charming myth associated with the creation of woman by the Supreme Creator, "Brahma." Brahma first created man and in his generosity, wished to give man a companion. He borrowed several components from the beautiful creation of nature and made woman out of them. Hence the reference of woman as Prakriti. Brahma presented woman to his earlier creation man saying "She will serve you lifelong and if you cannot live with her, neither can you live without her."

Both myths indicate that woman is either an "after thought" of a male God or a play-mate created for man as a psychic compensation for his innate loneliness. If the primordial myth gave woman her ritually prescribed status, all literatures since time immemorial expose the desperate marginality of female existence, whether these women have lived in solitude, in extended families or in nuclear families, be it in ancient Athens or the world of Manu. Though Manu, the lawgiver, accepts that "A woman's body must not be struck hard, even with a flower, because it is sacred," he is well known for stating: "A woman is never fit for independence. Her fa-

ther protects ([her] in childhood, her husband protects [her] in youth and her sons protect [her] in old age. . . . Day and night woman must be kept in dependence by the males."

It ought not to be surprising, therefore, that in the world's most powerful democracy, when the Statue of Liberty, which portrays a woman holding the torch of freedom, was opened to the public on October 28, 1886, no woman was invited to the ceremonies on this important occasion. Even to the nineteenth century conservative in America, the idea of equal rights for women had appeared ridiculous and unwarranted as can be evidenced from the following statement:

> The power of woman is in her dependence. . . . But, when she assumes the place and tone of man as a public reformer, our care and protection of her seem unnecessary; she yields the power which God has given her for protection, and her character becomes unnatural. If the vine, whose strength and beauty is to lean upon the trellis-work and half conceal its clusters, thinks to assume the independence and overshading nature of the elm, it will not only cease to bear fruit, but will fall in shame and dishonour into the dust.

These social stereotypes have been reinforced by archetypes for ages, amply supported by Freud's classic finding ascertaining that "Anatomy is Destiny."

Articulating Silence: Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*

Important questions like, Who is the real woman? Where is the real woman? What is her real entity? Has she an identity of her own? lay submerged in the conspiracy of silence. From the perspective of the Seminar's central theme, mention must here be made of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), a document that veritably challenged the paradigms of such a silence. In passionately reclaiming the woman's voice muted by patriarchal society—where men have all the power and money, hold all the important positions, make all the important decisions—Virginia Woolf's narrator in the essay explores the British Museum in London and is dismayed to find that though there are too many books written about women (almost all by men) there are hardly any books by women on men or by women on women.

Reflecting on such a great disparity, the narrator gives convincing evidence why genius has so infrequently flowered among women. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf ponders the significant

question of whether or not a woman could produce art of the high quality of Shakespeare. In doing so, she examines women's historical experience as well as the distinctive struggle of the woman artist. She says, "genius like Shakespeare's is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people." In her view, some kind of genius must have existed among women then, as it exists among the working class, although it never translated to paper. The narrator argues that the difficulties of writing—especially the indifference of the world to one's art—are compounded for women, who are actively disdained by the male establishment. By boldly advocating the fact that both the freedom from economic dependence and the freedom from fetters of the mind and body are conditions of the possibility of genius and its full expression, Woolf laid the foundation of the feminist movement. She asserts how Judith Shakespeare still lives within all women, and that if women are given 500 pounds a year and a room of one's own, that is money and privacy, she will be reborn. Woolf's essay raises three inextricable questions: women and what they are like; women and the fiction they write; and women and what is written about them.

In breaking the conspiracy of silence and in giving expression to the untold stories of women, the revolutionary roles played by The Feminist Press in New York and Kali for Women in New Delhi need not be overemphasized. The Mission of the Feminist Press is to publish and promote the most potent voices of women from all eras and all regions of the globe. The Press has brought more than 500 critically acclaimed works by and about women into print, enriching the literary canon, expanding the historical record, and influencing public discourse about issues fundamental to women. The Feminist Press continues to bring vital new voices to public attention.

Started in 1984, in a Delhi garage by Ritu Menon and Urvashi Butalia, Kali for Women has been providing a viable publishing mouthpiece to Indian feminism. Kali's objective is to increase the body of knowledge on women in the Third World, to give voice to such knowledge as already exists and to provide a forum for women writers. Apart from publishing English translations of significant fictional writings by women from various Indian languages, Kali also seeks to redefine issues of women's lives in a positive way. Kali for Women has now split into two independent imprints. The co-founders of Kali, Urvashi Butalia and Ritu Menon have estab-

lished their independent publishing imprints—Zubaan and Women Unlimited respectively.

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*

When Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) tells her husband Torvald Helmer before leaving him for good, "Our house has never been anything but a play-room. I have been your doll wife, just as at home I was daddy's doll child. And the children in turn have been my dolls. I thought it was fun when you came and played with me, just as they thought it was fun when I went and played with them. That's been our marriage," Nora comes to the point where she takes a drastic step ahead of her time. The play created a sensation when it was first produced and many women refused to play the part of a woman who deserts her husband and children.

Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*

Erica Jong advocates both emotional and economic autonomy as imperatives in the woman's struggle for liberation. What is significant in Erica's stance is that she is not unaware of the ground realities and the attendant hazards of Nora's decision in Ibsen's play. She takes into account all the dialectics involved in theories of Western Feminism propounded by Germaine Greer, Kate Millett, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir and the rest and yet she is highly critical of the "whole package of lies that passes for feminism." She states that fulfillment cannot be attained through idle flights of fancy, martyrdom or suicide. Fulfillment lay in exploring the "inner space" of the self to conquer one's own sense of vulnerability."

In Erica Jong's view the awakened Eve, especially in the American context, has gathered the confidence to voice her protest against the tyranny of man not by virtue of her legal battles or the attainment of political rights of equality but through her rejection of roles imposed upon her by a male-dominated society and through her discovery and acceptance of the true essence of her own selfhood. At the end of the novel, Isadora Duncan, the protagonist, is seen musing over the ambivalence of the choice she had made. Commenting on the powerful status of the institution of marriage, she states in the novel: "In 19th century novels, they get married. In 20th century novels they get divorced. Can you have an ending in which they do neither? But whatever happened, I knew I would sur-

vive it. . . . Surviving meant being born over and over. It wasn't easy, and it was always painful. But there wasn't any other choice except death."

Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* also brings to the fore the misconception that we in India normally have about the western idea of marriage and family life. One tends to believe as a result of such misconception that the woman in western society is endowed with all kinds of freedom that are denied to women in India, especially the right to live as one desires. Tired of playing the game of musical beds, the protagonist becomes aware of ground realities even in the most powerful democracy in the world: "It is heresy in America to embrace any way of life, except as half of a couple. Solitude is un-American. It may be condoned in a man. . . . But a woman is always presumed to be alone as a result of abandonment, not choice. . . . There is no dignified way for a woman to live alone. Oh! she can get along financially perhaps (though not nearly as well as a man), but emotionally she is never left in peace. Her friends, her family, her fellow workers never let her forget that her husbandlessness, her childlessness—her selfishness, in short is a reproach to the American way of life.

Doris Lessing

While talking of the fate and predicament of women in contemporary literature, one cannot ignore the dominant presence of Doris Lessing in any discourse both as creator and protagonist. In awarding the 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature to Doris Lessing, the Swedish Academy cited her as "that epicist of the female experience, who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny." The award, that came a few days before her 88th birthday makes her the oldest recipient of the coveted honour. Author of dozens of books of fiction, as well as plays, non-fiction and two volumes of autobiography, she is the 11th woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Lessing wrote persuasively about politics, feminism, Communism and black-white relations in Africa before moving on to explore the emotional dimensions of the human psyche in her groundbreaking 1962 novel entitled *The Golden Notebook* which took the world by storm. Lessing's focus has always been her concern about the inner lives of women and she is extremely articulate in rejecting the notion that they should abandon their lives to marriage and chil-

dren. Having known what it means to be intelligent and frustrated and female in an essentially male-dominated world, she states: "Any human anywhere will blossom in a hundred unexpected talents and capacities simply by being given the opportunity to do so." Lessing critically and realistically explores the controversial questions being debated the world over—the stereotypes, marriage, motherhood, the predicament of emancipated women, sisterhood and finally arrives at the conclusion to be free one must be self contained.

Lessing motivates us all to demonstrate an optimistic approach to life and its complexities and suggests that we ought not to wallow in self-pity, regret, sentimentality or seek to evade responsibilities. Instead we are to face each problem as it comes. She emphasizes the need for positive engagement with the world and prefers a delicate balancing of social responsibility and self-interest. In spite of the cosmic misalignments, humanity has the ultimate choice for good or evil, she says. According to Lessing, "The New Jerusalem does not come down from heaven—it is constructed by humanity in whatever geometric shape they want. . . . What is a hero without love for mankind."

Indian Literature

Images of woman in Indian literature is characterised by contradiction—there is a conventional image and there is a protesting voice. Post-independence literature reveals the woman's quest for her identity giving rise to a number of issues. The new woman is emerging and there are a number of new themes and issues to be taken by the future. However, two overall views of woman dominate Indian literature from ages. The Sita and the Draupadi archetypes. There is silent suffering with utmost loyalty to man in the Sita type and woman as an Individual demanding social justice in the Draupadi types. Sita absorbs all inflicted misery and humiliation of the male ego whereas Draupadi challenges the male ego to the epitonic limits of human excellence. Sita accepts, accommodates and withdraws. Draupadi resents, rejects and involves herself in the process of life as a protagonist. These two feminine archetypes define the limits of feminine experience in reality, especially the Indian Reality. The gender divide in modern Indian literature moves between new iconizations of these two bold and primordial figures.

Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni*

As an appropriate illustration of the two primordial figures mentioned above, Pratibha Ray's novel foregrounds the anguish and anger of Yagnaseni who rightly questions whether man has the right to consider woman merely as his movable or immovable property. Placed on the brink of utter humiliation when brought dragging to the court by Dushasana, Yagnaseni doesn't plead for mercy but demands justice. Pratibha Ray's protagonist Yagnaseni boldly affirms the stand she had taken in that critical moment, a stand no less significant in today's India than it was in that mythological space: "When that wicked man was stripping me, helpless like chaste Sita I could have disappeared into the depths of the earth to hide my shame. If I had prayed, would not the earth have opened? But I did not do so. If I had done so my modesty would have been protected but the wicked would not have been punished. In the future this problem would remain unresolved for women. . . . The remaining days of my life I will fight against injustice, adharma, sin. Though the world may call me an ogress because of this, the world must know that woman who creates, is auspicious, is also the destroyer of the sinful and the wicked. . . . Let the world know that while a woman's heart is delicate, it is not weak."

According to Ray, Draupadi is a challenge of womanhood, the embodied form of action, knowledge, devotion and power. Such a woman who has faced torment, insult, mental and emotional dilemma like Yajnaseni Draupadi—has not yet been born on this earth. Yet, the pain and the agony of mythical Draupadi is not an anachronism in contemporary Indian society, a fact that is highlighted by Ray through the narrative she recounts in the "Afterword" to *Yagnaseni—The Story of Draupadi*:

> All of us know something of Krishna's sacrifice, dedication, strength of character. The name of the younger sister of a lady known to me is Krishna. Leaving her debauched drunkard of husband she is living in her father's house. Everyone said Krishna should remarry. But in our society today the remarriage of one discarded by her husband is not that simple and easy. For diverting her mind, Krishna went away to her brother in West Germany. Sometime later, she married a young man there. She has two children now, a son and a daughter. Her conjugal life is comfortable. But the peculiar thing is that those who were at one time sympathetic towards Krishna, said after the second marriage, "Well, when her very name is Krishna, she could be happy only after taking a second husband. Arre! The Krishna of *Mahabharata*

took five husbands, and still not being satisfied, was attracted to Karna and Krishna."

After such knowledge, what forgiveness! It is interesting to note, sad though it is, how societal attitudes refuse to acknowledge the need for change in spite of epoch-making advancements and technological future shocks. In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, the novel that won her the Man Booker Prize, we are brought in touch with the harsh realities that reflect the social and cultural stigma of divorce in India and the fate of the "wretched Man-less woman": "a married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a divorced daughter according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all." Let us not forget that the novel's location is Kerala, the province which has the highest literacy rate in India.

Mahashweta Devi's "Draupadi"

On the other extreme, and contrary to the stereotypical patterns of the female image, the hope, perhaps, sadly lies in the emergence of the exceptional women like Dopdi in Mahasweta's story "Draupadi" who can live on her own terms by rejecting the stereotyped image of the 'truly virtuous woman' who is ever willing to conform to the standards set by a male-dominated society. Unlike the legendary Draupadi in *Mahabharata* who in her helplessness pleads to Lord Krishna to protect her from being ignominiously disrobed in public, Mahasweta's protagonist subverts the stereotypes of "female virtue and modesty" by boldly daring the exploiters of her modesty to touch her again: "What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man? . . . There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do?"

The Contemporary Scene

The image of woman in literature emerges out of the existing world. In India, which has been regarded by sociologists as a traditionally male-dominated society, both men and women writers have seen woman in this relationship with man, primarily as mother, wife, mistress and sex objects. Woman as an achiever is either non-existent or considered an exception. A woman's individual self has very little recognition. But we have to remember that family plays a pivotal role in the Indian scheme of life. The new woman in Indian

literature does not break the family but dreams to make the family "Home Sweet Home." Be it small or big, be it in the courtyard or in the courtroom, woman is the cause of all action. But they are still walking on a tight rope to achieve their human rights and social justice. Indian woman at the turn of the century is in a transitional phase vis-à-vis the interface of tradition and modernity. Though women writers are tolerant and respectful towards the traditional obligations, they are still confident of their own new self and sensitive to the dogmatization of traditional values.

At the turn of the new millennium Indian literature as far as the feminist thrust is concerned, is not free from family, history and social modernism. The women are more educated, sophisticated and even rebellious but the woman herself is wary of shedding off the traditional values which form part of her inherited consciousness. Once upon a time, not very long ago, the story of Savitri was held up as a prime example of the lengths to which a wife could go in aiding her husband. The myth relates how the good wife saves her husband from death, follows him anywhere, proves her virtue, remains under his control and gives him her power. We must however admit that the times are changing even if the pace of change is marginal. As an evidence of the changing scenario we may look at a statement by Anees Jung in her pioneering book titled *Unveiling India: A Woman's Journey* (1988):

> Not long ago a woman who spoke about herself was considered a loose woman. To voice a pain, to divulge a secret, was considered sacrilege, a breach of family trust. Today, voices are raised without fear, and are heard outside the walls of homes that once kept a woman protected, also isolated. Some of the women who speak here have stepped out. Others who have not, are beginning to be aware, eager to find expression. But let them speak for themselves. . . . Their looks have not changed, their manner has. Individually they have gained a name, collectively an identity. Their new power was not imposed upon them but already existed, enclosed within walls. Now that power has stirred out into the open. Their new strength stems from personalities defining their own terms, lending grace to living.

Anees Jung exemplifies another writer in search of new images of women. She explains the change that has taken place in Indian society so that now women will tell their own stories. Jung herself, who grew up completely secluded in purdah, has remained unmarried and become a successful writer. She says about herself: "My reality

no longer has one face. I have stepped out of an enclosed reality into one that is larger, more diverse, and mobile. . . . I continue to live out an experience for which I have yet to find a name."

Conclusion

To return to the epigraphs with which I opened the deliberations, it becomes imperative to realize that women empowerment is a very complex issue endowed with subtle shades of variant approaches that require the perfect poise to navigate between rocking the cradle and the system in order to restore a major share of the power that currently stands switched off. Perhaps, what is needed is that every feminist worth the name must learn to acknowledge what she has in common with others of her sex who are all similarly shackled by conventional notions of her predicament. Neither the path of open confrontation nor an uneasy truce but the confidence to move in harmonious unison as co-partner in the power game, without compromising honour and dignity as an individual, ought to be the real goal of woman's emancipation.

It must be borne in mind that specific reforms related to the emancipation and empowerment of women must supplement the basic need for a change in attitude towards women, since women need self-trust, self-reliance, and self-respect in order to assert their individual identity and existence. The fact cannot be ignored that sex is the only instance in which representatives of the unequal groups live in more intimate association with each other than with members of their own group to a greater extent than any other underprivileged group. Femininity must, therefore, exist as the complement to masculine power, not as its subversive supplement, an excess that would undermine the boundaries of gender. As such, it would be appropriate to bear in mind the words of Betty Friedan that come at the end of her *The Feminine Mystique*:

> Who knows what women can be when they are finally free to become themselves? Who knows what women's intelligence will contribute when it can be nourished without denying love? Who knows of the possibilities of love when men and women share not only children, home, and garden, not only the fulfillment of their biological roles, but the responsibilities and passions of the work that creates the human future. It has barely begun, the search of women for themselves. But the time is at hand when the voices of the feminine mystique can no longer drown out the inner voice that is driving women on to become complete.

This year (2011) marks the century of International Woman's Day. One can hope with some degree of optimism that in this significant phase of human history, reflections—both on the literal and real plane—will bring to the fore multiple facets of women's experiences: the power, the passion, the pain, the hopelessness, the fury, the joy. It will be rewarding to see light shed on the diversity of women and the diversity within each woman as portrayed in literature and life. It is intrinsically significant to ask how these experiences touch women writing on the whole. Do these writings address seminal questions and issues? How do women themselves view such writings? Is it marginal or central to their lives? What is the relationship between such writing and the political involvement of the writers? What are their concerns, and what is the creative energy at work?

Much heat and light is bound to be generated in the process as all right minded individuals concede in unison, "Why should boys have all the fun?"

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Imaging India through Literature

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The works of the writers like Asif Currimbhoy, Mahasweta Devi, Arundhati Roy, Aravind Adiga and Vikas Swaroop are certainly national allegories of postcolonial India. They open the field of literature into a broader area of inquiry. A literary form is an expression of a worldview or ideology which originates in economic or cultural relations and the writers' experience of these conditions. Thus, the literary form is a dialogue between the writer and the public. Marxist critics and thinkers believe that a work of art is a product of the base structure of society. They question the various bourgeois structures in society. In the changed scenario, Marxist literary theory tends to re-examine its assumptions in order to address all the major issues of modern society. They indicate the common fight against the discrimination based on gender, class, race and sexual orientation. Under such circumstances, Marxist literary theory sought to dovetail the concepts of life and society with art. Marxist thinkers and writers like Lukacs, Raymond Williams, Althusser Brecht, Antonio Gramsci stressed 'commitment' in literature and sought to establish connection between culture, politics and literature.

The present paper attempts to explore the image of postcolonial India, underscoring the issues like Naxalism, dealt with in the select works of Asif Currimbhoy, Mahasweta Devi and Aravind Adiga, who evince collective consciousness along the lines of class, caste, gender and tribes. Their characters are the product of society and also a victim of it. Aijaz Ahmed is right in arguing that there is nothing unusual, or exclusively Third Worldist, about such a procedure. It is proved that India is 'the country of million mutinies, now.' It is rightly said: "Men are naturally bad: the State is there to make them good. If the function of the State amounts to no more than 'administrative nihilism,' i.e. protection without interference, the result will be national decadence" (Lloyd, 94).

After independence India ceased to be the colony of British empire. Constitutionally speaking, India became a democratic republic

state. Political sovereignty was transferred from the British to the local elites. Political democracy to some extent ushered in. But the goal of social and economic democracy could not be achieved. The political freedom is there, but the freedom from exploitation and discrimination is still a mirage. This is the strong conviction of the oppressed larger section of Indian society. "Postcolonial India has seen the abolition of princely regimes but it has ironically multiplied the number of unofficial, uncrowned princes" (Jaidev, 350). Internal colonizers have been flourishing all along. The faces are changed; the positions are changed. But the condition of social and economic inequality and injustice is still there. The British have been replaced by the native rich, capitalist, landlords, bourgeois class who are irrevocably at the helm of political affairs of the nation. The central, ruling political class of the postcolonial India is not different in their approach from their British counterparts in colonized India. "In 1947 the British left, but only a moron would think that we became free then" (Adiga, 22). The heroes of Indian freedom struggle had dreamt of the nation based on social equity, solidarity and justice. However, after six decades, it appears that India has totally failed to establish the Constitution in its true spirit. This is the general experience of the peripherals, though the elite and bourgeois class may differ in their experience. The failure of Constitutional culture in Indian nation is strongly endorsed by Mahasweta Devi: "Law? The law is a strange thing! It stands there, on one side, but the other side shows several ways of bypassing, cheating it. It is not at all possible . . . to find any relief through the law . . . the law, judiciary, religion, ideology—all have long become commodities. With the passage of time their values have declined like that of an aged whore." (1985, 90)

The kind of politicians and the rulers, the Indian nation could get after independence are solely responsible for the wretched of the nation. The political leaders, both the Right and the Left, are mired in power mania, corruption and immorality; they even lack in human conscience. They are the leaders *sans* any national or patriotic spirit. One should not expect from them any simple adventure of sacrifice for the nation. They make laws for the show of general welfare, but they are not willing to implement the laws in their proper spirit and purpose. They flirt with the laws. The laws are not binding upon them. 'Opportunism' is their special feature. Thirst for power is their main weakness. Political power is their end, which

they are always ready to achieve by the means and methods, unscrupulous and immoral. The politician-police-gangster troika is in full operation to rule the state. Any social or national problem like poverty, unemployment, corruption, bad governance, social exclusion, etc. is not a problem at all, but an opportunity to grab the political power. Indian politicians have developed their own convenient approaches to all these issues. To them, these are merely issues to play with in the elections. That people are ignorant and poor is a good thing to them. "They remain slaves because they can't see what is beautiful in this world" (Adiga, 40). The situation is good for unscrupulous politicians to mislead and buy the voters to get them political power. Hero worship and use of money and muscle power in elections are the salient features of Indian politics.

The issues like social exclusion show the dark reality that we have utterly failed to implement our Constitution in its true spirit. As a result, we see the Indian nation fractured with various segments and groups harbouring the feeling of alienation and exclusion, resorting to violence and protest, posing a serious threat to Indian nation. Every group has its own convenient notion of nationalism which eventually appears at its crisscross. "The Indian nation is made up of princes, industrialists, bankers, merchants, peasants, labourers, etc. Nationalism does not mean the same thing to all these classes. The freedom of one of them is not the same as the freedom of the other. Nor is the manner in which they would fight for freedom, the same for all" (Prasad, 56). We have the political democracy to boast of, but we utterly lack in what is called the social democracy in its true spirit in order to support the political democracy with all its sanctity. Indian nation testifies to Marx's theory of Base and Superstructure. In the given socio-economic structure, the masses are not assured of economic and social justice. As a result, the base is undermined. It has failed to buttress the Superstructure of our political, legal and judicial system. It affords no space for cultural and national feelings. It seems that our executive, legislature, judiciary and media have come together to perpetuate the given system.

Aravind Adiga is right when he says in his famous novel *The White Tiger* that post-Independence India is divided into two: "India of the Light and India of the Darkness." Now the former is the colonizer and the latter is the colonized. The Indian society is ghettoized between the privileged and the underprivileged, the central and the

peripheral, wherein the peripherals are not allowed by the central ones to participate in the process of law-making and governance. The space is denied to them. They are always kept at the receiving end. They are socially excluded to suffer socio-economic and political injustice in the system. Social exclusion directly counters the principle of Equality. And Liberty cannot exist without some degree of Equality. "If the watchword of nineteenth century Democracy was Liberty, it may well be that the watchword of twentieth-century Democracy will be Equality" (Lloyd, 103).

In consequence of the given system, it is quite natural if Indian nation is threatened by the issue like Naxalism. The post-Independence India has been reduced to the stories of rottenness and corruption. The farmers are committing suicide. The young educated people are unemployed. The field of education has been entrusted to the private-political education mafias whose only purpose is to exploit and extort society. The government has ceased to feel any accountability towards the masses. Bureaucracy is corrupt and thick-skinned. Judiciary is complicated, costly, corrupt and inefficient. People are afraid of judiciary. It is on the verge of losing confidence of the masses. The laws regarding land holding, education, law and order, etc. are not fool proof. These laws expose the government's lackadaisical approach to the matters of general welfare. When a common citizen is subjected to any atrocity or outrage, he or she hardly gets legal protection. Tribals are being evacuated and dislocated all in the name of development and industrialization. They are condemned to live as bonded labourers by the landlords and the contractors. Their women are sexually exploited and raped in police custody. When they resort to any movement for their rights, they are framed in false allegations; they are killed in false encounters. Their movements are ruthlessly crushed using force, without giving any patient hearing to their genuine problems. Asif Currimbhoy in his play *Inquilab* vividly points out the nexus between Devdas, the 'Great Champaign Socialist' brand politician and the landlord Jain which operates to defeat the land laws meant for socio-economic justice for the landless peasants and labourers. The old, poor landless tribal serf, Dada is destined to live at the mercy of landlord, Jain. Mahasweta Devi's tribal fisherman, Jagat Shah earned his livelihood by fishing in the tank which belongs to the landlord, Mr. Ray. His only, educated son, Abhay, along with hundreds of other youths, is killed and dumped at the bottom of the tank, being suspected of politically affiliated to the Naxalites.

Phoolbanu, the sixteen-year-old poor girl is raped and killed by the politically sheltered *goonda.* And a rickshaw-puller is arrested in connivance with the troika of politician-police-gangster, and is condemned to die in the jail without trial.

Getting disillusioned and angry with the system, the state confronts the youths incarnated as Balram in *The White Tiger* or Madhav Apte in the Marathi film *Dombivali Fast* or the Naxalites like Amar, Ahmed and Shomik in the play *Inquilab*. It is a factor of economic compulsion and the financial security that force them to resort to violence and vandalism, in the hope of socio-economic justice. Material conditions form the basis of human existence. The basic assumption of Marxist literary theory is that matter is primary and consciousness is secondary. Human beings have a concrete physical dimension through which they are identified as what they are. But they have something in them which enable them to do what they are supposed to do, and something which impels them to act is called 'consciousness,' human body alone cannot perform what a man does. It takes both body and consciousness to act and behave like human beings. In other words, there is reciprocity of interaction between body and consciousness and between the base and the superstructure. One cannot influence and determine the other in an independent way. There is an indissoluble connection material production, political and cultural institutions and activity and consciousness. What comes first is material existence or physical presence of human beings. Consciousness is human beings' knowledge and awareness of themselves; it includes their knowledge of the environment in which they find themselves; the environment they create and they are created in. It is inappropriate to suggest that society is made of the individuals or individual is made by society. Both individual and society form and influence each other.

Currimbhoy's play *Inquilab* along with Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* and Mahasweta Devi's fictional writing implies that material conditions shape life of characters and their response in different situations. The very course of life gets radically changed due to material conditions. For instance, the relationship between Ahmed and landlord Jain, between the peasants and the landlords, between Balram and his landlord master, or between tribal fisherman, Jagat Shah and society he lives in. They wage war against the system, corrupt and rotten. They mobilize the youth, students and landless peasants to kill and to be killed. They unleash violence. They do not trust in Gandhism of the land. They find their idols in

the form of Marx, Mao, Stalin and Lenin. To them, the state is the 'Great Indian Rooster Coop' which is foil to China where people do not have the 'Rooster Coop' but "the Communist Party to shoot people and a secret police to raid their houses at night and put them in jail. . . . Here in India we have no dictatorship. No secret police. That's because we have the coop" (Adiga, 175). This is the difference between India and China, they find. It is suggested that material conditions make a lot of difference in the quality of life we live and the kind of choice we make at crucial moments of our life. The material conditions affect the growth of our relationships in a remarkable manner. Thus, considering the material conditions in society, the Naxalite movement is the product of given society wherein the subalterns feel deprived of socio-economic justice.

Calling the Movement as "Naxalite" is merely misnomer, and is deliberately a defamed, much abused term. Some Naxalite groups which have been indulging in unbridled violence are also to blame for the misconception. Basically, however, shorn of polemics, it represented the struggle of the exploited peasants, the deprived tribal and the urban proletariat for a place in the sun, for social and economic survival. This system has to provide this minimum. If it does not or cannot, the consequences are bound to be disastrous. At this juncture, Jaya Prakash Narayan's views about Naxalism are apt to note. While touring the Naxalite affected areas of Bhojpur on June 12-13, 1975, he exhorted the people to shun the path of violence and work for 'total revolution.' Addressing the crowd at Narayanpur, he said: "If in five years from now nothing changes, I will not ask you to give up Naxalism" (Singh, x). After three decades, "one wonders what he would have said today" (Singh, xi).

No doubt the Naxalite movement has its origin in the peasant revolt that occurred in the small village called Naxalbari in West Bengal in 1967. Initially, it was a peasant revolt for judicious share in crops and land holding. Now the movement has widened its scope in terms of its avowed mission of political power to secure their legal rights as human beings, as citizens of the nation. They want freedom from oppression, exploitation, discrimination and corrupt system. One should not ignore the fact that the Naxalite movement is rooted in the socio-economic causes. This is a 'Movement of Socio-Economic Justice for the Oppressed.' The Naxalite movement, as Prakash Singh says, represented "a sincere, even if misguided, attempt to change a system which according to large sections of the people was not working in a fair and just manner" (xi).

There are many segments of masses in Indian society who are not at all satisfied with the prevalent system in India. They certainly find fault with the system, and honestly think of an overhaul in the system. But they are helpless. These people have their own reasons to feel sympathy for the Naxalite movement, though they may not be actively involved in the armed struggle or the violent methods of bloodshed, embraced by the Naxalites. When Indian Parliament was attacked by the terrorists on 13 December, 2001, many Indians expressed woe over not even a single corrupt, criminal politician being killed. This feeling is a big menace to Indian nation. It indicates the erosion of public confidence in the post-Independence political system of India. Why the feeling arose? It is the need of the hour to answer the question by the Indian politicians. A movement is not to be judged from its present, its methods or ways. A movement is to be assessed from its history, its ends or goals. The Naxalite movement is certainly defamed not for its avowed mission of social and economic justice, but for its methods of violence and cruelty, which deprives it of public support. Indian nation should not find solace in the inherent faults or weaknesses of the Naxalite movement. As long as the evils of bad governance, the inherent social, economic inequalities, exploitation and injustice are allowed to exist in society, the public indignation and frustration with the corrupt system will continue to have its own course, no matter what name it assumes. There is no attempt in Mahasweta "to glorify or idealize the Naxalites as the saviours of the oppressed. They are deservedly the heroes of postcolonial India, but there is no suggestion that they are heroes only because they risk their lives for the tribals or the Harijans. They are heroes of the nation as a human collectivity to which their inner conscience responds. They are heroes because they care for its dictates. Their sacrifices are the sacrifices offered in the hope that this nation can be civilized, made to learn the basic lessons in human decency" (Jaidev, 357).

During the last sixty years, Indian government never bothered to take the issue seriously. Whatever efforts were or are being made, they are only to crush the issue by force, without going to its root cause. But no permanent solution was pondered upon. Our learned politicians totally failed to evince a time-tested mature vision and will power to resolve the problem of Naxalism, like any other serious national issues in the country. Indian Government and our learned politicians have been continuously talking of annihilation of Naxalites. But they never talk of annihilation of Naxalism, its root

causes. No man, with an iota of wisdom, can deny the fact that the present Indian social and political system is grappling with all the forceful reasons, responsible for the existence of Naxalism. All the politicians and media incessantly speak of the socio-economic and political existing conditions leading to Naxalism. So, this is not the issue to debate whether such conditions exist or not. The problem is how to get rid of the existing dark realities and the conditions of wretchedness. The Naxalites took up the simple way of violent methods. But the government and the politicians are content with the simpler method i.e. the politics of convenience. Naxalites are not foreign militants; they are very much Indians. Whether Naxalites kill the police or civilians, or police kills the Naxalites. Ultimately, loser is the nation. To kill Naxalites cannot be a time-tested panacea to get rid of the issue. In the Preface to *Agnigarbha* Mahasweta Devi is categorical in saying that "even though the so-called Naxalite menace was suppressed, the reasons that triggered off the Naxalite movement remain" (1990, xiv). This is the crux of matter to be resolved.

The Naxalite movement raises some basic questions. Why do the Naxalites feel that the given system is corrupt and rotten? Why do they prefer Communism to the Parliamentary democratic republic? Why do they feel the government is semi-feudal and semi-colonial? Who are the masses, resorting to Naxalism? Why do the Naxalites prefer Maoism to Gandhism to achieve their goals? Why do they insist on land to the landless tiller? What are the particular areas prone to Naxalism? and why? What are the ends of development in the country? By development, whose development do we really talk of? Why do the Naxalites oppose the given education system as bourgeois? Do the poor, deprived masses really have access to the basic needs of life—food, shelter, health, education? Why do they hold public courts, which are direct challenge to our judicial system? Why do they decline to participate in the election process? Is it correct to say that all their demands are illegal and anti-national? Is it not possible to address their grievances in the given system? All these issues are inter-related and are required to be honestly answered by the Indian politicians and the rulers, because "people in this country are still waiting for the war of their freedom to come from somewhere else" (Adiga, 304). The solution to Naxalism lies in a sincere move to answer these basic questions which are the root causes of Naxalism.

That the Indian political system utterly lacks in morality is evidenced by the "Bharat Swabhiman Abhiyan" recently launched by the people like Baba Ramdev, Swami Agnivesh, Anna Hazare, etc. If they develop a social conscience and resolve to enforce justice, the government and the police could effectively end so much of oppression, and thereby stop people drifting towards Naxalism. What is required is the well-intentioned will power. It is certainly a cry of masses who are victims of exploitation, discrimination and social exclusion, and longing for inclusion in the mainstream of society for their protean growth in life. A Marxist reading of the works reveals the inherent contradictions of society. We come across the corrupt, power-maniac politicians, the typical capitalist landlord, the distressed drought-stricken farmer, the insurgent peasants, the tribal landless bonded labourers, the politician-police-gangster troika, whose existence is evidence of the system, being corrupt and rotten. Marxist critics argue that economic mode of society is very crucial factor because it is this factor which frequently, though not always, "determines how art will be so constructed" (Wolfreys, 69). Raymond Williams, a liberal Marxist thinker, also suggests that the economic aspect determines 'a whole way of life' and the elements which are associated with superstructure should be related to this rather than to the economic element alone. The separation between spheres is practically not possible. The economic sphere includes the social relation of people.

Asif Currimbhoy, Mahasweta Devi, Aravind Adiga are logically obsessed with the nation. They plead for the nation to be redefined by the victims rather than by the ruling groups of colonized mentality. The situation shows "a 'nation' does not in reality mean the whole nation, nor does nationalism comprise the interests of all the classes and groups within it. At different times different classes constitute the 'nation' and give expression to nationalism. What class or group would play this role at a given time depends upon the circumstances of history and the structure of the society. It may often happen that the so-called national interests of the moment are actually against the real interests of the majority of the people." (Prasad, 54)

The nation as a concept is not to be dumped; it is only to be saved from the self-styled 'contracted leaders of India.' There is no doubt that much vision, much imagination and intelligence, much over-determination has made the nation as we have it today. Let the victim's alternative vision, imagination, intelligence and culture— all their resources and potential energy which are not allowed ex-

pression or realization—be given a try. The individual has potential not only to liberate himself but also the whole society. But this liberation is possible only after the rejection of those values, practices, institutions and traditions which are discriminatory. It is not a rejection of society; it is the rejection of discrimination, falsehood, hypocrisy, deceitfulness and double-speak. To conclude, the real dark image of the postcolonial India, narrated by the Indian or European writers can be no more ignored in the name of Orientalism. It is an urgency of the hour to accept and execute a radical change at the structural level so that the alternative vision is able to fashion out a more decent, less asymmetrical India to usher, by way of the ethical and the political remedies, in Tagore's vision of a truly democratic and egalitarian society:

> Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high,
> Where the knowledge is free; . . .
> Where the mind is led forward by thee into
> Ever widening thought and action. (35)

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The Advaita Experience in Anglo-Indian Literature (1900-1970)

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India that figures in the Anglo-Indian writing until the nineteenth century is an India of barbarous subservient people, inscrutable in their mystery, superstitions and magic and confined to the expression of wonder or ridicule related to surface features of India's political and social life. This India has probably nothing to do with the Indian tradition, as understood or deciphered by creative minds from Forster to Paul Scott that integrates the real-unreal, muddle-mystery, unawareness-awareness, time-timeless mythical-metaphysical etc. in time and space. Initially, the imperialists and the liberals, equally obsessed with the self-laudatory mission of the white man's burden looked at India with blinkered eyes and had scant regard for anything as Indian tradition. Even with the arrival of Flora Annie Steel, Maud Diver and Kipling, the India portrayed in their novels was the India of Sahibs and Memsahibs and the largest colony under western eye. It is Edmund Burke to whom the credit goes for having affected a shift from India as a contemporary socio-political phenomenon to Indian tradition. Burke was supported by Sir William Jones who had a deep first-hand knowledge of the Sanskrit texts and laid bare before the West an image of a rich and varied Indian civilization. To him, the ethical teachings of the Hindus were in no way inferior to those of Christianity and that ancient Indian civilization was in no way inferior even to the Greek civilization. James Cumming of the East India Company, realizing the truth of this traditional order, advised the Britishers to govern India according to their own traditions, If they failed in doing so, the result for the empire would be disastrous. The Empire went its own way, alienating and finally losing it, owing to its uncomprehending short-sightedness. India and the Indian tradition went on being successively re-discovered throughout the Western world. Nehru's presence in England coincided with the thrust of the new Western discovery of India and his *The Discovery of India* may be identified with what Forster, Yeats, Eliot, Raine, Scott, Emerson, Huxley and

others strain to discover and embody creatively in their work related to India.

The presence of India and its tradition become a very important strand in shaping the modern tradition in the West. In America, from Whitman and Emerson to the Harvard Oriental Studies, a discovery in respect of a growing certainty was made about the decline of the West. Oswald Spengler, in his *The Decline of the West* confirmed this notion and marked it as 'crisis.' And for a dying civilization the fate predicted by Spengler was a return to myth and ritual. Sir James G. Frazer in his *The Golden Bough* brought alive myth and mysteries of ancient and contemporary India by blending theosophy with mysticism, religion and philosophy. Arnold Toynbee treating civilization as predictable cycles of evolution and decay find their paradigm in Indian metahistorical cycles of creation and dissolution with the four ages, 'yugas' ; his homage to the Indian civilization. Perpetually rising from decline and transformed through cross-fertilization, affiliation is characteristic also of the West discovering the Indian tradition. Tracing this line further we have Jung's march towards Indian mythology, symbology and philosophies of 'Self.' He authenticates in psychological terms the timelessness of certain Indian icons in his archetypes—mandala, the Child, the Great Mother, Rebirth etc. Heinrich Zimmer also has concentrated more on the Indian tradition. Fritjoff Capra in *The Tao of Physics* confirms unsettling discoveries in Relativity and nuclear physics in texts of ancient Indian and Chinese wisdom.

The above-mentioned account may be sketchy, but fascination for India and its tradition coincided with the disillusionment of the West from its own civilization in the nineteenth century on account of its centre being lost, values collapsed, culture lost and God dead. It may, therefore, be termed a search for compensation, in a 'time of troubles' an attempt to draw a fresh lease of life by the 'creative minority,' firm in their conviction in the collapse of their conviction, in the collapse of their world and so 'withdrew' but 'returned' with new values and visions or myths, capable to nourish their future existence. Burke, William Jones, Emerson, Max Mueller, Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Forster, Yeats, Eliot, Aldous Huxley, Lawrence, Joyce, Frost, Kathleen Raine, Paul Scott and a host of others are to be major exponents of this true discovery of India in terms of myths, ideas and diversities. All this constitutes a 'trend' in English literary sensibility, made all the more emphatic in its as-

similation to radically different moulds of personality, oriented to diverse ends.

Whatever be the historical forces operating in the background to prepare this trait of sensibility, it may be conveniently stated that from the late nineteenth century to the present, India and its tradition has sustained the most eminent creative minority of the West whose conviction in envisaging the collapse of their world is unquestionable. The British Raj in India opened the gates and provided an adequate opportunity for this encounter. At the same time, there is no denying the fact that the ruling class itself was the strongest deterrent to a genuine encounter owing to its rigorous political aims, mercantile interests and a general obtuseness. But the literary sensibility on account of its familiarity with ancient texts (gradually) and dissemination and assimilation of available knowledge produced a body of work with a distinctive mark. This distinctive mark constituted to be neither the 'mysterious' India of Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*, nor the spectacular India remembered with love by writers from Kipling to M.M. Kaye, but India as a way of life, a mystique, a wisdom, a myth etc.

There is no denying E.M. Forster's profundity of vision, in that we have all the major aspects of a true discovery of India. The insular British-Western outlook framed in the narrow limits of a lake-like Mediterranean, something confirmed in finite calculations of space, time and history is overwhelmed the moment one sails out of the Suez Canal into the vast ocean, uncomfortable, tight in any environment, but is beyond specifications. This is deepened in the sense of unreality and uncertainty which Adela Quested experiences in the cave. The sense of something vast, ineffable and overwhelming runs through the experience of Mrs. Moore, in the muddle and mystery of Gokulashtami in Rajasthan. Forster is profoundly eloquent of the spirit of India and the little world of the British rulers. No doubt, Forster's approach to India was through the India he knew intimately, sounding their feelings and convictions that resounded back to the origins of their sense of reality, which he finds very inclusive and certainly beyond easy comprehension. *A Passage of India* is not only the first of its kind, it still remains the most honest in its evocation of the 'reality' of India going back through the opacities of modern Anglo India to layering of labelled Moslem and Hindu world-view on to a nameless pre-historic reality vs. unreality syndrome. This pre-historic reality is all engulfing, all-obliterating, and breaks into the mosque-temple-church cultures as a mystery, which

most Englishmen term an irrational muddle. What happens in the 'Cave' and in the Gokulashtami frenzy, and what shoulders and threatens to erupt under the façade of Hindu-Moslem amity and divide, is related to the pre-historic, if not timeless reality of India. The Cave, which comes first in the novel, is the repository of Indian sense of reality while mosques or temples are adaptations; the last, the temple ritual perhaps takes us full circle to the same reality-unreality, muddle-mystery epiphany as in the cave. The double shades of 'to know' and 'not to know,' real and unreal, mystery and muddle, ecstasy and squalor, intimacy and union with God (in Godbole's Vaishnav Songs) resound both with the Veda-Upanishad-Gita world-view which his contemporaries and many of his successors have tried to articulate.

W.B. Yeats was writing great poetry related to his own encounter with India around the time *A Passage to India* appeared. Yeats' encounter with India through Mohini Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Kabir and Swami Purohit evoke symbols of contrast and conflict between Europe and Asia, and come very close to what we have found in *A Passage to India*. From Pythagoras to his times, Yeats finds distinction in art, philosophy and science to the 'number, measurement and calculation,' "Measurement by our might". Yeats's access to Indian Wisdom was through a visionary and intellectual search for an alternative to his own heritage. Huxley and Tyndall had deprived him of his faith in the Bible, and his search for the miraculous and the spirit went through various experimental measures. He breathed the spirit of India through Theosophy and oriental texts, but this encounter continued to be a relentless discovery upto the end. The fundamentals of Yoga, Tantra, Vedanta, and the Upanishads determine the nature of experience and wisdom in his poetry. F.A.C. Wilson puts him in the tradition of 'eclectic heterodoxy,' and his final approach to truth was: 'man can embody truth but he cannot know it.'

Yeats tried to know it and thus he looked upto Patanjali who had outlined the four states of the soul—waking, dreaming, having dreamless sleep and the turiya when oil and wick are burned into one. With gradual exhaustion of desire and with proper meditation, one can by stages reach the corresponding states of reality which are called Virata (Cosmos), Hiranyagarbha (the soul of the World), Isvara (Self consciousness) and Brahma (Joy eternal). After years of meditation Yeats in *A Vision* sums up this profound realization as the rise of the cosmic, historical, psychological (spiritual) evolution

from Primary to Antithetical. Moreover, the quarters on Yeats' wheel in *A Vision* are earth-water-air-fire and body of fate—creative mind-mask-will correspond to non-being—Buddhi-Ahamkar-Manas. Yeats' preference for Patanjali instead of Upanishads, is because Patanjali explained the intellectual foundation on which rested the idea of reincarnation or of the world of spirits because it rendered 'continual discoveries.' Yeats uses Patanjali's analysis for judging man and human history as perhaps he once desired support from it for his philosophy of the Mask. This he could easily do because the yogic system is basically an exercise to discipline the mind and as such could be adopted for any purpose. (W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, 237-46) By following that system the devotee 'through states' analogous to 'self-induced hypnotic sleep' (Swami Akhilanand, *Hindu Psychology*, 44.) can attain a final state of complete wakefulness which is called 'Samadhi' or 'turiya' where the soul purified of all that is not itself comes into possession of its own timelessness. (Swami Purohit, *Aphorisms of Yoga*, 15). This corresponds to Yeats' full moon of subjectivity. (antithetical)

> The soul begins to tremble into stillness.
> To die into the labyrinth of itself.

From the early interest in the Vedic age and Puranic mythology, Yeats advanced towards a mature poetic cultivation of mythico-philosophical comprehension of the Indian tradition. Indian mythology is assimilated into a Biblical and metahistorical vision of *The Second Coming* where the half-lion half-men emanation is a composite of Sphinx and Narasimha incarnation of Vishnu both standing for the end and revival of historical cycles. These might be incidental like his infusing his 'Swans' with the symbolism of pilgrim soul in Tagore and Kabir. *The Dialogue of Self and Soul* is capacious in its scope, not only to contain Yeats' share of fullness and freedom as much through life beyond life. The whole range of ascetic soul striving to empty itself of 'This' and 'that' and the Self delighting in filling itself to the brim and spilling over-converges upon Advaita, the inseparable oneness of the 'knower and the known,' 'Is and ought,' for 'how can we know the dancer from the dance.' He also found sources other than Tantra, that held delight in created things or Maya as divine in the Indian tradition, Bhakti mysticism often fusing erotic and spiritual experiences. The darkness in which all appearances dissolve and the resonance in which all sounds sink back in Forster's 'Cave' are similar to Yeats's projecting 'the deso-

lation of reality' against 'the mirror scaled serpent' that is the multiplicity of Maya.

"Mirror as mirror, mirrored is all the show." This is much in the same vein as he qualifies the dark and desolate reality of immense emptiness by not dismissing the ephemeral and turning it into a dignity of tragedy.

> Man is in love and loves what vanishes
> what more is there to say?

This is sage-like and so are his images of death as freedom and consummation of love, steeped in the wisdom of the Upanishads, Tagore and Kabir. His self declared agnostic position towards the end which made him say that 'Man can embody truth but he cannot know it' is a profound aspect of his Indian experience like the inscrutable immensity projected by Forster. It may be, indeed an echo of the agnosticism comprehended by the far-reaching vision of the seer in Rig Veda who wrote the Nasadiya—evoking darkness, void, receding emptiness and uncertainty.

So in Yeats, there is a free-ranging amplitude, adventure with traditions so various as European, Chinese, Jewish, Indian or the Occult. It is an evidence of his extraordinary discipline of mind and imagination both in his art and thought that he could comprehend and synthesize so much of learning acquired by self-education which might have reached out exploring to very uncertain areas but was never erratic.

The case of T.S. Eliot is a contrast to Yeats. There is urbanity in his early verse and also his orthodoxy about Christianity. But Eliot's apprenticeship in Harvard and the courses in Pali, Sanskrit and Patanjali, his contact with F.H. Bradley and other such factors gave him a peep into the Vedas, Upanishads, *The Gita*, Buddhist literatures and the thoughts of Emerson and Whitman. His discovery of the Indian tradition is consistent through his works. The 'heady excitement' of this discovery and the endless possibility of fusion with Christianity in its elemental form runs through his reading Jessie L. Weston and J.G. Frazer and using their studies of the Veda, the Upanishads and the primitive myth in *The Wasteland*. The excitement of filling out and amplifying the Grail myths from the *Rig Veda*, the *Brihadaranyak Upanishad* and the implied quest of Bhagirath and the self-sacrifice of Dadhichi, loses no ground whatsoever in his plays and *Four Quartets*. There is no doubt whatsoever about his professed belief and worship, but the more interesting

point is that in transforming his assent to belief, he gave to Christianity an unchanging and universal core of primitive and archetypal origins and that the most compelling images and wisdom of such origins are usually traceable to aspects of Indian tradition. Thomas Becket, ruminating on action and suffering and compassion has Buddhist aspects to him. The right action involved, the theme of surrender and self-sacrifice echoes the message of the *Riga Veda* to the dilemma of Arjuna in the *Bhagvad Gita*. The Hindu doctrine of *prarabhda* as accumulated Karma blends with disenchantment and enlightenment in Harry (*The Family Reunion*). *The Cocktail Party* combines these with the right action *Swadharma* (appointed burden) and renunciation of the Buddhist kind. The cumulative Indian tradition and wisdom permeating Eliot's treatment of experience is like a world-view implied by his poetry.

Both Forster and Yeats insist on the impression of vagueness, immensity, paradox and unboundedness in association with Indian experience. In the early years of his apprenticeship in Buddhist studies and a study of Patanjali, Eliot too confesses to such impressions like 'mazes of Patanjali' and 'enlightened mystification.' A little advance in comprehension makes him see the essence of Indian tradition in its capacity for wholeness and relating to wholeness. This is more a tribute when he specifies that when Western philosophers from Plato down the ages were tinkering with 'categories'; the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* had already envisioned the 'whole' and the 'absolute' that was beyond categories. It is precisely this notion of Reality that confounds and overwhelms the Western analytical mind, measuring eye, with a sense of 'vague immensity' (Yeats). If Eliot had found the ills of Western civilization in dissociation, fragmentation and indifference, he had found the cure in the holistic vision and clarity of right action from the Vedas to *The Gita* and in the synthesis of Yoga.

There is a sense in which the two greatest poems of the world according to Eliot shaped the nature of his experience which finds manifestation in his poetry. In the poems between *Prufrock* and *Gerontion*, the dominating experience is of suffering without being aware of if (with no possibility of redemption) is Dante's Inferno. From *The Wasteland* to *Ash Wednesday* there is an intense awareness of suffering and the need to find this is Dante's *Purgatorio*. From *Marina* to *Four Quartets*, the impulse to understand and comprehend suffering and the intimations of all informing ecstasy are very strong. These are intimations from Dante's *Paradiso*. But,

there is a predictably apt way in which the early poems upto *Gerontion* are about lack of action and volition, indifference and apathy. Likewise *The Waste Land* and *The Hollow Man* insist on interested action in terms of desire, lust, possession. The joy springing out of the last poems upto *Four Quartets* is one of having given, of voluntary dispossession of detached, disinterested action. The last section is in terms of *The Gita*, Nishkama Karma or Anasakti while the first two are Virakti and Asakti. So Krishna and Arjuna figure quite naturally in *The Dry Salvages* as Dante does in *Little Gidding* where 'flames of incandescent terror' evoke the exact experience of Arjuna, face to face with the terrifying splendour of the effulgent light and flames of a transfigured Krishna.

In assimilating the visions and symbols of Yeats and Eliot into her poetry, Kathleen Raine finds images from the Indian tradition most intimately articulating the tortuous ways to ecstasy and union with Nature, God, Spirit and Love which constitutes the recurring themes of her work. To leave Indian tradition alone for a while, the ground she shares with them involves myths, archetypes, Frazer, Jung, G.R. Levy and Cambridge anthropologists, devotional and mystical poetry; the pilgrimage through one's life to make of it a fable of transfiguring meaning. With Yeats, she shares a passion for Blake and with Eliot St. John of the Cross and Dame Juliana of Norwich. C.G. Jung was to her the greatest and the wisest teacher of his times. Jung's interpretation of myths, dreams and archetypes happen to be points where the major concerns of Yeats and Eliot also converge. His work is suffused with wisdom from the Upanishads and Vedas, for his own descriptions of Collective Unconscious, archetypes and the process of individuation.

Raine's love poetry is sensual and at the same time unboundedly cosmic, spiritual and mystical. Perhaps her psychic experiences gave her recurring access to her deep unconscious, setting in a process of individuation which ultimately transformed her love and personality. At the archetypal level, she projects the 'animus' archetype upon her lovers. She identifies herself more and more with the Great Mother archetype—mother and consort into one; the eternal feminine with the whole of Nature as 'He' one with spirit or light. In Jung's account of this archetype is a very specific mention of 'Prakriti' of many 'veils' that dances and unveils herself before Purusha in Sankhya Philosophy. She is mystically aware of her being, Maya or Prakriti who delights in enveloping, embracing and giving birth to him as Incarnate God. Thus, the sensual delight rings through the

universe as 'Leela' and the union is a mystic conflagration of the carnal into spiritual. Here love poetry has this mystic aspect which derives from the Bhakti poetry of the medieval India which is around Lord Krishna and his Raasa. Herein is the enactment of man and woman in exalted union very much like that of God and Goddess.

In Kathleen Raine's poetry one finds in abundance the epiphanies of Tantrik nature and she is aware of potential delight and fulfillment in both the 'Sahaj' letting go of Bhakti mysticism and in the Yogi holding his breath. She is aware of 'bodily lowliness' (a beast on all fours. and exaltation blended in ecstasy): "Celestial fire kindled in the solar plexus. Her poetry is about transformations through unions and separations. The canal and the spiritual are the two beams of the cross whose separation is agony and union is ecstasy. This polarity runs through the cosmos, in unlighted depths, of darkness and the blinding light of galaxies. Her familiarity with the latest revelations of science fills the depth of this cosmos with the particularities of created things and anonymity of void. In stretching her identity to such immensities and diversities, more than Isis, Leda, Mary or Demeter—it is as Maya that she unveils herself in her totality. Vedanta, Tantra and Yoga offer her ways to reach out and fathom these immensities, just as Nature-Spirit (Prakriti Purush) polarity cosmicises her love into the longing, separation and fulfillment in Bhakti mysticism. The very unusual intensities of her life and work find articulate symbols in Indian tradition.

Not only in terms of chronological sequence but while rounding off this study, Paul Scott's consistent concern with Indian tradition and its assimilation in his works, *Raj Quartet* in particular, has to be considered. Scott's starting point is probably the point where Forster stopped, and went on updating situations upto pre-independence India. The lack of comprehension and the deep-lying alienation of the British rulers from the land and its people is more or less the same. If what happened to Adela Quested in the Cave remained lost and uncomprehended in darkness, radiating an aura of uncertainty and unreality, is what happens in Bibighar Gardens in 1942 to Daphne Manners remains in similar vagueness of violence compassion, love and rape. In his attempt to depict the earnest British desire to know India, it portrays an effort of love frustrated by the immensity implied in the encounter, uncertainty, vagueness. unpredictability and unsuspected involutions of circumstances. Dr. Aziz like Hari is alienated, Daphne like Adela Quested languishes

and dies. But Daphne bears a child, Parvati Manners, in whom the encounter comes to fruition. Her 'morning raga,' breaking silence and relapsing into silence, like the proverbial Indian emblem of a drop of water rising up from the ocean, with dazzling rainbow shades, and sinking back to anonymity, is an expression of Indian interpretation of creation and dissolution, beginning and end, in Aum. In *Raj Quartet*, the immensity and the silence of India are comprehended as part of its tradition. In Vishnu sleeping and working, for example, or Shiva dancing his cosmic dance in stillness, feet rising and falling in creation and destruction, hands raised in assurance and holding up the outer shell of the cosmos, the silence of Indian wisdom becomes articulate.

Paul Scott envisions the British Indian encounter and its history receding back to fair-skinned races invading or migrating to India—the Aryans, Mongols and may be many others before them. This is the abyss of history in Indian terms like everything else about India receding into its immensity. The loss of focus and certainty is related to illusion, to Maya, then to Karma—action. The reality of India contains the unreality of truth and existence, a paradox inseparable from the myth of India that finds words in the Nasadiya hymn of *Rig Veda* that goes on probing darkness behind the darkness of non-being and asking: who knows? These are 'vague immensities,' its tradition has not only probed the immensity but stopped and thrown a question out into the abysmal void: who knows? Does even God know? This is the culmination of the resounding echo in the cave in *A Passage to India*. These are the 'mazes' and the 'mystification' Eliot encountered in his India affair. To go far from this would result in not hearing the music but being lost in the music—the music and the listener, being one and the same. This is like, you know you are dancing but you feel to be still. This made Yeats realize and ask: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

You know that behind the exquisite articulation in words, music, dance, sculpture is a resounding and enveloping of silences. The profound realization after encountering Indian tradition has almost taken over all sensitive minds who have come in contact. Indeed in totality if things are orchestrated in terms of symbols and ideas, times and figures in Forster, Yeats, Eliot, Raine and a few other writers. All the puzzles, riddles and paradoxes resolved and unresolved have been experienced in terms of 'advaita.'

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Emerging Voice and Vision in New Indian Poetry

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The contemporary English-language Indian poetry scene has never been so prolific in its energy and innovation, just as much as it has been in its output (at least as far as the number of excellent volumes that have been published by mainstream publishers are concerned). Added to this, a sizable number of good poetry collections have emerged from reputed small presses. This is true not only for India but also for the broad Indian diaspora: in the USA and Canada, the UK, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, the South Pacific, and East and South Africa. Vikram Seth's novel in verse *The Golden Gate* (1986) marked the watershed for the modern movement in Indian poetry. Corroborating all that, the success of and interest in Indian writing (though so far primarily in fiction), both nationally and internationally, coupled with an ever-increasing audience of book buyers and a new-found special interest of the mainstream media, have contributed to this rather welcome situation. It is especially heartening for the health of poetry, as it has finally spilled out from the garret and graduated to a more widespread and growing audience of readers.

Thus at the end of the twentieth century, Indian poetry written in English, as well as regional poetry translated into English, was at last attaining the recognition it deserved. Critics were enthusiastic about the new generation of Indian writers; publishers in Great Britain and in the United States were anxious to bring out their works; and readers throughout the world were becoming familiar with poets hitherto unknown to them. In this case, at least, change was all for the better.

The most striking features of the new generation of poets are their range of concerns and themes and their use of language. They use English as an Indian as well as a global language, without the "peculiar hang-ups" exhibited by many in the earlier generations, whose work went "under many ludicrous names—Indo-English, Indian English, Indo-Anglian, and even Anglo-Indian and Indo-

Anglican" (Mehrotra). Thankfully, the last traces of archaic forms of British English have finally vanished. The new generation of poets are unafraid, motivated, clear-sighted, and they use English with a sense of ease. Their language, style, rhythms, and forms are inventive, original, and contemporary.

Meena Alexander among this new generation of poets deserves special mention. She brings to her work a varied range of landscapes—India, Sudan, England, America—as well as a strong sense of being a woman and the issues of being a minority/ black poet in a primarily white American community. Her first book, *Stone Roots*, appeared many years back, in 1980. She has since published a book of criticism, a novel, and a memoir. Her newer poetry is available in the form of two pamphlets, *The Storm* (1989) and, most recently, *Night Scene, the Garden* (1992). These work as companion long poems—the first relating to the tearing down of her father's house (to be replaced by a new one) and the second about her mother's home. These two houses are located in the landscape of her childhood, in Kerala, only twelve miles from each other. "After the First House," the opening poem in *The Storm*, begins with a mix of drama and sadness.

> Father's father tore it down
> heaped rosewood in pits
> as if it were a burial
> bore bits of teak
> and polished bronze
> icons and ancient granary;
> the rice grains clung
> to each other
> soldered in sorrow,
> syllables
> on grandmother's tongue
> as she knelt.

Alexander's poems tend to have a languorous feel about them. She uses the sequence form to build scene after scene, weaving characters with feelings that gradually heighten the further you travel with her. Myth, language, warfare—all collide. "And in the empty hold of air/ whispers of children born into this garden" closes *Night Scene*.

Bibhu Padhi is a poet who uses language with strength and originality. His first book, *Going to the Temple* (1988), reveals his poetic talent amply. In *Indian Evening* he shows how well one can handle local colour with subtlety without getting messy or prosaic or deliberately Indian: "its quiet puts us in touch/ with creatures of dust and heat./ the crows fly about the pale sky/ with a homely noise,/ while the gods float by effortlessly/ with the first evening chants./ There is peace here, regardless/ of every single, separate pain." His second book, *Lines from a Legend* (1992), and his third, *A Wound Elsewhere* (1992), appearing almost back to back, confirmed his strengths further. Padhi's concerns range from the local Cuttack winter to America, from the peculiarities of a power cut in the summer to a dead sparrow. Some of his best poems are those where he uses sparse couplets, such as "Trees," "Pigeons," "I Hear a Small Voice Speaking," "Footprints," and "The Farther Shore." He shows further signs of maturity in theme and style in his next book, Painting the House. His individual signature, his deft handling of language, and his quiet sensibility place him most certainly among the superior poets in the 1950s group.

Vikram Seth is one of the very few contemporary authors who, with every new book, tries something different: travelogue (*From Heaven Lake*), novel in verse (*The Golden Gate*), pure poetry (*Mappings, The Humble Administrator's Garden, All You Who Sleep Tonight*), children's verse (*Beastly Tales*), drama, and, most recently, poetry translation (*Three Chinese Poets*) and a novel in prose (*A Suitable Boy*). His choice of genres, as is evident, spans the whole literary spectrum, and each one with his unique signature and a definite formal necessity. *The Golden Gate* was set in tetrameter sonnet stanzas à la *Eugene Onegin*, the play in alexandrine couplets; and, what is not entirely unbelievable, Seth is contemplating writing his dissertation in economic demography in sestinas.

Rukmini Bhaya Nair's debut collection *The Hyoid Bone* (1993) brings to light another poet of talent, another poet in whose work the woman's point of view is discussed with authority. Nair also brings to her poetry a background in linguistics, fusing lexical rules and variations in unusual ways. In the poem *"Genderole"* all this is displayed with great skill:

> Considerthefemalebodyyourmost
> Basictextanddontforgetits-slokas

Whatpalmleafmscandoforusitdoes
Therealgapsremainforwomentoclose.

There is no flinching as far as her questioning stance is concerned as she challenges:

Sankarayouoldmisogynisttellme
Whatssocontemptibleaboutfleeting
Splendour? . . .
Itmaybe beneathyoutopriseapartthisgimmick
Butremember thethingawomanchangesbestishersex."

Nair's endings are always unpredictable and sometimes quite witty. Another interesting aspect of the poem just quoted is its form, the way the "couplets" are used in the Sanskritic tradition of slokas, with the poor naviram or "full-stop" marking the end of the two line stanzas.

In "Moondrop, Javadweep" we see the effectiveness with which Nair paints the fury of an equatorial rainstorm:

Drenching rain, and the blindness
that goes with it, pushed us down.
We went so quickly on our knees,
the long soak of road squelching.
closest thing to stoning it was—
Small, stinging pebbles of rain
And then—fist-sized rock-hammers
Loosed wrath of some invisible mob."

Prabhanjan Mishra's first book, *Vigil* (1993), contains poems that arise predominantly from an Oriyan sensibility, an interest in local folklore and myth, and the poet's experiences as a twentieth-century suburban Bombay-dweller. In the rural landscape of Orissa, where "The smell of ripe paddy/ churns hungry stomachs," we see the peasant's "sad buttocks/ and shrunken breasts/ peer through the tattered cloth." In the poem, "Peasants of Orissa," the stark reality is brought into sharp focus in a sad vein: "Only daydreams sustain their smiles."

The postcolonial response to a colonial past is ironically and effectively explored in a poem such as "The Foreign Tourist": "For you to come and plunder,/ rape and massacre/ and return centuries later/ to applaud the splendid ruins." Quite in contrast, the plight of metropolitan suburbia is explored vividly with an underlying ironic

ring: "It is not Bombay/ unless one looks/ at the postal addresses,/ the varicose city/ growing elsewhere/ like a pestilence./ in the east the salt pan bask./ The creek, languid in the north, is a well-fed boa; having swallowed the city's garbage/ at the mouth of the belching drains/ At the nearby station/ tired trains stop for a drink or smoke./ One hears them grunt and gasp,/ the announcer urging them to take to the tracks" ("Suburb"). When Mishra chooses to be lyrical, however, he can be a pure delight. The opening stanza of "Weeds of Hope": "the night is an impenetrable mask,/ the sharp shapes of feminine footfalls/ cut slices of nostalgia./ Across a quiet pool of waiting/ the numb senses crawl/ on the bellies of turtles" is ample evidence of that.

Manohar Shetty's poems in his three books *A Guarded Space* (1981), *Borrowed Time* (1988), and *Domestic Creatures* (1994) use with unusual effect the spatial element that pervades everyday life. Whether in a cramped train, "the lines/ Rustle unchecked through his hands" ("Epitaph"), or looking inward, "I weave myself/ a cocoon breathe/ the air in the inky/ gloom" ("Cocoon")—or opening a lid—a cockroach "tumbles out/ Like a family secret;/ Scuttles back into darkness" ("Domestic Creatures"). Shetty has full control of the movements of his characters in the areas he has outlined. In the poem "Floorshow, Bombay," executed in tight tercets, the performer feels a sense of a trap's having been laid by the leering eyes of the audience.

> Smoke-screened sighs escape
> From the redly-lit audience when she bends
> Crabwise instead, unwinds a ream
> Of ribbon from the cleft
> Of her sex, the tantalising yards
> Cheered like a victory parade.
> Away from the vicarious climax
> Her suppleness swaddles her waist,
> Her facial a pink mash.

The sense of claustrophobia the dancer feels is finely juxtaposed as an antithesis both to the visual energy of her pirouettes and to the movement created by the lines' internal rhymes, as "Her unpeeled costume is heaped." This poem, like many others in Shetty's books, uses metaphors rather refreshingly.

Sujata Bhatt is by far one of the best poets of the 1950s. She uses free verse with delicacy, poise, and effect. Her lines are tight, her metaphors unusual, and her range of themes wide. In her first book, *Brunizem* (1988), the continents where she has lived—Asia, Europe, and North America—are used as her poetic landscapes In "Udaylee" she explores with haunting sentiment the state of menstruating women, who are deemed untouchable during that period according to the beliefs and practices in the Gujarati community of her childhood: "Only paper and wood are safe/ from a menstruating woman's touch./ So they built this room/ for us, next to the cowshed." Further, she describes, "This aching is my blood flowing against,/ rushing something—/ knotted clumps of blood,/ so I remember fistfuls of torn seaweed/ rising with the foam, rising."

Bhatt's mother tongue, Gujarati, figures prominently in her poems in both of her books. In her second collection, *Monkey Shadows* (1991), the protagonist in the poem "Devibhen Pathak" says at different points in the poem," (Chaal, chaal! Sapat Payhri lay!) Let's go! Put on your slippers," then later," (aray bhen, tamnay khabar nathi. . .?) Oh bhen, don't you know. . .?" Bhatt goes one step further by using the actual Devnagari Gujarati script on the page. At times it may appear gimmicky but overall Bhatt is an accomplished poet using her multicultural background to its fullest effect: her growing up in America, her Indian family background, her German marriage.

Jeet Thayil occupies half the space in the two-poet volume *Gemini* (1992), the first attempt by Viking Penguin India to publish young poetry. His work is mostly urban, where unusual angles of sex prevail, and he likes using rhymes.

> This woman, her milk is black
> she feeds me lying back.
> Strange countries stop her in-betweens
> lazy with crime, softnesses, sin.
> Her phallus is a Chinese pipe,
> I suck upon it hollow-cheeked,
> eunuched in the lamplit dark
> as she sputters and spits and shrieks. (Oneroid)

In "India Mother" we see delightful irreverence couched in innocence, as "Her hands round out your anus, a hand/ wets you there and powders you, hands/ busy themselves with your sex." Thayil's

magnum opus *Apocalypso* has been published by Mark Arts London. Here is weighty and daring poetry. The first section, *The Leper King Speaks of Love* starts with an epigraph from Job: "I have said to corruption, Thou art my father" and takes a walk up the "skin-flint street" where "the red lamp burns." But it is not brutal encounters that we get, for Thayil is not out to shock. Each poem is handled delicately, like expensive crystal being held up to the light. His talent lies in working the gold out of the mundane and the workaday. He wrings out poetry and "legitimate sorrows" from "prize pettinesses" which the soul is heir to, finds "the sublime and the vacant" "both ridiculous at one go." Only the whore's "sadness tells the truth."

Ian Iqbal Rashid's first collection, *Black Market White Boyfriends and Other Acts of Elision* (1991), essentially wrestles with a variety of struggles: the struggle of growing up in different cultures, the struggle of language and identity, and the struggle of the homosexual world. The book opens with startling candour with "Another Country," wherein the poet and his white lover are watching "The Jewel in the Crown" on television. The narrative onscreen is cleverly interwoven with the suggested narrative of his own life: "Now I watch you watch Sergeant Merrick watch poor Hari Kumar./ And follow as the white man's desire is twisted,/ manipulated into a beating." Further, the poet is willing to be the submissive black man mirroring what happens onscreen: "My beauty is branded into the colour of my skin,/ my strands of hair thick as snakes,/ damp with the lushness of all the tropics,/ My humble penis cheated by the imperial wealth of yours./ Hari's corporal punishment, mine corporeal:/ Yet this is also part of my desire."

The element of sexuality is seeping in abundance, oozing out of most of the poems. In "Civilities" we see the poet's own experience of racism and gay rape: "policeman on me says paki/ bare hand on billy stick,/ gloved hand pulling at my cock." In "A Redefinition" the poet lies on the "vast rumpled ocean" which is his lover's bed, "completely naked but for [his] skin/ which is also a sheath. . . . It gleams nut-brown or bronze or cocoa/ or such other magazine words." Rashid's strengths lie in the cinematic quality of his verse as well as in his use of dialogue in poetry. His newer poems, as evidenced in journals, show considerable maturity and growth.

Tabish Khair brings a reporter's eye to his poems. In his first book, *My World* (1991), "My India Diary" presents us with a series of snapshots of scenes he has observed and recorded in plain, simple, fragment phrases.

> puja procession
> clay god carried to the ghats
> dancing in the streets
> happiness like a summer cloud
> today
> man will triumph over gods.

Many of these vignettes draw upon minute and ordinary details in everyday life and are used as comments on larger issues in society. Sometimes Khair achieves this with a haunting effect, as in "Second-hand Books," where "There is something sad about second-hand books:/ their creased covers have seen a little too much,/ Their yellow pages promise yet another story." There is always a peculiar kind of poignancy in his poems—sometimes wise, sometimes naïve, sometimes fatalistic, but always moving.

In Khair's second book, *A Reporter's Diary* (1993), he takes some of the minute observations further. Many of his poems are personal ("To Gyanendra," "For Smriti"), others contain experience of his travels ("Peels Onions in Europe," "At Theresienstadt"), and there are those that explore aspects of fear while experimenting with the sonnet form. His language has developed more, and we see him tackling certain harder issues such as death ("Nanijan's Cupboard," "When Someone Dies," "Death in a Muddy Pond," "Shraddhanjali") and the futility of language itself ("Preface").

Ranjit Hoskote with his *Zones of Assault* (1991) is one of the most promising ones in the new breed. He uses poetic diction with effective accuracy, images with clarity, and metaphors with originality. In his elegy "Two Women in Midsummer" he portrays grief juxtaposed with a scene of calm: "Two women in midsummer/ Sharing their loss/ In traditional white./ Walls, their bricks baked brown,/ Relieved now and then/ By pictures fading into cool green remembrances." The city of Bombay is presented with post-industrial venom and futility in many of his poems. In "Reclamation" we read: "The land is a wolf's grey paw reaching out to grab/ Bay and breakwater. Hoskote's themes range widely, from political violence to Renaissance art, to figures such as Safdar Hashmi and

Hannibal, and portrays landscapes as different as Kashmir and Hardwar. Sometimes Hoskote can become extremely convoluted and trip over his own syntax and cleverness, but that seems somewhat acceptable, considering there are many good poems here.

In addition to the poets mentioned above, there are others who have been published in magazines and anthologies: C.P. Surendran, Maya Chowdhry, Taj Masud, Sanjeev Richhariya, and Rajneesh Dham—all promising names who will vie for space in the future. Then there are others who have published volumes to their credit—Melanie Silgardo, Debjani Chatterjee, Suma Josson, Menka Shivdasani and Imtiaz Dharker—who all seem to be the ones to watch out for. In *Purdah* (1989) Imtiaz Dharker brings to her poetry a very specific and tightly-wrought Muslim sensibility, "one that is further enhanced in strength by her individual point of view, indeed any woman's point of view." If the poets discussed in this essay represent the vibrant generation of new Indian poets, then the future of modern English-language poetry in India is certainly in mature hands, a force to reckon with in the wider arena of contemporary world poetry.

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Tagore's *Gitanjali*: An Enchanted Song in English Translation

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We may start the discussion with a question: how did Indians begin to write poetry in English, which was a foreign language? This question can strike anyone who goes looking for the origins of Indian English poetry. Today, English seems to have a very stable, even natural, place in India's social and cultural life. But there is another picture even now-a-days when we step out of our cities and go deep into the interiors of the hinter land, the foreignness of English at once becomes clear. Hardly anyone can really understand the language and if a few do, their command over it is questionable. That is why English, Americans and other native speakers of English continue to speak loudly, haltingly or through interpreters when they are in India. But about more than two hundred years ago, when British paramountcy was far from established in India, when the sight of Englishman was a great novelty in the streets of Indian cities, the English language was very much a foreign tongue. Yet, the fact remains that nearly a century before English education was institutionalized or the first Indian universities were founded, there was already a growing crop of Indians who chose English to write their poetry in.

The first Indian English poet, by common consent, is Henry Derozio, who published his collection of poems of Calcutta in 1827. But, perhaps, even this was neither as sudden nor dramatic as it may seem today. Indians had begun to learn English in earnest at least twenty five years prior to that and some had even begun to write it. M.K. Naik in his extremely useful book entitled *History of Indian English Literature* (1982) refers to C.V. Boriah's *Account of the Jains Published in Asiatic Researches* (London, 1809) as the first substantial published composition in English by an Indian. Boriah's essay, twenty-eight pages in length, was a translation, yet it retains historical importance as the first sizeable 'piece of writing' in Indian English. After that the Anglicization of the Indians which came into direct contact with the Britishers was an ongoing process which grew in direct proportion to the rise of British power in India.

After India got its independence in 1947 Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru wrote an article which was published in the *National Herald* on 13 February 1949:

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

Pandit Nehru wanted Hindi as a national language but also saw the value of English as a window to the world.

Indian English poetry began under adverse circumstances—adverse in the sense that the country was under British rule and the British had subjugated India. During this period three significant factors emerged and acted as a solvent of the doubts and perplexities of the situation. They were first, the new intellectualism and nascent nationalism among the Indians, as symbolized by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and second the perseverance of the Christian missionaries and third and final, the persuasiveness and metallic clarity of Macaulay's prose style. These factors went a long way in defining the course of education in India.

Indian poetry in English emerged under unfavourable conditions but as conditions changed this type of poetry became more and more homely, indigenous and patriotic. An important characteristic of Indian verse in English in the mid-twentieth century has been its appearance as part of Indian literature. It has been said that it is Indian in sensibility and content; and English in language.

Tagore is the most outstanding name in pre-Independence Indian English poetry and was the first poet who achieved for modern India a place on the world literary scene. The award of the Nobel Prize for Literature placed not only Tagore but also Indian literature on the world map.

Tagore wrote primarily in his mother tongue Bengali, but he had a mastery of English too. He translated many of his poems and plays into English. His *Gitanjali* is indeed an enchanted song in English translation. When it was published for the first time in English translation the West hailed it for its message of peace and love in a war-torn world. The poems in their slender volume are charged with a deep sense of peace and calm. The charm of this work is "the sub-

tle under flow."[2] It is nothing else but his sense of life. The spirit of "curious quiet"[3] vivifies it.

To readers of Tagore in Europe and America, it came with the delighted wonder of a new discovery, but to Eastern readers it was "only a natural culmination of his earlier writing."[4] The love of nature and man had by unconscious steps merged into the love of God. Deep personal suffering had given a mellowness to his images and themes. The wonder and pathos of human life brought a new sympathy and understanding to his works of imagination. In brief, the very "personality of the poet had passed into it."[5]

Tagore is today a poet of national and international repute. His poetry is born out of an amalgam of the rich classical heritage of ancient India, the simple ways of the life of the common people of Bengal and the restless energy and intelligent vigour of modern Europe. He is decidedly "an inheritor of all times and all cultures."[6] It is this combination of many diverse strands and themes that gives to his poetry its resilience, universality and infinite appeal. His internationalism is one of his main claims to future remembrance. Therefore he is, and will always be, one of the world's greatest international poets.

So far as his works are concerned, *Gitanjali* or *Song Offering* is the most famous English work i.e. a piece of translation of Rabindranath Tagore. When it was published in 1912-13 it created a sensation among the English and European reading public. The prose poems are on the very ancient themes of man's worship full of surprises at every turn of thought and phrase. Their impression of uniqueness is as fresh as ever.

The poems of *Gitanjali* are arranged in such a way that one idea passes gently to another and is an impression of variety in unity. A group of poems leads naturally on to its successor and within a single group, every poem has its individual charm and beauty.

In the first seven poems the poet deals with the relationship between God and himself. In the next group of eight to thirteen the same idea is carried forward and the stress is laid on the proper realization of God. The poet is eager to write himself to God and poems fourteen to thirty six deal with his eager waiting and the obstacles that handicapped him. In poems thirty seven to fifty seven the union with God becomes a reality and new aspects of their relationship are revealed. The dominant note in the poems fifty eight to seventy is a note of joyousness. I will like to focus on two poems. "I Ask for a Moment's Indulgence to Sit by Thy Side" is the fifth

poem of Gitanjali. It emphasizes the intimate relationship of love existing between the poet and God:

> Away from the sight of thy face my heart
> Knows no rest nor respite and my work becomes,
> an endless toil in a shoreless sea of toil.[7]

The imagery of this song is based on nature—which is always found in plenty in the poems of Tagore. The poet enjoys an atmosphere of serene silence after sitting face to face with the Lord of Love. He awaits the summer, the season of fulfilment of the longings of the thirsty heart pining for the sweet music of bees in the flowering grove. Here the dramatic atmosphere is painted in the mystic words of the Muse.

"My Prayer to Thee My Lord" is the thirty sixth poem of *Gitanjali*. This is an expression of the will of shedding of the life of alienation led by a single individual. It is a prayer to the Lord to remove the traces of ignorance from the heart of the poet. The poet wishes that he is granted strength not only to bear up to his joys and troubles but to be able to selflessly serve the Lord with a human heart. The poet also asks to be gifted with fortitude to serve and love the poor and unfortunate and never to be a coward in the face of the rude and mighty. The last two lines of the poem

> And give me the strength to surrender my
> strength to thy will with love (29)

elevate his mind above the mundane things. And finally he has the strength to merge with the will of God with love and devotion.

NOTES

1. Sudhakar Pandey, et al, ed. *Rose Petals: Selections from Jawahar Lal Nehru* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1989).
2. Ezra Pound, Review of *Gitanjali*, *Tagore Centenary Volume*, p. 111.
3. Humayun Kabir, "Tagore's Poetry," *Indian Literature,*' 1, 2, No. 1, Oct. 1958-March 1959, p. 12.
4. Edward Thompson, "*Gitanjali* and the Prize," *Tagore Centenary Volume*, p.109.
5. Humayun Kabir, p. 16
6. G.C. Ghosh, *Bengali Literature*. Calcutta, p. 173.
7. R.N. Tagore, *Gitanjali: Song Offering*, Macmillan, London, 1953, p.4.

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Labyrinths of Memory: A.K. Ramanujan's *The Striders*

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Unlike most of his compatriots, Ramanujan never aligned himself to any school or group and composed poems in English as a creative necessity rather than as a method of proving a point. He was born in a scholarly family and his exposure to the classics of East as well as West happened quite early. Apart from Kannada and Tamil, English became his third language. Probably the most important thing that distinguishes Ramanujan from his contemporary Indian English poets is that he has been deeply involved in the classical literatures of India especially Sanskrit, Kannada and Tamil. The influence of the Anglo-American poetic tradition on him is obvious but at a deeper level he is emotionally as well as intellectually attached to the classics of India. Ramanujan has said,

> English and my disciplines (linguistics, anthropology) give me my 'outer' forms—linguistic, metrical, logical and other such ways of shaping experience, and my first thirty years in India, my frequent visits and field trips, my personal and professional preoccupation with Kannada, Tamil, the classics and folklore give me my substance, my 'inner' forms, images, symbols.[1]

He began writing poetry when he was seventeen. Apparently Ramanujan seems to be a complete antithesis to Ezekiel. Three volumes of his original poems in English *The Striders* (1966), *Relations* (1971) and *The Second Sight* (1986) were published in his life time. *The Black Hen* is a collection of a part of his unpublished poems which was published immediately after the poet's death.

As an expatriate Ramanujan relied chiefly on his memories without becoming sentimental or nostalgic. The impulse to preserve remains the driving force behind Ramanujan's poetry. As an expatriate poet, Ramanujan knew the importance of connection. A sense of loss is invariably accompanied by a desire for reclamation and recovery in his poetry and this makes him a subjective poet. R. Par-

thasarathy rightly remarks: "Ramanujan often relapses in his own life and writes from it. He follows up a private insight until it completes itself into a poem that is a world in itself. The impulse to preserve is at the bottom of his poetry."[2]

Irony is the chief mode through which he perceives and recalls his childhood and adult experiences. He is definitely a modernist. S.K. Desai says, "Ramanujan was essentially a modernist committed to anti-historical, depoliticized, transnational consciousness and to stylistic experiments like, say Imagism and expressionism."[3]

Memory is a tool of a diasporic poet to metaphorically retrieve what he cannot physically or literally possess. Memory often becomes nostalgia and a poet who depends solely on nostalgia fails to depersonalize his poetic voice and express his experiences from a certain aesthetic distance. A.K. Ramanujan is pre-eminently a poet of memory and even though memory provides the subject matter for the majority of his poems, he is able to exercise restraint and is able to achieve objectivity. Ramachandra Sharma is right when he says, "There is no nostalgia in Ramanujan's going back to his childhood and in juxtaposing an image of the Indian past with one from the immediate and insistent West. No attempt at comparative evaluation of one against the other either. Just his wonderment in connecting and holding them together as he focuses his eye on them. Abjuring large gestures of rhetoric in any of his utterances, he leaves the poem to speak for itself in the mind of the readers and form a gestalt."[4]

The Striders was published in 1966 and it contains many finished poems both in theme and craftsmanship. In *The Striders* most of his memory poems are built round absurdities or cruelties but there are also poems which touch the reader with their poignancy and immediacy. K.R.S. Iyengar says, "In *The Striders* Ramanujan summons from the hinterland of memory buried moments of suspense, surprise or agony and turns them into disturbingly vivid poems. The mutilated beggar, the drowned woman; they are caught in their contortions and misery, and they are there, like the denizens of Dante's hell. The images are unforgettable but perhaps there is not always the touch of compassion to redeem the doomed."[5]

The technique of deflation is common to practically all the memory poems. In fact, Ramanujan's memory poems can be divided into three categories: (a) poems in which memory is unspecified; (b) poems about memories of the family especially his grand-

mother and mother; (c) poems about larger cultural and racial memories.

The title poem 'The Striders' is taken up with the theme of the poetic self's encounter with the reality which apparently first refuses any framing or limiting. The strider, an American waterbug, firmly plants its dry, weightless capillary legs. The poet is surprised by the bug's power of concentration, its ability of perfect self-control and its refusal to give away what it can claim as its own. The poem opens in the midst of an action:

> And search
> for certain thin-
> stemmed, bubble-eyed waterbugs.
> See them perch
> on dry capillary legs
> weightless
> on the ripple skin
> of a stream.
> No, not only prophets
> walk on water. This bug sits
> on a landslide of lights
> and drowns eye—
> deep
> into its tiny strip
> of sky.[6]

The waterbug is thus an objective correlative for the poetic self that has to balance detachment and involvement at the same time. The strider provides the poet with this perspective of passivity in the midst of flux so that he can look at his experiences with a certain degree of objectivity and coolness. But what Ramanujan says about the waterbug is nothing new. He himself has written extensively on the poetic techniques of classical Tamil and medieval Kannada poets where he tells how those poets utilized the available poetic conventions to achieve entirely new effects in their poems. Chirantan Kulshreshtha rightly says: "In Ramanujan's poetry passivity becomes an essential preoccupation for suggesting the inexhaustible potential of the self: it is a positive state of being which allows the self the necessary freedom and transparency to manipulate subjective and inner time, use personae, bring the equations of one's relationships into a vivid focus by interacting memory and time and even observe itself as an object."[7]

In "Self-Portrait" the poet gives voice to the paradoxical situation of being alienated from and also aligned with his past. In the shop windows, his reflection appears to be that of a stranger but on closer observation he finds that the portrait of the stranger also carries in its corner the signature of his father. The momentary vision of himself as a stranger is thus mitigated by a sense of connection:

> I resemble everyone
> but myself, and sometimes see
> in shop-windows,
> despite the well-known laws
> of optics,
> the portrait of a stranger,
> date unknown,
> often signed in a corner
> by my father. (*CP*, p. 23)

Thus his individuality is dissolved and he is forced to define himself in terms of his relationship with his origins. The relationship between the present and past is not always smooth and unproblematic. A large number of poems in the first volume *The Striders* are with such disturbing experiences when memory of something unpleasant in the past spoils his present. The poem 'Snakes' recalls the contradictory experience of fear and fascination:

> A basketful of ritual cobras
> comes into the tame little house,
> their brown-wheat glisten ringed with ripples.
> They lick the room with their bodies, curves
> uncurling, writing a sibilant alphabet of panic
> on my floor. Mother gives them milk
> in saucers. She watches them suck
> and bare the black-line design
> etched on the brass of the saucer.
> The snakeman wreathes their writhing
> round his neck
> for father's smiling
> money. But I scream. (*CP*, 4-5)

The poet is overwhelmed by his fascination with the past. Quite a few poems in this volume like 'Snakes' and 'Breaded Fish' are examples of unpleasant memories. The following lines from 'Breaded Fish' illustrate it:

> Specially for me, she had some breaded
> fish; even thrust a blunt-headed

smelt into my mouth;

and looked hurt when I could
neither sit nor eat, as a hood
of memory like a coil on a heath

opened in my eyes; a dark half-naked
length of woman, dead
on the beach in a yard of cloth,

dry, rolled by the ebb, breaded
by the grained indifference of sand. I headed
for the shore, my heart beating in my mouth. (*CP*, 7)

Thus the past never comes whole or unchanged in memory. "Looking for a Cousin on a Swing" recalls a childhood experience of the poet when he enjoyed the swing along with his cousin:

Now she looks for the swing
in cities with fifteen suburbs
and tries to be innocent
about it
not only on the crotch of a tree
that looked as if it would burst
under every leaf
into a brood of scarlet figs
if someone suddenly sneezed. (*CP*, 19)

Thus the poem seems to suggest that the relationship of the past with the present is always unstable. In some poems the poet recalls the sense of cruelty as in "The Opposable Thumb" which is about the abnormal sixth finger in the hand of a blind boy. In the last stanza the poet refers to his grandfather's knifing temper which resulted in the chopping off of all but one finger of his granny's hand:

'One two three four five
five princes in a forest
each one different like the fingers on a hand,'
and we always looked to find on her paw
just one finger left of five: a real thumb,
no longer usual, casual, or opposable after her husband's
knifing temper one Sunday morning half a century ago. (*CP*, 6)

Ramanujan's sensibility apparently rejects nostalgia or sentimentality while evoking scenes from the past. Thus for Ramanujan, the past cannot be totally avoided and that memories howsoever mutilated, diluted or even falsified cannot be totally disengaged from the

present. Change is inevitable but not less so is continuity. The mind is a "sun-struck house of mirrors" in which

> Memory,
> in a crowd of memories, seems
>
> to have no place
> at all for unforgettable things. (*CP*, 21)

The poet realizes that he cannot run away from memory, he ultimately surrenders to it. The poet knows well that memory is always unstable and keeps on changing the picture of the past and with that the picture of the present, the poet concludes in a poem entitled "Instead of a Farwell":

> how can I say farewell
> when farewells are made
> only for people who stay
> and only for people
> who go away? (*CP*, 22)

The number of family poems in *The Striders* is not very large. In these poems Ramanujan has provided some evocative pictures of his family members—grandmother, mother, cousin, sisters, father, etc. "A Leaky Tap after a Sister's Wedding" gives an insight into personal relationship:

> My sister and I have always wished a tree
> could shriek or at least writhe
> like that other snake
> we saw
> under the beak
> of the crow. (*CP*, 10)

"On the Very Possible Jaundice of an Unborn Daughter" underlines the male domination in a Hindu family. The poet is worried about his daughter's future:

> And if that daffodil too flaps all morning
> in grandma's hands, how can my daughter
> help those singing yellows
> in the whites of her eyes? (*CP*, 14)

"Lines to a Granny" harps on the same theme by juxtaposing the romance of a folk-tale and the truths of real life:

> But tell me now: was it for some irony
> you have waited in death

to let me learn again what once you learnt in youth,
that this is no tale, but truth? (*CP*, 17)

'Excerpts from a Father's Wisdom' is a proof of light, irreverent attitude of the poet towards his past. His meditations on things momentous such as despair, love, suicide, poverty are meant to be diversionary. Towards the close, there is a warning:

Poverty is not easy to bear.
The body is not easy to wear.
So beware, I say to my children
unborn, lest they choose to be born. (*CP*, 42)

The same debunking imagination is at work in 'A Hindu to His Body' in which a Hindu prays to his body not to leave him:

You brought me: do not leave me
behind. When you leave all else,
my garrulous face, my unkissed
alien mind, when you muffle
and put away my pulse
to rise in the sap of trees

let me go with you and feel the weight
of honey-hives in my branching
and the burlap weave of weaver-birds
in my hair. (*CP*, 40)

Ramanujan treats family in his poems in a variety of moods. Sometimes humorously as well but many poems deal with complexities and contradictions of family as a social institution. There are a couple of poems in which the poet registers his sense of incomprehension of the western values. A typical poem is "Still Another for Mother":

I discovered that mere walking was polite
and walked on, as if nothing had happened
to her, or to me. (*CP*, 16)

The present throws the poet back into the past:

something opened
in the past and I heard something shut
in the future, quietly,
like the heavy door
of my mother's black-pillared, nineteenth-century
silent house, given on her marriage day
to my father, for a dowry. (*CP*, 16)

The poet's attitude to his past is not always reverent and adulatory. Very often he registers his rebellion against his orthodox Brahmin past and exults in breaking the laws of tradition but he is not prepared to forsake and abandon his past. There is an undefined quality about his past which compels him to stick to it. This ambivalence comes into greater prominence in his cultural memories. "A River" is the only poem in *The Striders* in which the poet scrutinizes the ancient literary traditions of Tamil and probably the whole of India. The poet notes with dismay:

> The new poets still quoted
> the old poets, but no one spoke
> in verse
> of the pregnant woman
> drowned, with perhaps twins in her,
> kicking at blank walls
> even before birth. (*CP*, 39)

The poet invokes the past in this poem to underline the sterility of the modern Tamil writers. The poem underscores the weaknesses of the new poets' historical sense in which repetition and not creative and critical assimilation of tradition has been resorted to.

The relation of the individual to something larger in nature is the theme of 'Towards Simplicity' and the relationship between the two is reciprocal:

> From the complexity
> of reasons gyring within reasons,
> of co-extensive spring and autumn,
>
> into the soil as soil we come,
> to find for a while a simplicity
> in larger, external seasons. (*CP*, 37)

In "Conventions of Despair" he ridicules the trappings of modernity and rejects them in favour of his own past which in spite of its weak spots is much more genuine than the ever-changing face of modernity:

> Yes, I know all that. I should be modern.
> Marry again. See strippers at the Tease.
> Touch Africa. Go to the movies.
>
> Impale a six-inch spider
> under a lens. Join the Test-
> ban, or become The Outsider.

Or pay to shake my fist
(or what ever-you-call-it) at a psychoanalyst.
And when I burn

I should smile, dry-eyed,
and nurse martinis like the Marginal Man. (*CP*, 34)

The poet declares:

But, sorry, I cannot unlearn

conventions of despair.
They have their pride.
I must seek and will find

my particular hell only in my hindu mind:
must translate and turn
till I blister and roast

for certain lives to come, 'eye-deep,'
in those Boiling Crates of Oil; weep
iron tears for winning what I should have lost. (*CP*, 34)

The poem ends on a note of clear affirmation of his ancient roots:

No, no give me back my archaic despair;

It's not obsolete yet to live
in this many-lived lair
of fears, this flesh. (*CP*, 35)

The recurrence of the past also forms the theme of "A Poem on Particulars." Like humans, fruits have a future to look forward to. The roots may be temporarily forgotten but they can never be abolished. Present and future are all rolled into one and what once appeared as uprooted now acquires an unbroken continuity:

I have heard it said
among planters:
You can sometimes count
every orange
on a tree
but never
all the trees
in a single
orange. (*CP*, 54)

But there is one poem in *The Striders* which suggests Ramanujan's effort to effect a very different kind of return to his roots. In "The

Fall" he goes back to the Alvars though the title of the poem has been intentionally made ambiguous in which the Christian Fall and the Hindu concept of Prapatti are unconsciously contrasted. S. Nagarajan rightly says that these poems "are based on the cultural predicament of a person who has been brought up in a traditional culture and is now living in a very different one."[8]

The Striders contains many poems which are overtly satirical and they all refer back to Ramanujan's memories of India. But the satire is kept controlled and it serves the aesthetic purpose of saving the poet from lapsing into nostalgia. He persists with his past and the resultant poems are different enactments of his memory. Thus the volume is dominated by poems based on his memories of India. Ezekiel observes: "Ramanujan's poetics sustains a fine tension between the traditional and the contemporary. He has not surrendered to either but is master of both, keeping his careful distance from them."[9]

NOTES

1. Qtd. R. Parthasarathy, *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets* (Delhi, 1976), pp. 95-96.
2. R. Parthasarathy, "How it Strikes a Contemporary: The Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan," *Literary Criterion*, 12 (1975-77), p. 189.
3. S.K. Desai, "Mixing Memory and Desire: Small Scale Reflections on the Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan," *Perspectives on Indian Poetry in English*, p. 113.
4. Ramachandra Sharma, "Universe in a Handful of Earth," *Indian Review of Books*, 11 (1993), p. 27.
5. K.R.S. Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English* (Sterling, New Delhi; rpt. 2006), p. 671.
6. A.K. Ramanujan, *Collected Poems* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999), p. 3.
7. Chirantan Kulshreshtha, "The Self in the Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan," *The Indian Journal of English Studies*, XVIII (1978-79), pp. 112-13.
8. *Contemporary Poets*, ed. James Vinsun and D.L. Kirkpatrick (London, 1985), p. 689.
9. Nissim Ezekiel, "Two Poets: A.K. Ramanujan (*Relations*) and Keki N. Daruwalla (*Apparitions*)," *Selected Prose*, p. 53.

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Kamala Das's Poetry: A Study of Theme of Love

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Kamala Das as "a poetess of considerable talent"[1] established "her reputation as the *femme fatale*"[2] of Indian English poetry. She stormed into popularity with the publication of her collection *Summer in Calcutta* in 1965. Her frank outpourings often jolted the readers and attracted their attention for her bold writings. It was this bold, open, clear, frank and straightforward expression that paved the way for Indian women poets as far as her sincere, unsentimental, uninhibited expression of love, sex, emotional sterility in marital relationships, failures, frustrations, disillusionments and extra-marital sex are concerned. Nevertheless, her volumes such as *The Descendants* (1967) and *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973) have widened the thematic range of Indian English poetry. Her poetic journey begins with poet's vehement desire for sincere and true love and ends with loneliness, vacuity and death-wish. The present paper peeps into the poetry of Kamala Das where she mainly deals with the concept of love and takes a shift from physical attraction to eternal bliss.

Kamala Das's poetic work represents the sensibility and sensitivity of a modern Indian woman. She, though not directly influenced by the feminists of Sixties and Seventies, takes up the causes of women with all the zeal and vigour at her command. In this respect she is essentially different from the rest of her contemporaries. She deals with the trials and tribulations of the woman who is struggling hard to find a place in the male-dominated society. "The crux of the matter is that from the very beginning, human society has been dominated by the male, otherwise literature of the world would have been very different. However, it is worthwhile to mention here that the attitude of literature to love and sex is opposed to that of religion and ethics. And in this context, a female poet like Kamala Das takes advantage of her poetry to undo this historical imbalance in the society."[3] She chooses to write freely on the subjects that have never been discussed before. In her poetry she not only ex-

presses her feminine sensibility but the unfulfilled desires lying dormant in the unconscious mind also take part. Her sincere and frank outbursts sometimes jar and jolt the reader who is not habituated to such utterances. Her candid confessional revelations give a new dimension to her poetry. In addition to all this, she explores her self through self-introspection and self-analysis. Her search for true love is untiring and unending which takes her from one place to another.

The poetry of Kamala Das has been examined and interpreted from various ways by a good number of critics. Hari Mohan Prasad rightly observes her poetry as "an autobiography, an articulate voice of her ethnic identity, her Dravidian culture."[4] M. Elias also holds a similar view: "Kamala Das is quite unique in exemplifying an allegiance to Dravidian Indian."[5] While E.V. Ramakrishnan labels her as "a confessional poet" and says "she has always dealt with private humiliations and sufferings which are the stock themes of confessional poetry"[6] and Eunice De Souza forwards the same view: "Kamala Das writes incessantly about love or rather the failure of the love, her unhappy personal life, her unsuccessful sexual encounters and relationships."[7] But I.K. Sharma walks on a different track and says: "Beneath the explosive poetry of Kamala Das . . . there flows a subterranean stream of *bhakti* heading towards its own destination to have an ideal lover, to attain higher truth like Mira."[8]

The above-stated views show how critics after interpreting Kamala Das's poetry from different angles come to a certain conclusion. Hari Mohan Prasad and M. Elias see 'the ethnic identity' in her poetry because there are certain life incidents of the protagonist in her poetry which tally with those of Dravidian life pattern. Das's poetry has a woman protagonist and the use of the personal pronoun 'I' or the study of the self is a predominant factor in her poetry. This makes E.V. Ramakrishnan and Eunice De Souza catch hold of this view that Kamala Das has presented love and suffering of her personal life and that such love and pain and suffering of the protagonist animates I.K. Sharma to identify her with Mira. Such observation makes its scope narrow and leaves no impression on reader's mind. Kamala Das's poetry is experientially deep and psychologically complex. To some extent her poetry suffers from the problem of obscurity. Hence, to understand her poetry in its true form, it is essential to examine it through some more sound and solid approach.

A close reading of Kamala Das's poetry reveals the fact that she intensely craves for love. It seems that she has an intense desire to love and to be loved. As Priya Pathiyan in her article on Kamala Das writes:

> Love is the only ritual I believe in,
> It makes everything legitimate.[9]

To Kamala Das, "Love s beautiful, whatever four lettered name the puritans call it by. It is the fore state of paradise. It is the only pastime that involves the soul."[10] The poet has clearly admitted that love is the main theme of her poems. As Keki N. Daruwalla observes: "Kamala Das is pre-eminetly a poet of love and pain, one stalking the other through a near neurotic world. There is an all-pervasive sense of hurt throughout. Love, the lazy animal hungers of the flesh, hurt and humiliation are the warp and woof of her poetic fabric. She seldom ventures outside this personal world."[11]

Love is a central point round which Kamala Das's poetry revolves. Her poetry encompasses a woman's longings, hopes and fears. Her repulsion for physical love and lack of sincere love occupy a very significant place. She craves for union with man for the fulfillment of love but she is disillusioned and frustrated when it degenerates into sheer lustfulness and bodily pleasures. Such beautiful love gets spoiled without getting solace and comfort from a being. In *An Introduction* she tells about her marriage and her initiation in sex. She boldly reveals how loveless sexual assaults are committed on a woman in the name of marriage:

> I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
> For he drew a youth of sixteen into the
> Bed room and closed the door. He did not beat me
> But my woman body felt so beaten
> The weight of my breasts and wombs crushed me.[12]

Kamala Das deals with the quest of a woman for love in general terms. It is her deep desire to find fulfillment in love:

> I met a man, loved him. Called
> Him not by any name, he is every man
> Who wants a woman just as I am every
> Woman who seeks love. In him . . . the hungry haste
> Of rivers, in me . . . the ocean's tireless
> Waiting. (*An Introduction 59*)

In *The Dance of Eunuchs* Kamala Das adroitly presents the sterile, arid, exploitative and dehumanized world of "vacant ecstasy" of dancing eunuchs which reveals the sharp sense of anguish hidden under the whirling movement and extended frenzy of the dancing eunuchs. The rainfall is also not sufficient to bring calm and coolness to them. She uses apt and suggestive images to visualize this world of "vacant ecstasy." A.N. Dwivedi has rightly pointed out: "The poem is powerful and bold indeed and displays an admirable sense of proportions in the use of imagery and metaphor."[13]

In the *Dance of Eunuchs* Kamala Das finds a close parallel to her own loveless life, a life of emotional vacuity:

> Their voices
> Were harsh, their songs melancholy; they sang of
> Lovers dying and of children left unborn. . . .
> Some beat their drums; others beat their sorry breasts
> And wailed, and writhed in vacant ecstasy. (7)

To her, love is a far cry. K.R.S. Iyengar rightly says: "Lip-love prattles like the bones in the anatomy, laboratory, words and feelings trip 'idly over puddles of desires,' and love—where is love?"[14]

In her poetry Kamala Das boldly and frankly expresses her ardent desire to experience love to its very depth. She in *Freaks* presents a glaring contrast between women whose mind willed "to race towards love" where the mind of men only trips "idly over puddles of Desire." He always satiates "skin's lazy hungers." In such a callous and loveless atmosphere the heart of a woman is

> An empty cistern, waiting
> Through long hours, fills itself
> With coiling snakes of silence. . . .
> I'm a freak. (*Freaks* 8)

Kamala Das's intensity for love "Loved, and loved, and loved, until/ The bold gray mornings burst in"[15] shatters when she realizes:

> these men who call me
> Beautiful, not seeing
> Me with eyes but with hands

She falls into man-made world where this "strong man" plans

> to tame a swallow, to hold her
> In the long summer of your love so that she would forget
> (*The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* 1)

This resentful attitude of Kamala Das reveals her love for freedom but she finds herself in a cage like a bird. Her urge to fly and her pre-occupation with self is reduced gradually for she becomes the victim of male lust.

The concept of love in Indian tradition is a feeling where the lover and beloved both merge into one and enjoy eternal bliss. However, the protagonist of *The Old Playhouse* is far away from this kind of reciprocated love. The poet protests here showing her hatred and rejection of male body:

> You were pleased
> With my body's response, its weather, its usual shallow conversions
> You dribbled spittle into my mouth, you poured
> Yourself into every nook and cranny, you embalmed
> My poor lust with your bitter-sweet juices.
> (*The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* 1)

What Kamala Das advocates in her poetry, is the concept of true love, to say "Shringara Rasa," the Rasa of Love which she finds missing in her life. The quality of "losing oneself" in the enjoyment is the distinctive feature of the Rasa of Love. "It is not pleasure or joy or even ecstasy as such but the state where one loses one's identity. This is exactly a feeling that distinguishes sexual experience. This particular feeling in literary appreciation is called 'Rasa' a word which has no equivalent in English. It is no surprise, in view of the origin of the conception, to find that Rasa of Love (Shringara) is called the king of all the Rasa. Sex experience is at the root of the conception."[16]

Nevertheless, in such a situation a woman has nothing to do except surrendering her body to a hungry hawk. Kamala Das sarcastically remarks that the woman should accept the cruel reality that she is merely an object for the satisfaction of man's lust. That is what she expresses in *The Looking Glass:*

> Only be honest about your wants as
> Women. Stand nude before the glass with him
> So that he sees himself the stronger one
> And believes it so, and you so much more
> Softer, younger, lovelier. . . . Admit your
> Admiration. Notice perfection of his limbs . . .
> and the jerky way he Urinates. All the fond details that make
> Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
> Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of

Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers. (*The Looking Glass*)

To her, a woman should derive satisfaction out of her sexuality by challenging traditional social norms. This could be by standing "nude before the glass with him" or by watching "the jerky way he urinates." Such poetry really shocks the readers when she talks of gifting the man "the warm shock of menstrual blood." Raveendran rightly says that this gives the reader a "vision" of an "illegitimate" sex experience with a legitimate partner.[17]

Apparently there is nothing negative in the approach of Kamala Das as far as love is concerned. To her, love is not only physical union of bodies but also of minds and the souls. Emotional and spiritual fulfillment is required in love or it becomes merely a "skin-communicated thing." It is true that Kamala Das expresses her need for love, a sense of urgency and fulfillment with a frankness and naiveness unusual in the Indian context. Embarrassing questions are ignored by us because we can not face the truth. C.V. Venugopal remarks: "The poetry of Kamala Das is full of questions that are rarely answered. They are queries about truth. But truth, in general, is unbearable. And Kamala Das, the seeker after truth feels betrayed. The wise ones live in a blue silent zone, 'unscratched by doubts.'"[18]

Kamala Das in her poem *Gino* expresses a sense of disgust at male habits and treatment. The poem reveals the terror of sex:

You will perish from his kiss, he said, as one must
Surely die, when bitten by a krait who fills
The blood stream with its accursed essence. (*Old Playhouse* 13)

The lover is like a reptile who keeps on sucking the female body. Love as it is manifested in her life causes a sense of death, thus one feels that it is very difficult to draw the demarcation line between life and death as well as love and lust. There is a desire to experience true love but it turns poisonous even outside marriage.

When Kamala Das's discontent reaches its climax her thoughts turn suicidal. Her utterance becomes painful in "The Suicide":

Bereft of soul
My body shall be bare
Bereft of body
My soul shall be bare (*The Old Playhouse* 34)

Physical maturity is destructive and its suppression or even its fulfillment does not give her any mystical experience. This creates a kind of conflict between the world as it is and the personal experience. The poet cannot synthesize, the inner and the outer i.e. the soul and the body. Thus love is the essence of her life but in real life she has to wear the mask of a happy woman and wife in the male-dominated Indian society.

It seems that Kamala Das does not ignore the physical aspect of love. She wants to experience eternal bliss in her marital relationship. But what she experiences is frustration and disappointment in it. Sex is an outer grab for her inner and outer world of emotions and feelings. She does not derive physical mental satisfaction. For driving full satisfaction she steps out of the legal orbit of marriage by challenging traditional and social norms. Love as some sort of reciprocation gets a severe jolt when it discovers that

> Life is quite simple now—
> Love, blackmail and sorrow. ("Substitute")

As the thought develops in the poem she finds that lovers have become a nameless, faceless crowd and the speaker a harlot:

> After that love became a swivel door,
> When one went out another came in
> Then I lost count, for always in my arms
> Was a substitute for a substitute
> Oh, what is the use explaining—
> It was a nameless faceless crowd. ("Substitute II," 43-48)

However to observe this kind of an attitude on the part of a female poet is something unheard of before. In some of the love poems Kamala Das strikes an entirely new note. In the poems dealing with extra-marital love she does not justify adultery and infidelity but she justifies the search for an ideal relationship which gives love, solace and peace. She identifies her love outside marriage with mythical love of Radha who broke up the ties of marriage for Lord Krishna

> Vrindaban lives on in every woman's mind,
> and the flute, luring her
> From home and her husband,
> Who later asks her of the long scratch on the brown
> Aureola of her breast, and she shyly replies, hiding flushed cheeks,
> It was so dark outside; I tripped and fell over the brambles in the wood.

Love is not only physical union of bodies but also of minds and the souls. Kamala Das has an earnest desire to experience love to its very abstruseness: "Her poetic corpus configurates an inner voyage, awareness beyond 'skin's lazy hungers,' to the hidden soul. It enacts her quest, an exploration into her self and seeking of her identity."[19] Physical love for Kamala Das only brings frustration and humiliations. She gets disappointed. For attaining perpetual love she steps out of the so-called established legal institution of marriage but every time it brings unrestfulness in her life.

However, she takes all the things at ease and without bothering much about anything she tries to unite her physical love with the eternal one. Without feeling any shame or guilt she continues her journey of search for true love for experiencing eternal love:

> Even my soul,
> I thought, must send its roots somewhere,
> And, I loved his body without shame
> On winter evenings as cold winds
> Chuckled against the window panes.[20]

Some poems of Kamala Das are unique examples of her love where she forgets all the pains and sufferings of her sexual exploitations given by her partner. It is not earthly love but beyond it the love of a mother experiencing a great joy on the birth of a child. In *Jaisurya* the child's cry gives her all the comfort and pleasure:

> Love is not important, that makes the blood
> Carouse, nor the man who brands you with his
> Lust, but is shed at end of each
> Embrace. Only that matters which forms as
> Toadstool under lighting and rain, the soft
> Stir in the womb, the foetus growing.

The poem *Jaisurya* exhibits the ecstasy of the childbirth and the poet like Kamala Das wisely merges the personal with the universal. Her maternal love for the child is beyond imagination; how happy she is, becomes clear from the following lines:

> Out of the mire of a moonless night was
> He born, Jaisurya, my son, as out of
> The wrong is born the right and out of night
> The sun-drenched golden day.

Her search for love is part of a larger quest for motherhood and home which cannot be understood by the commercialized urban

sensibility. City knows no real love. It reduces everyone who seeks love to a beggar.

The theme of dual relationship in love is also discussed in the poetry of Kamala Das. A woman craves for complete union with man for the fulfillment of love but a great shock to her; it degenerates into sheer lustfulness and bodily pleasures. For realizing true love, a woman, even though married, runs from one man to the other:

> Another's name brings tears, your's
> A calm, and a smile, and yet Gautama.
> That other owns me: while your arms hold
> My woman form, his hurting arms
> Hold my very soul. ("An Apology to Gautama" 18)

In "The Testing of the Sirens," a sense of belonging to one and uniting with other is strongly communicated:

> I'm happy, just being with you. But you . . .
> You love another,
> I know, he said perhaps a handsome man,
> A young and handsome man. (66)

But she feels frustrated and disappointed for not getting sincere partner.

Kamala Das is preoccupied with the theme of love. To her, love is a beautiful thing and it is a *tapasaya*. She starts seeing her relationship with the divine love of Radha-Krishna and tries to find the image of Krishna in her lover. Without any hesitation she accepts the fact that Krishna is the ultimate lover: "I grew up reading *Geetha-Govinda*, about Radha-Krishna. Which Hindu girl has not been interested in Krishna, the great lover? So to us Krishna has not been vulgar at all. To us it has just been normal."[21]

At times Kamala Das begins to visualize herself to be Radha who is waiting & standing on the bank of the river Jammu for seeing her lover Krishna. In the image of Lord Krishna, she seeks her true and ideal love. It is this sincere love that unites Radha and Krishna.

Kamala Das deftly portrays the feelings and emotions of Radha who is in love with Krishna. She depicts the ecstasy of Radha for Krishna in the poem *Radha*:

> The long waiting
> Had made their bond so chaste, and all doubting

And the reasoning
So that in his first true embrace, she was girl
And virgin crying
Everything in me
Is melting, even the hardness at the core
O Krishna, I am melting, melting, melting,
Nothing remains but
You. ("Only the Soul Knows How to Sing" 67)

It is the love that unites the souls of lover and beloved. Through our legendry tales we know that Radha loved Krishna but married another man continued to love Krishna. When Krishna embraced Radha she realized first time as if her entire self began to melt. In Krishna's arms Radha felt that her own individuality was lost.

In depicting the relationship of Radha and Krishna, Kamala Das's concern here is not religious. In the poem "Radha," she tries to express the intensity of human sexual relationship. This totality of human relationship or fusion "offers contrast to the *ardhanareeswara* concept where woman is fused to man but (sic) yet remains distinguishable" (Raveendran 87). In a disguised form, the poet herself is dissolving away and losing her identity with her lover. She praises Lord Krishna and her concern deepens for Krishna: "But illogical that I am from birth onwards. I have always thought of Krishna as my mate. When I was a child I used to regard him as my only friend. When I became an adult, I thought of him as my lover. . . . Now in middle age, having no more desire unfulfilled I think of Krishna as my friend, like me grown wiser with years, a householder and a patriarch. And illogically again, I believe that in death I might come face to face with Him."[22] Kamala had always cherished one image in her mind and soul and it is the image of Lord Krishna.

Kamala Das's earnest longing to merge with Krishna becomes intensified in the poem "Krishna":

Your body is my prison, Krishna,
I cannot see beyond it.
Your darkness blinds me,
Your love words shut out the wise world's din.
("Only the Soul Knows How to Sing" 67)

Her intense love for Krishna is pervaded in the poem. Her eternal lover Krishna brings the rain of solace and mental peace and she realizes the eternal bliss at that moment. She feels intoxicated under the spell and charm of Krishna and own identity is merged with

him. Only the presence of Krishna is realized all around. Nothing is heard except the voice of Krishna and the mortal world has no meaning to her.

Kamala Das suffers intensely for not getting solace and emotional fulfillment in her marital relationship. For seeking emotional support she turns to the other man but it makes no difference. With the maturity of her life she realizes the fact that the happiness lies not in the mortal but in the eternal world. Such feelings are expressed in the poem "The Maggots." Here the poet sees some similarities of her life in Radha. Radha loves Krishna but after getting married she performs her household duties forgetting her love for Krishna. She accepts her husband's love. To Radha, it doesn't matter whether her husband loves her physically as her soul is dedicated to Krishna. Here Radha is reminding Krishna with great pains:

> At sunset on the river bank, Krishna
> Loved her for the last time and left
> That night in her husband's arms
> Radha felt so dead that he asked what is
> Wrong do you mind my kisses love,
> And she said no, not at all, but thought,
> What is it to the corpse if the maggots nip. (*Ibid.* 42)

Radha considers the physical rapture insignificant because her soul is intact and devoted to Krishna.

Thus, Kamala Das's attitude towards love in her poetry has been discussed here from different angles. The poet wants to attain fulfillment in love in her marital life i.e. the time-honoured institution of marriage but instead of experiencing such fulfillment and deep pleasure in physical love, she feels frustration and humiliation when love is denied to her. In order to seek complete pleasure in love she breaks the social norms and turns to the other man's door. But to her great surprise, she receives the same shocks to find that the man is only "a hungry hawk." At last in a situation of tension she discards the earthly love and epitomizes her love in the form of divine love of Mira for Lord Krishna

NOTES

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'I Learnt Love from My Mother's Milk': Women in the Poems of Pashupati Jha

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Much has been written about women by poets and writers across time and place, and yet such is the depth and variety among them that the subject remains inexhaustible. Every poet and writer, who writes about women, has a point of view about them that tells as much about him/ her as about the women he/ she is writing about. The present paper takes up the topic of women in three poetry collections of Pashupati Jha, because we are at a juncture at which society needs to consider how it views its women. Jha, a senior Professor of English at I.I.T., Roorkee, is writing his poems in a world where women are glorified in theory but exploited and tortured in reality. There is, therefore, an urgent need to lend a voice of empathy to women and to recognize the sacrifices they make in their everyday life for their family. Nobody can fulfil the task of conveying the essence of womanhood better than a poet as sensible and sensitive as Jha. Through delicately crafted words and rhythm of the poem, the poet captures the imagination of the readers and, through his direct yet potent power of expression, succeeds in evoking the same thoughts and feelings in them.

Pashupati Jha is a poet on a mission. Through his poems, he intends to inform, inspire and, possibly, reform the world. He does so by sometimes just letting us see the images of society as it is until our conscience pricks us, and at other times he unequivocally lets us know what he thinks of the subject. In the poems that deal with the fair sex, Jha gives us a glimpse into the lives of varieties of women. He captures the diversity among them with great dexterity. He portrays women as mothers, wives, beloveds, daughters, widows, housewives and socialites. Jha largely respects and eulogizes women, the source of these feelings being his mother:

> I learnt love
> from my mother's milk
> so sweet, so pure and priceless:

for many early months
her bosom was my only world
her lyrical lullaby
my only words
her kisses, her touch, her hugs
the only actions
I understood and enjoyed. (*AIO* 63)

In similar vein, he immortalizes effectively: "Mother, you were/ therefore we are/ and would continue to be/ till eternity" (*MOP* 13). In this poem, the individual mother of the beginning becomes universal in the middle and divine at the end, making Rahman write that here "Jha achieves the triple union of reality, reflection, and vision" (69). Bhatt too highlights Jha's deep love and reverence for his mother in this poem, by "unifying religion, myth, and memory" (46) in one go. This sense of love and reverence for mother is recurrent in his poems. But Jha is also not blind to the fact that there are some unwomanly women as well who lack kindness, commitment, and goodwill. Jha's depiction of women, thus, is poignant, balanced and realistic.

"Civilization: A Progress Report" depicts an affluent family and its young maid-servant. The potshot is not just at the master of the house and his son who violate the modesty of the hapless maid, but also at the fashionable wife and daughter who choose to look the other way at the wayward habits of the men in their family. These women are more interested in their own comforts and cosmetics, and do not spare a thought for the misery of a fellow woman. While the Memsahib is busy shopping for "the latest in fashion to arrest/ her fading youth and charm," the daughter "is in the arms/ of her next boy-friend, behind/ the bush of her college lawn/ putting Elephanta Caves to flame" (*CC* 13). This shows that not all women are alike. Some women are as much a part of the patriarchal structure of exploiting the weak as men. Here we come face to face with a mother/ wife who has not inculcated good values in her children, and who doesn't check the malevolence of her husband. And so, the young maid of her house "with more stitches/ to her blouse," daily "mops everything/ away, except her misfortune" (ibid). So long as women are divided on bases such as class, status and economy, their cause will suffer a setback.

"Two Indias" also shows how diverse the category "woman" is, and why all women cannot be clubbed together in one group. On the one hand is an ultra-modern teenager who, with her verve and vigour, makes "even Venus/ run for life" (*AIO* 46); on the other are the poor and mentally challenged women at a place of worship who are blinded by superstition and "would soon be begging/ in the courtyard of the same god" (*AIO* 47). By highlighting the plight of women who are victims of society's blind belief in superstitions, Jha, quite movingly, is raising the same question that Gayatri Spivak raised, "Can the subaltern speak"? The poem brings to forefront the question whether these women, who have lost their sanity, are poverty-stricken, and a prey to blind faith, will ever be able to articulate their own concerns and speak for themselves! It would be naïve to assume that all women have the same problems, and that there is one single solution to all their predicaments. Jha challenges the universalized view of gender, and differs from the feminist ideology which deems other dimensions of social life such as class to be less important in understanding women's experience as women. Jha shows post-feminist sensibility in as much as post-feminism, unlike feminism, acknowledges the differences among women and does not adopt the same standards for all of them. It focuses on the specific experiences of women. The portrayal of women in Jha's poems shows the multiple complexity among them.

Jha prefers authenticity to sham sophistication in women. He feels that attempts to artificially enhance one's physical beauty, with complete disregard to inner beauty that comes from deep seated values, is a sign of degradation. Jha takes a dim view of made-up women who reek of artificiality. In "Art and Artifice," he writes, "How do I kiss you/ when the lipstick has/ coloured your conscience?" (*CC* 27). In "A Symbol," Jha talks of a modern woman whose "super-thin dress/ sticking to powdered skin/ leaves nothing to curiosity" (*AIO* 41). This woman, who is completely bereft of kindness and whose entire existence revolves around artificially enhancing the beauty of her external appearance, is a symbol of the world we live in where moral values are passé. "Flower without Fragrance" takes a swipe at a woman who is extremely beautiful but lacks compassion. External beauty is not sufficient to win the poet's heart as he is looking for something more profound. The poet says: "You have all a poet ever dreams of/ except a throbbing heart that

feels for others;/ why then should I fall in love at all?" (*AIO* 55). The poet is in search of the beauty of the soul which makes even "the lips with the fresh smell/ of raw onion" (*CC* 27) quite appealing. The raw onion here becomes the symbol of all that is simple, authentic and natural. It symbolizes distance from deceit and lies that the lipstick and super-thin dress stand for. The real culprit is the modern world of pomp and show, encouraging women to be self-centred. Jha's poems, by holding a mirror to this aspect of modern life, inspire women to regain the better part of traditional virtues with which they have long been associated.

In "I Want," the poet proves that he is not a slave to the concept of physical beauty and knows how to appreciate the beautiful in a woman at any age. The poet says of his beloved, who has now aged and perhaps no longer so much attractive, "Who knows, there is/ some lingering light/ left still in the sunset rays!" (*MOP* 21). By admiring his beloved/ wife even when she is no longer young, Jha is posing a direct challenge to the beauty industry which tries to undermine a woman's self-esteem as she ages and makes her feel that she needs to use anti-aging products in order to arrest her youth. Youthful looks are considered a precondition for approval in society, but Jha does not feel that a woman needs to be defensive about her age. He agrees with Naomi Wolf, who writes in The Beauty Myth:

> You could see the signs of female aging as diseased, especially if you had a vested interest in making women too see them your way. Or you could see that a woman is healthy if she lives to grow old; as she thrives, she reacts and speaks and shows emotion, and grows into her face. Lines trace her thought and radiate from the corners of her eyes as she smiles. You could call the lines a network of 'serious lesions' or you could see that in a precise calligraphy. . . . The darkening under her eyes, the weight of her lids, their minute cross-hatching, reveal that what she has been part of has left in her its complexity and richness. She is darker, stronger, loser, tougher, sexier. The maturing of a woman who has continued to grow is a beautiful thing to behold. (76)

The poet, similarly, expects his beloved to be a woman who is not scared of taking a plunge into the depths of love and life. In "A Love Song," he writes: "Love is more than a skinny affair,/ it is more than seek and hide;/ are you ready for a life-long dive?" (*CC* 15). The poet expects the woman to have substance and understand-

ing within. It is clear that the kind of woman that the poet eulogizes is not simply the one who is outwardly beautiful, but the one who knows the value of commitment and has depth. Jha's emphasis on the values of love and commitment is understandable, considering he belongs to a land, which worships women such as Sita and Savitri. These women knew the significance of loyalty in a relationship and remained committed to their partners even in the face of heavy odds.

However, in his rare poem "Definition," the poet remonstrates with his beloved for her seeking "the security of a definition" (*CC* 24) in their relationship. He exhorts her to be more adventurous and to "let our link be mysterious as the universe". Thus, the liberal poet leaves the option of being daring or otherwise to his beloved. In "Home is where," Jha talks about his beloved who wants "freedom of the lonely,/ sitting alone and sipping your tea"; yet he feels: "But life is easy only in pairs/ when there is some soul sweet/ to share joys and divide despairs" (*CC* 19). In a tender way, the poet wants to tell the liberated woman, who values individualism before anything else and believes she can be happy without man, that true happiness comes only when there is a loving man-woman relationship. The woman is afraid of long commitment because she feels it will deprive her of her freedom and independence. Jha points out how excessive liberty results in painful loneliness. He asks his beloved to "see above the powerful sun/ burning alone in his searing pain,/ yearning for one, who really cares/ home is where one gets repairs/ and likes to return, again and again" (ibid). The sun symbolizes a life of freedom that is outwardly attractive, but also connotes isolation from the bliss of homely joys.

Jha is not altogether impervious to the charms of physical beauty. In "Muse's Abode," he talks about "the unfathomed depth/ of your liquid eyes,/ your soft, sweet, steady smile/ and the enchanting smell/ of your sensuous breath" (*CC* 25). In "The Last Glance on Romance," the poet eulogizes his beloved's "big, bright eyes," her "beautiful face" and her "soft, shy body." The poet wishes to become the sunglass, the parasol, the raincoat and every want of his beloved "so that, once for all/ you may be lost/ in me, and I in you/ till the final call" (*MOP* 61). The poet admires women who are naturally beautiful and who retain their feminine virtues of softness, kindness and compassion with deep commitment to people around

them. In "Beauty," the poet says of his beloved, "How fair looks your face!/ your curls covering the moon in vain" (*AIO* 28). Though Jha mentions the beloved's beauty, he does not love a woman because she is beautiful, but she appears beautiful to him because he loves her.

The poet also takes note of some women who burden their husbands with unending demands. In "Costly Questions," the poet talks about the wife who pesters her husband with "Will you ever bring two tickets/ for this Salman show?" The poet's response is typical of a harried husband: "She goes on and on like this—/ asking me awkward questions,/ answers to which/ I have long forgotten" (*M* 20). If on the one end of the extreme is the wife who makes life difficult for her husband, on the other is a woman who makes his life a heaven on earth. Conjugal bliss is wonderfully captured in the poem "Absence and Essence." Even when the poet's wife is not physically present with him, he can feel her everywhere:

> on the shared bed
> made by you before you left,
> in the kitchen with dishes,
> spoons, and spices well arranged;
> and when I am out of home
> in well-ironed shirts and pants
> bearing the sweet smell of your body. (*AIO* 15)

The love shared between the poet and his wife is such that even death cannot obliterate it: "living with you has become a habit/ which may die only with my death/ Or not even with my death/ for soul survives the body" (ibid). The poem is a treat and tribute to the countless women who stay behind the scenes and work silently for the welfare of their husbands without expecting anything, except love, in return. It is this selflessness that is so unique to women in India. The poet subscribes to the view that behind every successful man is a woman. "Each Eve" is another testament of love that the poet finds for his wife. The poet feels his thirty-three years of married life are akin to "two flood-/ washed bodies clutching/ to each other for/ sheer survival, no wave/ big enough to tear us/ apart" (*AIO* 34). The poet appreciates the contribution that a woman makes as a wife, and the strong pillar of support that she proves to be.

A woman showers joy in the lives of those around her, and one of the roles in which she excels is that of a daughter. Jha believes in

the traditional Indian view of considering the daughter to be a goddess where the birth of a daughter is taken to be an auspicious occasion. The poet writes in "Dear Daughter": "First born/ she descended a Lakshmi/ down our home" (*CC* 49).

The procreative abilities of a woman are given due regard in Jha's poems. He writes, when the daughter is leaving the parents after her marriage:

> Now she is leaving us, leaving behind
> a gaping hole in our home and hearth,
> she would soon become the mother earth
> and grow her own garden, begin a new birth. (*Ibid*)

Giving birth is a central experience in the lives of most women, and by tackling this subject with sensitivity, Jha ensures that he does justice to this glorious moment in the life of women.

It is only a woman who can both enjoy and endure the pleasure and pain of giving birth. It is only she who is blessed with the ability to bring a new life into this world. In "The Birth," Jha describes the difficulty which precedes the birth of a baby: "Vomiting through day, groaning through night,/ enduring all the fret, all the fright" (*CC* 18). And the culmination of it all is the birth of a child, a marvel of Nature; and so the poet equates biological creativity with poetic creation: "Lastly life stirs off her girth,/ poetry has a difficult birth" (*Ibid*). Similarly, the poem "Mother" talks about the experiences of a mother who is "squeezed by many childbirths" and yet is happy to nourish her children to health and happiness (*MOP* 12). Kristeva's views on pregnancy are worth discussing at this point.

Pregnancy is "the splitting of the subject," the subject-in-process/ on-trial. Pregnancy is a case where identity contains alterity as a heterogeneous other without completely losing its integrity. The maternal body problematizes the very notions of identity and difference. Pregnancy, says Kristeva, is an "institutionalized psychosis": Am I me or it? The other cannot be separated from the self. The other is within the self. It is not in its place—the place of the Other. Rather, it is in the place of the subject. This inability to separate self from other is a symptom of psychosis. But pregnancy, says Kristeva, is the only place where this psychosis is socially acceptable. (Oliver 84)

Mother is someone who is associated with love, care and continuity, and if female values were to nourish the world, there would

be no more wars and violence, but only love and peace. Jha in his appreciation of the female values comes close to Kristeva's concept of herethics. Kelly Oliver says: "In Tales of Love, Kristeva uses maternity as a model for an outlaw ethics, what she calls 'herethics.' Herethics is founded on the ambiguity in pregnancy and birth between subject and object positions. It is an ethics which challenges rather than presupposes an autonomous ethical agent. Herethics sets up one's obligations to the other as obligations to the self and obligations to the species. This ethics binds the subject to the other through love and not Law. The model of ethical love is the mother's love for the child." (Oliver 84)

If pregnancy is a cause of celebration for many women, it is also a reason of misery for a few unfortunate others. Jha writes in "Night in a City" of a maid who

> hangs herself to death
> with the strings of her soiled garment;
> for her unclaimed, indiscreet womb
> has been showing off for the last few weeks. (*CC* 21)

Having children out of wedlock is taken as a social taboo, and not many women are able to bear the ordeal of living with this stigma. The image of the maid who commits suicide is a bitter comment on the patriarchal structure of our society where the name of the father is thought to be all important. Reproductive capacity of women is subservient to patriarchal interests, and a woman can enjoy the bliss of motherhood only inside the framework of patriarchy. Once she ventures, or is forced to venture, out of this zone, her life becomes unbearable.

But the mother figure is mostly depicted as venerable in Jha's poems. In "My Mother's Story," the poet talks about the story that his mother told him "of the two different trees—/ the pot-plant, protected/ in the sweet shade/ watered and fed daily without fail;/ and the tall teak tree/ standing outside/ drenched by the rain/ burnt by the sun/ and shorn by the storm" (*M* 28), influencing the poet to be strong like the teak tree. Mothers play a vital role in shaping the characters of their children, and most of the values are learnt from the mother. The poet has learnt the lesson of preferring the life of hardship but dignity to a sheltered but emasculated life from her tale.

The poet wants to underline the fact that all that is noble in a man is also a gift from woman. It is mothers who instill in men the confidence to face the challenges of the world. This vital role played by mothers is to be credited for all the important achievements of the men of integrity.

"The Two" describes the difficult choice that the poet had to make between his wife/ beloved and his mother. Both were indispensable to him and the choice was not easy to make. It was the mother who understood his dilemma and "she freed me willingly/ from her bondage" (*M* 29). Thus only the true love of mother proved to be liberating for the poet. The poet salutes this sacrificial nature of motherhood in his poems, and he knows that the love of the mother is not one that binds, but the one which frees from the bondage, if the occasion so demands. "Ma" talks about the agony of two small kids after their mother has passed away. Their sorrow is understandable "for these innocents/ have no world/ to live in without/ that two-lettered word" (*AIO* 61). Thus Jha brings out the central importance of mother in the lives of young children.

A mother is the first person that the child comes to know after its entry into the world. She is the source of security, sustenance and love for the young ones. Jha is able to fathom what the loss of a mother can mean to the children for whom the mother means the entire universe. But the poet also highlights the apathetic attitude that some women have towards their children.

In "Snapshots," he depicts the callousness of modern day mothers who leave their children in the care of under-paid maids. The maid is planning elopement and couldn't care less about the baby. The baby, who is hungry, cries itself to sleep. The irony of it all is, "motherhood is a bliss—/ is a kitty-talk tomorrow/ with a framed Madonna/ smiling in the backdrop" (*AIO* 11) Madonna, who is a symbol of all that is pure and loving, is appropriated as a fashion statement by the modern women; for them motherhood too is nothing but a social trophy. These are warning signs, and the poet by projecting this image of modern mindset is giving a cali to the return of the traditional virtues of motherhood where concern for the well-being and happiness of the child was paramount.

The poet also turns his attention to the plight of an average Indian woman. "An Indian Woman" is a satire on the Indian society where women are outwardly worshipped as goddesses, but the

ground reality for most of them is entirely different. Jha presents a poignant picture of ignored/ exploited women of India in this poem. He shows how women have to suffer in the different roles of daughter, sister, wife and mother. In "Widow's Woes," Jha talks about the ordeal of the life of a child-widow and writes: "O Goddess—Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati—/ take courage to be born a widow/ in this country of yours/ and then you'd know the difference" (*CC* 35). In "Milk or Tears!" Jha finds fault with the insensitive homes where men-folk do not share the domestic burden. As a consequence, a housewife has to drudge from early morning to late at night, resulting into simmering discontent: "They regard me a goddess of milk and multitude,/ I think me a river of flooding tears,/ banked only by my mother's platitude/ and the stigma of social fears" (*CC* 60). Jha feels that excess of anything, including self-sacrifice, is counterproductive. He sees a thin line dividing the nobility of sacrifice and the futility of it.

Arguably the most hapless among women, the prostitutes, find a prime place in Jha's poems. Jha can feel the acute misery and plight of this section of women, and has a compassionate and benevolent attitude towards them. In "Nature and Man," he speaks of "a mother of one freshly squeezed/ clutching two notes with beaming Mahatma/ stealthily rushing from a starred hotel/ to her home, before darkness/ is driven out by the peeping sun" (*M* 39). Prostitution is the only way she can afford a square meal to her family after the untimely death of her husband in a riot. "Starred hotel" indicates that her customers are the rich and famous of society who lead double lives. On the one hand, they are the ones who label a woman "fallen" while actively partaking in their disgrace. It would be apt here to quote Manoda Devi, a Calcutta prostitute of the early 20th century who writes in *Autobiography of an Educated Fallen Woman*: "I am a despised being—I live outside the pale of society. . . but my autobiography would disclose some pictures of those pseudo-honest men, those lewds that daily come in contact with us and yet occupy the highest seats of honour in our society." (43)

It is with a feeling of rage against such hypocrites of the society that Jha writes in 'My Choice,' "If I am given a choice/ I would marry a whore then/ to whore the world that has/ whored her without asking for her wish" (*M* 48). Jha's compassion for this marginalized section of society comes from the awareness that most women

take to prostitution not out of choice, but are forced into it by circumstances. Jha agrees with the views of radical feminists on prostitution. Radical feminists believe that prostitution reduces women to a piece of merchandise and that adoption of prostitution as a profession is not done of a woman's own free will. The radical feminist usually sees prostitution as an exploitative relationship in which the customer is interested only in the prostitute's services and cares a whit for her psyche. It is against this degradation of women that Jha raises his poetic protest.

Thus, the range of women that Jha has portrayed is quite complex and extensive. From a modern teenage girl to a poor prostitute, from a socialite to an overworked housewife, from a widow to a riot-victim, the picture gallery is immensely rich and varied. There is also an element of light humour in such poems that portray a nagging wife and a pestered husband. But through it all, Jha never loses respect for women, and is always acutely and obligingly aware of the vital role they play in our family and society. His heart goes to exploited women wherever they are, and their agony is always sketched in keenly felt, masterly strokes. The poet in Jha is always conscious of the first lesson of love that he learnt from his mother's milk, and this reverence for her has largely coloured his poetic and poignant portrayal of women in his three collections.

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Environmental Imagination: The Poetry of William Wordsworth and Kazuyosi Ikeda

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The concept of the natural world as a place of vital sustenance and peaceful coexistence has become an illusion since the earth threatened by the imminent environmental catastrophe. The dawn of the industrial revolution indicated for the first time that such apocalyptic events were really the result of normal human activity rather than divine nemesis. In the early years of the 19th century, the manufacturing cities of England and Japan disappeared into a thick haze of photochemical smog, and it became possible to imagine that new technologies of mass production might alter the climate and eventually destroy the Earth's ability to sustain life. The environmentalists for the first time perceived this danger and warned the world to take these dangers seriously and do what is necessary to avert them. An environmentalist philosopher Val Plumwood visualizes the natural crisis as the "massive process of biospheric degradation and the failure and permanent endangerment of many of the world's oldest and greatest fisheries, the continuing destruction of its tropical forests and the loss of much of its agricultural land and up to half its species within next thirty years" (Plumwood: 1).

Postmodernity alerted the writers to be conscious of their natural surrounding in an age of global warming and industrialization. Man's ambition for limitless enjoyment and material comforts has led him towards the exploitation of nature's treasure so indiscriminately as to reduce its capacity for self-stabilization irreparably. To make things worse, man's innate urge to conquer nature has brought him in confrontation with environment. As a consequence, the crowded islands of Britain and Japan demonstrate the fact that nature is rapidly being gobbled up by culture and as such poets have emphasized the urgency of ecological balance threatened by "an unending conflict and war between the natural eco-sphere and man made techno-sphere" (Commoner: 7). The poems of the British

Romantic poet William Wordsworth and those of contemporary Japanese poet Kazuyosi Ikeda invariably focus on nature and environment. In *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind*, Karl Kroeber vehemently argues that British Romantic poetry was "the first literature to anticipate contemporary biological conceptions and that poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and P.B. Shelley were proto-ecological in their intellectual orientation" (2). They often seek to address perennial questions concerning the relationship between mankind and the natural world which has become one of the most important terrains for the development of ecological literary criticism. Everybody seems to be concerned with the impending doom of our planetary ecosystem due to an array of man caused environmental hazards on an unprecedented scale as never before. The well-known critic Jonathan Bate voices his anxiety thus:

> Carbon dioxide produced by the burning of fossil fuels is trapping the heat of the sun, causing the planet to become warmer. Glaciers and permafrost are melting, sea levels rising, rainfall patterns changing, winds growing stronger. Meanwhile, the oceans are overfished, deserts are spreading, forests shrinking, fresh water becoming scarcer. The diversity of species upon the planet is diminishing. (2000: 24)

What is alarming is that despite widespread awareness of these shocking environmental problems no effective remedial action is in sight. Something is lacking in the deep matrix of the western culture or at the global level and this warrants change in human consciousness .The study of the poetry of these poets can be a positive step towards the solution of this global problem because, "the business of literature is to work upon consciousness" (Bate, 2000: 23). The present paper attempts to unravel the nuances of environmental phenomenon as portrayed in the poetry of Wordsworth and Ikeda and how these poets seek to warn us of environmental threats emanating from governmental, industrial, commercial and neo-colonial forces.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century, man was disappearing into money and nature into machinery. That is why Rousseau's call back to nature sounded so pertinent and was widely acclaimed by the Romantic poets. Man was indeed everywhere in chains—chains of machinery and chains of reason. Poetry of this period reveals the fact that man is no longer at home in society,

rather is alienated from the society. The most common figures and powerful literary creations are solitaries, a haunted Ancient Mariner, a self-exiled Childe Harold and a Solitary Reaper. The typical figures of Wordsworth are largely ordinary people, remote shepherds, forsaken women—all lost creatures exhibiting a peculiar strength of heart. But in spite of this, Wordsworth is particularly concerned with man and nature whereas Ikeda's preoccupation is man, nature and the glory of God's creations on this earth. Both the poets seek this in the primitive and unspoiled nature and myths. Fed up with din and bustle of society, Wordsworth is instinctively driven to nature. It is here that he seeks his freedom and liberty in the lonely places of nature. For example in "The Daffodils," the poet cherishes the eco-friendly moments:

> I wandered lonely as a cloud
> That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
> When all at once. I saw a crowd,
> A host, of golden daffodils. (187)

If Wordsworth hailed from Lake district, Kazuyosi Ikeda is a child of Japanese hills and shares with him a profound faith in imagination as a means of knowing the truth. Ikeda's attitude to nature is obviously Wordsworthian because he treats her as a perennial spirit ready to sympathise with and soothe a suffering heart. In one of his significant poems, Ikeda puts before us the healing virtue of Nature:

> The seven coloured Rainbow is so beauteous
> Sunlight gives mercy and grace very bounteous.
> Sunlight flows to the bottoms of humankind's hearts.
> And dissolves the sufferings and worries in hearts.
>
> (*Songs of the Soul*, 12)

He observes beauty and peace in nature which straightway corresponds with heart and enkindles it by removing all traces of anxiety collected there.

While comparing Wordsworth and Ikeda, it can be illustrated that the former was a pioneer in the strict sense of the word. His chief merit lies in an acute perception of the contemporary scene and the expression of a poignant reaction to it. The following observation of Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads* exhibits his prophetic vision:

> For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for an extraordinary incident which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners, the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. (Brett and Jones: 210)

Wordsworth obviously felt the dehumanizing impact of the growing mechanization of society. He could foresee the gradual manifestation of the horrible consequences of the industrial revolution. His anguish bursts in the following lines of the sonnet "The World is Too Much with Us":

> Great God! I'd rather be
> A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn:
> Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn. (259)

In the above lines, the word 'forlorn' is a key word which stands at the threshold of the contemporary world and compels the poet to go back to the primitive realm of nature. People are always busy, running after a materialistic life, which consumes their time and energy blinding them to the beautiful objects of nature. The poet discloses the horror of social, moral and ecological degradation embedded in the industrial pursuit:

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers
> Little we see in Nature that is ours;
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon! (*Ibid.*)

In this context, Bate's remark is quite apt: "Wordsworth's politics were truly green and that he is the first authentic ecological poet in English. His message has strong relevance to our own contemporary census with the depiction of the layer, the damages of acid rain, the disappearance of the tropical rainforests, the development of energy saving technology and clean engines, and the problems of industrial pollution generally (181).

Like Wordsworth's, Kazuyosi Ikeda's poetry also appeals for going back to nature for the survival of humanity. He has a deep insight into human psychology where the sad plight of man is the real cause of his tragedy. His poetry basically deals with nature and human situation. As a scientist and environmentalist, he ponders over human suffering with a sense of unusual concerns. In his book *Poems on the Heart of Creation,* he expresses his faith in humanity which will ultimately survive because of its inexhaustible voice. As a poet Ikeda differs from Wordsworth because he did not believe in the presence of any divine spirit in the objects of nature like trees, plants and flowers etc. The following speech of Ikeda unravels his firm belief in God's creation particularly man, nature and environment:

> I consider that man-made things, such as a pen, a basket and a hammer, also have their own hearts, because they are creations of men who are creations of God and so they are God's indirect creations: I also sing of the hearts of many man-made things. (Dwivedi: 120)

Coming from a developed country, Ikeda is more deeply concerned with human surroundings. He knew that technological advancement ushered in the industrial revolution and brought in its wake unprecedented material prosperity besides the evils of unfettered capitalism. The over-crowding in big cities and the consequent moral and social problems resulted in class tensions spoiling the face of nature. What Bill Mckibben observes in this context is true: "by changing the weather, we make every spot on earth man-made and artificial. We have deprived nature of its independence, and that is fatal to its meaning. Nature's independence is its meaning, without it there is nothing but us" (54). In the Poem "An Aeroplane," the poetic persona longs to soar high into the sky beyond the human existence since an inanimate object has also physical feelings. In the following lines, Ikeda criticizes scientists for inventing aeroplane whose heart is heavy being abused by men. The poet, conscious of his environment, longs for peace and harmony without 'vain sound' and 'roaring cry':

> I am an aeroplane soar high into the sky;
> I fly in the bright sunlight at will and freely.
> But as my wings are heavy, my heart is heavy.
> Listen, there is a vain sound in my roaring cry.
>
> (*Poetry on the Animate and the Inanimate*: 25)

The word ecology is derived from the Greek word '*aikos*' meaning house or dwelling place, and the poetry of Wordsworth and Ikeda clearly foreshadows the modern science of ecology in its holistic conception of the Earth as a household, a dwelling place for an interdependent biological community. In his great autobiographical poem "Prelude," Wordsworth states that his earliest memory of childhood was the sound of the river Derwent, whose murmurs "from his alder shades and rocky falls, . . . sent a voice/ That flowed along my dreams"? (I: 272). He claims that his first memories were those of sounds, a speaking forth of the river directly into the dreams of the infant, making him an engaged participant in the world that surrounds him, not merely a detached observer. On the other hand in the poem "Tintern Abbey," he describes again his return to a place on the banks of the river Wye that he first visited five years ago. His initial response is one of sheer delight in the evidently unchanged appearance of the landscape, he celebrates the endurance of wild natural beauty, even in the midst of intensive human pre-occupation. The opening lines of the poem depict a human community dwelling in harmonious co-existence with nature; the local farmsteads are green to the very door, and the local farmers have acted to preserve a remnant of the primordial ecosystem of the region by allowing their hedgerows to run wild. It is the central meditative development of the poem in which Wordsworth depicts his younger self as if, 'he were a wild beast, bounding over the mountains.' Ikeda has also formulated his ecological philosophy in the context of man and animal relationship. He imagines a small creature bee which makes our life more beautiful despite being aware of his own ephemeral life. In the poem "A Bee," the poet suggests that man should also emulate the philosophy of the bee and beautify his surroundings without disturbing the external world:

> A bee is frail insect with no human mind.
> But the shortness of his life may be in his mind.
> So he at a calyx, sucks nectar from flowers.
> And he dances together with falling flowers.
>
> (*Heart of Creation* 19)

The beautifying nature of an insect bee is contrasted with man's "meddling intellect/ Misshapes the beauteous forms of Nature." Unlike Wordsworth, Ikeda has used here the Japanese "Sitigotyo" (seven and five syllable metre) quatrains where each and every word

portrays unique beauty, precision and clarity. The last two lines of the stanza contain alliterations which underline the poetic art of Ikeda while contributing to his sense of rootedness in a particular landscape.

Both Wordsworth and Ikeda wrote poetry to propagate natural peace and prosperity on this planet. Unlike Wordsworth, Ikeda deliberately believes that all things in nature, animate or inanimate are created by God with a heart which has feelings like human beings. In his poetic piece titled "Three subjects poem," he states the fact that inanimate objects have also a living sign and soul. The following lines of the poem "A Stone on the Road" show the helplessness of a stone which is lying on the road unnoticed by man. But the pretty flowers provide shadow and shelter in a peaceful atmosphere:

> I am a stone on the road, but I do have life.
> A traveller, ignorant of a stone's dear life,
> Kicks me, then I roll lightly with unwounded pride
> And rest by pretty flowers on the calm roadside. (*Ibid.*, 45)

While narrating the relation between man and nature, Wordsworth also feels pity and sympathy for man who has made his life worst living in a scientific surrounding beyond nature. The poet wonders how the madness of man to acquire all-round development has brought evils of unfettered capitalism and overcrowded industrial cities. As a consequence, social problems arise like co-existence of poverty and wealth, class tensions and damage to the beauty of nature. He warns us against the continuous degradation of the environment in particular by the interference of human activities. Wordsworth's poetry particularly "Lines Written in Early Spring," manifests, as K. R. Johnston observes "the same split or contrast between praise of natural beauty and expressions of sympathy for the poor" (179). The following is an apt instance of poet's anxiety about the lot of man alienated from natural eco-sphere:

> To her fair works did Nature link
> The human soul that through me ran;
> And much it grieved my heart to think
> What man has made of man. (482)

However, it is worthwhile to infer that being aware of the environmental hazards, both the poets aspire for natural wilderness for the growth and survival of humanity. Their poems succinctly reveal

their ecological speculations which they might forethink to change the vulgar space of modernity into a holy space of wilderness. Their fascination for nature is to be understood in a broad perspective which brings with it a sense of loss and desire to recover that time of unalienated life when man was in symphony with nature. In his poem "Japan," Ikeda as an optimistic poet imagines that our world should be evergreen and in this way can make our earthly life full of bliss and ecstasy transcending the prejudices of human life. From an ecological point of view, the following poetic extract reminds the reader of the dependence of all living things on the light of the sun and reveals the glory of natural beauty, sustenance and bliss which is essential for the entire universe:

> O Japan! people's hearts are pure, warm, tender.
> The fields and mountains are full of rays beautiful
> Spring and autumn are pregnant with subtle flavour.
> May the dear, lovely Isles be forever blissful?
>
> (*Poems on Love and Peace* 34)

Wordsworth like Ikeda also delineates the picture of the early morning in the poem "Upon Westminister Bridge" where the great beauty of the London city is marvellous. He imagines an environment where the towers, domes and temples stand glittering under the smokeless sky. Such a sort of ecological speculation is experienced in the following lines:

> This City now doth like a garment wear
> The beauty of the morning: silent bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky,
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air. (269)

Thus Wordsworth and Ikeda share a perception of the natural world as a dynamic ecosystem and a passionate commitment to the preservation of wild creatures and serenity of nature. Fed up with 'anthropocentric' problems, both turned their back to the realm of primitive nature in their own ways. The serenity that they derived from natural objects was not merely a response to the striking patterns in the natural order—the beauteous forms of nature. For them, the objects of nature were a constant source of enrichment of their imagination and moral being. The crucial thing, however, was their characteristic belief that man and nature were inter-dependent. So the interde-

pendence is sought to be explained through a mediacy of an all pervasive, animating, informing principle—the spirit. This is the supreme achievement of their myth-making imagination which makes their view of man and nature organic and hence any disregard to the sanctity of nature and its funotioning may lead to colossal loss in the relationship which would jeopardize the forward movement of humanity.

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Multicultural Consciousness in Derek Walcott's Poetry

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Caribbean society has an imperial history of enslavement, forced transportation of human beings, extinction of indigenous peoples, piracy, rape and territorial appropriation. The Caribbeans have a fascination for dangerous pleasures in their post-colonial existentiality. The Caribbean society witnesses a shared feeling of common language, religious belief and a cultural hybridity. The Caribbeans in spite of their anthropological distinctiveness, ethnic diversity and socio-economic existentiality have a homogeneity in their tastes, ideas and desires. Derek Walcott, like other Caribbean writers, C.L.R. James, Aime Cesaire, George Lamming, Leopold Senghor, Edward Kamau Braithwaite, Jamaica Kincaid and Michelle Cliff, has analysed his history in the contemporary reality with a wide range of issues relating to language, ethnicity and religious practices. It is marked that he is caught between and betwixt the western constructs of African past and African consolidation of American future. The geographical transferability of the Africans to the Caribbean island nations, their affinities for the archipelagos and intercultural relations reveal the basis of Caribbean multiculturality.

Derek Walcott projects an intense multicultural consciousness and quest for identity in his poetry under the influence of dominant European imperial culture. His poetry unravels pure regional Caribbean themes—indigenous population, African slave population, racism and discrimination as the historical themes. Walcott's poetic works focus on his natural observation of his native paradise, its inspirational locations, psychology and idiosyncrasies of the people, their real life and relationship with its picturesque setting.

Multiculturalism and quest for identity are interrelated in Walcott's poetry. Walcott's West Indian identity is nostalgically connected to African past and is ideologically connotated with the territorial integrity of the islands from Florida to Venezuela where the

Greater Antilles comprises Leeward and Windward islands, Trinidad, Tobago and Barbados; and the Netherlands Antilles comprises Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. In West Indian centrality identity raises complex questions on islands' cultural matrix. 'Identity' remains one of the most urgent as well as hotly disputed topics in Caribbean literary and cultural studies. West Indian society is marked with the uniqueness of distinctive cultures, ethnicity, class, gender and sexual preference, social difference, relative cohabitation, micro-nationalism, ideas of sentimental primitivism, re-ethnification, black Atlantic culture, history, tradition, outside influence, nostalgia, creolity and cultural inversions.

Caribbean islands are predominantly descended by the African population and they as a community have attachment to their homeland for sustaining ancestral ties. These Africans in their dispersal still retain conscious attachment to their tradition, customs, values, beliefs and languages in their Caribbean presence. Of course Walcott's Caribbean identity is marked with his willingness to admit and avoidance to surrender. His reclaiming of identity is both a revolt and a compromise, fundamentally 'arbitrary' and normally 'conventional' biologically distinct and realistically positivist. His theory of identity in poetry is historically constituted, socially categorized and multiculturally interpreted. His assertion of identity has racial authenticity and cultural hybridity. Walcott's quest for identity establishes his self-segregation in white separatism and cultural plurality. His search for self in a marginalized and oppressed status is an outcome of social subordination of the blacks. Most of his poetic works are on historical subjects and linguistic constitutions. They appear as the evidence of his experience. Quest for identity is not a politics in his cultural predicament but a philosophy in his poetic scholarship for the normalization of heterogeneity among different social categories.

Walcott projects Caribbean region as a place of tensions for racism, class prejudices, sexism and colonialist attitudes. Many European powers culturally control/ eliminate his moral sensitivity and conceptual horizons. In his poetic vision Walcott examines the history of the archipelagos and popularizes the native myths and folklores. Observing the incursion of imperialists' new cultures he

imagines the experience of marginalized, dispossessed and subjugated others. As a patriotic poet of the region he imagines how

> The emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of his skin like open sore which flinches from the caustic agent; and the psyche shrinks back, obliterates itself and finds outlet in muscular demonstrations which have caused certain wise men to say the natives is a historical type (Fanon 44).

Walcott as a conscious writer and conscientious cultural leader of his time revolts against any kind of cultural imperialism in his poetry. He revolts as an 'angry black man' against the dominant cultures of European imperialists, but attempts much to impoverish his black identity through Anglo-African parental geo-genetic links. He observes how the dominant culture greatly affects the peculiar habits and personalities of Caribbean natives. He calls it the European cultural transplantation upon the Caribbean identity. In his complex relationship with the African past, Caribbean present and American future he imagines how "no people has been spared the cross-cultural process" (Glissant 138) and his West Indian physiognomy is marked though "Adamic, not Satanic" (Briner 11).

In the Caribbean history of conquest and annihilation by the imperialists, a cross-culturality is marked in the heterogeneous societies. James Clifford remarks very insightfully on the syncretic cultures of his urban archipelago, "We are all Caribbeans now in our urban archipelagos" (173). This suggests his creole model of a homogenizing process of language and culture to minimize class and ethnic complexities. Similarly in Walcott's imagination:

> Creole has traditionally been used to distinguish that which is created in the colonies which is neither native nor derives directly from the culture of origin. It is used to describe both someone born in the colonies and some new cultural or linguistic forms . . . that the oppressed and the exploited . . . managed to create unprecedented cultural transformations from a series of dialectical relations that united oppressor and oppressed. (Dash 46-47)

In his poetry there are frequent references to plantation slavery and later schemes of indentureship. He projects how the archipelagos have undergone a total repopulation for the purpose of working in the plantations and how the natives are exterminated by the settler colonies. Walcott presents its pictorial sociology when the colo-

nizer's dominant culture was inching its place. In many of his poems he presents the process of hybridization and creolization.

Multiculturalism in Caribbean plurality has been demonstrated in different languages, races, types, colours, mentalities. For Walcott Caribbean multiculturalism is an interconnectedness between African cultural past and reconstruction of social, psychological and economic subject positions in the Caribbean present. In Walcott's poetry multiculturalism is an analytical construct of different cultural practices of Caribbean, African, European, Asian and Levantine elements. The Caribbean culture is neither ossified nor sterile, rather each island's cultural map is influenced and designed after their political independence and with the postcolonial challenges. The creolity of Caribbean society has also a blending of internationalism and longing for home. He focuses on West Indian language and culture which remain unchanged in their displacement even after centuries.

Walcott's feeling of participation in several cultural groups or traditions is marked with his three kinds of loyalties—to the Caribbean land and lives, English language, and his African origin. In his poetic practice he has analysed the contending and liberating forms of cultural identity. His poetic works show his acceptance of African origin from his mother, a prominent social worker and a producer of dramatics of St. Lucia; and Western possibilities from his English father Warwick Walcott. For him 'origin' and 'birth' are separate things. While the former refers to Africa, the later refers to his West Indian birth. In entirety he owns both but fails to discard neither in his creative expressions. His attachment to the ancestral homeland varies considerably in new environment where he has wedded to ancestral customs, traditions, languages, and religions.

In Caribbean poetry scribal and oral traditions coexist. Walcott has his outburst of national feelings of the islands, philosophy of the region, and sweeping social changes. For Walcott multicultural consciousness is a treble impulse of his African origin; West Indian birth and upbringing; and American stay while teaching English at Boston University. His poetic works express his intellectual toughness in "historic, geographic, and cultural experience" (Rehman 10). St. Lucia is the Caribbean paradise for Walcott where he enjoys the 'Heredity of cruelty everywhere.' He demonstrates the effect of "the

dominant culture of European imperialists" in his "vision of revenge" (Walcott 1972: 7). In his poetry he has the transformative power of imagination from the stasis of his Wolof, Igbo and Yoruba cultures in pan-Africanism. His poetry is also rooted in West-Indian societies where he is accustomed to a 'rhetorical improvisation.' As an 'elemental man' and like other islanders he develops his self-critical faculties without mutilating his past but mutualising his hybridized present in the face of hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, storms at sea, and strange creatures in the deep sea. Walcott's African past helps him to "carry the weight of his African experience" and to "create the conscience of his race." Romanticizing the islands' peculiarities in Joycean brilliance he finds how

> The islands had their drums, the flutes, the brave brass rhythms which celebrated the life under "the blue sky that blessed the morning with fire"; the hills and their waterfalls, the bananas and the sugarcane, the fish in the water, the parrot on the tree (Narasimhaiah 188).

In Caribbean cultural syncretism he realizes 'unchanging cultures' of Africa. In his poetry he reconstructs the beautiful contours of St. Lucia with a vision of his own version of Eden for his Adamic men.

Walcott's cultural plurality has links to the African, Afro-American, European and the Pacific world centres. This appears as recurrent themes and projects some psychological truth that lies in African life and in the oceanic layers of West Indian cultures. In his burdened conscience and fragmented self he has a tortured existence in his obsession with whiteness and romanticizing the blackness. His creative consciousness in poetry is haunted by the feeling and indulgence of self-abuse, self-denial and self-annihilation on the one hand and psychological survival on the other. In the serene cultural wholeness of Caribbean society multiculturalism provides a therapeutic effect to his obsession in displacement, wandering and incompleteness.

Walcott's major poetic works include *In a Green Night* (1962), *The Castaway* (1965), *The Gulf and Other Poems* (1969), *Another Life* (1973), *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979), *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981) and *Omeros* (1990). His earliest poems published *In a Green Night* express his profound, rhapsodic reverie upon his remote birthplace—its people, its landscape, and its history. The poems express his affinities between Walcott's real and imagined

worlds which he juxtaposes with Caribbean history of transmigration and slavery. The majority of his poems form a long and detailed meditation on sea, sand, the mangroves and the fish of the islands. The line, 'The sound of water gnawing at bright stone' in the poem, "Brise Marine" and similar lines in "As John to Patmos" project the struggle of different categories of people. This also resembles the lines like 'Albion too was one/ A colony like ours' in his poem, "Ruins of a Great House." The poems in *The Castaway and Other Poems* (1965) present Walcott's drawing of inspiration from Caribbean settings in Port of Spain, Trinidad, Castries and St. Lucia. Though St. Lucia is the birthplace and working place for him for sometime, the poorer inhabitants of Port of Spain have become the matters of sharp expression in most of his poems in the volume. "Laventille," one of the important poems in the volume named after one of Port of Spain's slums, presents the reality in cityspaces "Where lank electric/ lines and tension cables linked its raw brick/ hovels like a complex feud."

Another Life, an epic length poem like *Omeros*, is based on Walcott's poignant observation of the people who contemplate due to islands' 'overdevelopment.' His observations of the natural world, human psychology, and idiosyncratic characters express his epic mode to develop more generalized human typologies with the blending of larger and universal themes. Monsieur August Manoir, the main character in the poem becomes the emblem of a greedy, mean-spirited, decadent merchant of 'the coconut lances of the inlet.' Walcott writes, 'His hands still smelled of fish, of his beginnings,/ hands that he'd ringed with gold, to hide their smell,/ sometimes he'd hold them out,/ puckered with lotions, powdered, to his wife,/ a peasant's hands, a butcher's/ their acrid odour of saltfish and lard.' The other characters in the poem, Gregorias and Anna are based on Walcott's real-life relationship with a young painter friend who epitomizes his youthful friendship and romantic love. Walcott's preoccupation with 'nothing' in *Another Life* expresses his vacuity with the concept of 'unhistoricity.' 'Nothing' is at once a comment on traditional views and a search for identity based on self-knowledge and real knowledge of history, which in John Figueroa's view "rejects acceptance of doctrinaire concepts" (*Revista/ Review of Interamericana*). The poem shows that "Walcott's con-

frontation with the world results in despair but eventually leads to a renewal which celebrates the power of art and language" (*Ariel*).

The history of Caribbean blacks is largely unwritten but Walcott in his postcolonial vantage point has attempted to reconfigurate and to reprioritize Caribbean history. In his collection, *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979) he promulgates frequently the notion of progress which is quite hard to discern within the backwash of present-day colonial vacuums. His poem "The Schooner Flight" presents Walcott's persona, Shabine "who knows who his grandfather is, much less his name?" and goes on to lament "progress leaving all we small islands behind/ . . . progress is history's dirty joke." In his poem "The Star Apple Kingdom" he has noted the shortcomings of recent political history within the Caribbean community and its aborted attempts to form a Caribbean federation in the postcolonial era. This gives a vivid account of how 'Caribbean was cut up by seven prime ministers' 'with only one bank account' 'for the Caribbean Economic Community.'

The Fortunate Traveller (1981) illustrates Walcott as a man "divided to the vein" and "caught between dusk and darkness," "between fury and peace," and "a kind of split writer." Picaro is the persona with whom the poet has his conscious relation to history and sketches his artistic and psychological involvement to express dual, ambiguous and paradoxical elements in the complex personality of the traveller himself. His Picaro is the protagonist moving from the author to the traveller. He is a prototype of the picaresque novel with slight modification of Thomas Nashe's prose work *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1954). Walcott presents him with duality, adventure, erudition, pretentious manners and atrocities. He introduces us to Ovid, Dante and to a catalogue of European satirists like Juvenal, Martial, Pope, Dryden, Swift and Byron. The journey of the protagonist provides an unrelenting satire on the evils of the old. It presents the protagonist's progress as a pilgrim through the modern world of America and Europe. Among other things he presents racial memories of the past, experiences of the present and converging of many divergent elements of victim and victimizer, conquered and conqueror, native dweller and foreign intruder. Walcott as a literary pilgrim responds to his deep racial memory in his own creative impulses. Dealing with the tensions and ambiguities of the trav-

eller between attitude and behaviour, the poet constructs his autobiography with his fictional protagonist.

The three-part sequence of the poem, North-South-North, accentuates the cruel forces of memory and tortured convergence of divergent elements, contrasting the social realities of the black-white dichotomies as reflected in symbols, myths and geographical landmarks. Walcott brings together the concrete and abstract, biographical and historical, spiritual, the social and psychological, the linear and cyclical, and the this-worldly and apocalyptic in the convergence of his Caribbean, Afro-American and European realities. The first section introduces us the territorial environment encountered by the traveller, that is the New England's coastal cities of America. In the persona 'I' he expresses his ironic doubleness of black and white that provides distinguishing features for the speaker. The speaker compounds the difficulties in a strangely unfamiliar cultural environments of Caribbea, America, Greece, Africa and the Middle East. He intensely confesses his inner securities through images and ideas. The Middle Section is marked with satire that rooted in the artistic psyche of Walcott as a 'divided child' and 'cultural schizophrenic.' Here Walcott believes in the collapse of time in travellers' sense of disorientation. The third and final section explores a cruel environment that surrounds a painful but profitable pilgrimage to his place for renewed creativity, self enactment and self-discovery. The fortunate traveller's quest however comes to a powerful disillusioning conclusion in the title piece, "The Fortunate Traveller."

At every stage of Caribbean history Walcott's stream of memory bifurcates in backward and forward movements. The concluding piece of the last section of *The Fortunate Traveller*, "The Season of Phantasmal Peace" projects a dramatic pilgrimage of the traveller who faces the colliding questions about his apocalyptic future in his environment. Walcott visualizes the cultural predicaments of his traveller as a message-bearer of the millennium and imagines with his return:

> The return to the islands is further marked by a tormented ambivalence as he becomes another Marlow who has peered into the heart of darkness. But unlike Marlow's European capital city of Brussels, the Car-

> ibbean setting is the agricultural peasant world of the Africa Kurtz had exploited. (Wyke 221)

But his fortunate traveller is the noblest one trapped in Walcott's metaphysical vision of twilight and darkness. His protagonist is the noblest traveller with a sacred urge "to record the anguish of his race" (Walcott 1981: 5).

Walcott's *Omeros* is a spiritual thesis based on the epical hypothesis of *Odyssey*. It is a modern verse epic, places Walcott's birthplace, St. Lucia at the centre of his epic cosmos. This sprawling poem covers seven books consisting of sixty-four chapters, twenty five characters, and roughly eight thousand lines. The poem is an attempt to provide strength and comfort to the local islanders through his epic heroes, magnifying their conflicts into epic battles, visiting the exotic shores of Africa, North America, and Europe on Odyssean journeys. In his epic imagination Walcott merges a profound, rhapsodic reverie upon his remote birthplace—its people, its landscape and its history with the central and classical tradition of Western civilization. This poetic project reveals Walcott's intercultural 'meld' flawlessly without any trace of artificiality or pretensions. In the fragmented presentations he encourages the Herculean ambition of his protagonist by embedding Colombian wanderlust through the exotic images. Through Homeric parallels he attempts to recreate the authenticity of Caribbean culture. Walcott's conceptual structure and developing sense of beauty lie in a profound network of cross-fertilization of his dialect and sustaining poetic sensibility.

In the 'mythic method' of *Omeros* Walcott establishes his commentary on the life and language of Caribbean people and their village life. He develops an idea on the island of St. Lucia, where he grew up and his gratitude lies with its culture. Achilles and Philoctete, the two fishermen occupy the epical dimensions in the foreground of the narrative. Walcott on the other hand sets up an obvious parallel between his characters and their Homeric equivalent in Joycean technique. As Machaon heals Philoctete's wound in the *Odyssey*, Ma Kilman heals Philoctete's ulcerous wound in *Omeros*. His Ma Kilman is presented as a typical St. Lucian, larger than a life persona. The poet matches her in mythic proportion who indulges her animistic belief through pilgrimages into the rain forest to seek out natural remedies. Signifying the island's history he focuses on

colonialist-colonized relations that condition his realization, 'Heredity of cruelty everywhere.'

Omeros, Walcott's seminal work, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1992 expresses his painful and acute awareness of Caribbean history. In the resonance of Homeric story Walcott turns the original story into an account as a textual rebirth for both male and female. In the new story he draws white Helen who died long ago and redraws the postwar Troy in the West Indies. His Helen is a New Antillean who deviates from the original matrix symbolizing and personifying the island itself. Though Helen legend has numerous interpretations in various cultures, the Helen theme is multifariously present in Caribbean literature and folklores. Walcott's mythic story is different from Homeric story. In *Omeros* Helen is no longer abducted by Priam nor exiled in Troy, rather the poet narrates her growth as a woman after war. Changing the original story in which the male captor victimizes his female captive in a seduction, Walcott converses seduction of the male by the female. Disentangling himself from Homer's intellectual web Walcott opts for a Caribbean identity in its cultural subordination to the West.

In his reminiscence Walcott apparently links the plot with Homer and Shakespeare and identifies his own with Caliban's in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. If in Shakespearean context storm serves as a catalyst, in Walcott's multicultural matrix it serves the purpose. In his attempt to delve into the history since the arrival of Columbus in 1492 he expresses his 'Adamic' notion of Caliban as a symbol of Caribbean people in their socio-political existentiality who are taught the language by colonial Prosperos not for their liberation but for self-deceit. He imagines the political and cultural conscious Caribbean woman who plays the pivotal role in the creation and procreation of a new and promising Helen, "Carrying Hector's child." Now the island is no more a man's land to muster creativity and wisdom; and the divine poet Omeros sings the complex problems of Caliban-like characters who view the female creative force that propagates, procreates and builds upon her own mental capabilities, without man's or god's intervention. He rewrites the myth: "Adam had an idea/ He and the snake would share. The loss of Eden for a profit. So both made the New World. And it looked good." (*C.P.* 301). He establishes the West Indian identity through

his maternal roots which he deliberately and unconditionally surrenders to Helen: the mother figure of Africa, the earth goddess of Greece, the Nereid of the 'other' archipelago. He expresses his concern for his characters who have resigned to the dominant culture and struggle to strengthen their liberating sense. Sidney Buorris rightly remarks:

> Now and again, uneasy truces are worked out in Walcott's poem between the native and inhabitants of the island and the governing class, but these are truces whose terms have historically misrepresented the magnificent biographies of islanders like Achilles, Philoctete, and Helen. Recording the evidence to correct such misrepresentation is one of the most fundamental purposes of Omeros, and in this endeavour Walcott has succeeded widely, providing for his religion a deeply assimilative work that immediately becomes essential to further assessments of the Caribbean literary tradition. (267)

The poem is Walcott's mythopoeic gift that conveys the intellectual, spiritual and physical powers of 'real' woman. Walcott's new woman teaches her 'Caliban' the way of belonging to a new world. He emphasizes that the Caribbean can now be recognized as a locus of treasure in the worst aspect of imperial history.

Walcott's multiculturalism projects his moral crusade for the Hellenic culture of the Caribbean islands that defines his 'universal historic vision' and 'reciprocal relativism.' If Walcott's poetic works convey the meaning for 'many cultures coexisting in dialogue'; he deserves to be one of our greatest cultural leaders. Dealing with multicultural elements from the treasure houses of English-French-Caribbean-Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman and European cultures he enriches his cultural philosophy in Caribbean paradigm. In most of his celebrated poems he has prognosticated the predicament of cultural schizophrenia. For Walcott multiculturality is an advanced model of identity on the principle of facing the world 'with black skins and blue eyes.' His poems have an acute and painful awareness for Caribbean patriotic slogans, national anthems and glorious official histories. His awareness of history remains Quixotic for ever. The study of his poetic works provides long-cherished myths, chronicles of oppression, racism, genocide, human difference, and interrelationships as model for multiculturalism. It can be

said that his poetry recharges the living voice and lofty cultural moods of Caribbean people.

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Partition in Indo-Pak Fiction

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In literature the depiction of demonic forces based on political facts demands a broad perspective and objective narrative mode of expression. Narrating partition with facts of dislocation, large massacre, physical rupture, terror and carnage need a different aesthetics to expose grave situations and events that make people groan and die. The strategy of narrative discourses retains the art of dexterous use of facts for adequate presentation. The reconstruction of actual experience is possible if the writer is able to crystallize the feelings of anguish and rage into a clear and definite artistic form.

There are novels, poems, films and short stories based on partition. They are bald narratives of a great human tragedy in which fourteen million people were dislocated and one million died. The literature of partition presents horrid images of raped women, orphaned children, blood-thirsty mobs and burning villages. Most of the fictional works written by Indo-Pak writers project partition with distinct motif and point of view. Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Attia Hossain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Mehr Masroor's *Shadows of Time* (1987) and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) belong to the genre of partition novel.

The Indian writers present Indian perception of the partition and writers from Pakistan project the Pakistani version of the great upheaval. In addition to these novels, written in different languages, we find a number of works based on the subject of partition. Intizar Hussain's *Basti*, Joginder Paul's *Khwabro*, Abdullah Hussein's *Udas Naslein*, Qurratulain Hyder's *Aag Ka Darya* and Kamleshwar's *Kitane Pakistan*, manifest feelings of religious and communal disharmony. There are films like *Garam Hawa*, *Tamas* and *Arth* that show the holocaust; but none of these works is a "conscience teaser." Partition had the largest migration in our history and the novels written about partition lacking in proper aestheticism, appear as mere testimonials of stirring facts of history.

The two novels of partition, *Ice Candy Man by* Bapsi Sidhwa and *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh, need to be examined in the context of ideas, art, and their strength and weaknesses. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* is the prism of Parsi sensitivity and has a feminist text dealing with a female protagonist. *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh is primarily a male discourse that presents men in command and their world. The two novelists have the common theme; but they depict the experience of trauma with different strategies, patterns and modes of expression.

Though both the writers have different narrative techniques, they have one common factor: their novels have a political strand and they deal with calamities of partition that divided friends, relatives, communities, groups and two neighboring countries.

Bapsi Sidhwa was born in Karachi in 1939, was brought up and educated at Lahore, graduated from Lahore's Kinnaird College for Women. At the age of nineteen she married a businessman from Bombay; the marriage did not last long as her husband died. She remarried Noshirwan. She led a typical social life in Lahore. In her childhood, she suffered from polio. She had a grim childhood like Emily and Charlotte Bronte, who, later on, inspired her to be a writer. Her loneliness left a great impact on her creativity. Charles Dickens, V.S. Naipaul and Leo Tolstoy shaped her art of writing. Now she is Pakistan's finest novelist, writing in English, while Ahmed Ali and Zulfikar Ghose are other significant Pakistani writers. Many Urdu poets like Mirza Ghalib, Allama Iqbal, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Zehra Nigar and Kishwar Naheed greatly influenced and sharpened her sensibility. She knows many languages—English, Urdu, Gujarati and Punjabi: but she has written only in English. Her choice of English is aptly explained by her:

> It is a language of the world now. And it is a means of communication between various nationalities and the most immediate tool at hand. So I use it without any inhibitions or problems, as far as I'm concerned.[2]

Before we examine her novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, it is necessary to know her views about her writing published in a note *Why Do I Write*, in which she describes her childhood, magazines, books and authors read by her, and her associations and compulsions. She posits her "Larger concerns" in her writing that engage her compassion and sense of justice. She remarks:

> And not content merely to interpret human relationships or the cosmos, the novelist also passes judgement, makes statements about her beliefs, and imposes on the unwary reader, through dramatization of the subject, his or her own bias.
>
> In *Ice-Candy-Man* I stressed a central concern—the evil in the name of religion by politicians, and located the ordinariness of the people who so mercilessly preyed on the victims of partition.[3]

Ice-Candy-Man (1988) is Sidhwa's third novel. In an interview given to David Montenegro, she confessed that her work was a politically motivated novel and the main motivation grew out of her reading of "a good deal of literature on partition," written by British and Indian authors. Many scholar-critics of Sidhwa find her a non-partisan writer, because she is a Parsi and does not belong to either of the affected community. She presents an objective rendition of traumatic experience of partition. Through her novel, Sidhwa tries to give a voice to the people of Pakistan; she feels that Pakistan's version of partition was always mis-represented by British and Indian writers, who always tried to dehumanize Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Sidhwa, through many books came to know that Muslims suffered at the hands of Sikhs, manipulated by Nehru and Gandhi. She reacts to literature that presents Jinnah as a villain and Gandhi as a saint. She tries to correct the very grievous wrong done to Jinnah and Pakistan. In her novel, she tries to humanize Gandhi through her satirical depictions of his character. In the novel, the main narrator remarks about Gandhi, "He's a politician yaar—it's his business to suit his tongue to the moment."[4] Moreover, the child narrator in *Ice-Candy-Man* also makes a very funny observation about Gandhi as "an improbable mixture of a demon and a clown."

Partition caused loss of families, home and cultural values and innocent people suffered greatly before and after partition. The present generation in India and Pakistan does not know the cost of independence. We Indians celebrate Independence Day as a moment of victory and people of Pakistan feel satisfied with the idea of a "homeland." The narrative discourses of Sidhwa and Khushwant Singh can be related to the historicity found in distinct views of Jawahar Lal Nehru and Mohammad Ali Jinnah expressed on 'Independence-days' of their nations:

> Long time ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but

> very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will wake to life and freedom.
>
> Jawaharlal Nehru Midnight 14/ 15 Aug 1947 Delhi

> It is with the feelings of greatest happiness that I send you my greeting. It marks the fulfillment of the destiny of the Muslim nation, which has great sacrifices in the past few years to have its own homeland.
>
> Mohammad Ali Jinnah 15 Aug 1947, Karachi

The two speeches cited above have political overtones but the views of Jinnah and Nehru may help writers to form a particular point of view in a novel or in a work of art.

Sidhwa's, *Ice-Candy-Man* is a politically motivated novel based on partition. The partition caused a great loss of family, home, culture and exile. Men experienced genital mutilation, and women were subjected to rape. Partition led to the largest migration in history. The horror and psychology of enormous human suffering in Sidhwa's novel is presented by a child narrator. In the context of her narrative art, the novel should be evaluated in the light of her note, *Why Do I Write*, where she dramatises the episode and events, suffering and agony and her own bias; and she tries to pass her judgement aiming at the correction of critical and contrary views of partition. The novel is objective in its treatment because the story is narrated through the observation of a small child. The novel is full of autobiographical details. Sidhwa is a Parsi, she in her childhood, suffered from polio and was looked after by her own Ayah. Lenny does represent Sidhwa's childhood. Sidhwa, in her novel, blends two narratives together: objective narrative exposes real suffering and subjective rendering is impressionistic. She also uses a feminine style of depiction, which is suggestive but less effective. There are critics and scholars who examine Sidhwa's novel as the prism of Parsi sensitivity. But Lenny, the narrator in *Ice-Candy-Man*, musing about the absurdity of partition, remarks: "I am Pakistani. In a snap. Just like that." (4) Her Pakistani perspective is evident; she explains her background as the novel is rooted in a historical-political consciousness and it highlights events of Partition that affected people and society in Pakistan. The novel, therefore, seems to be a political novel and Sidhwa re-tells the events of partition from a Pakistani perceptive.

Notwithstanding, the novel is interesting for its characterization, developing narrative technique and the child's point of view. The

focal point in the novel is represented by a Parsi lame girl. Sidhwa tells the story of horror and murder through the perspective of this child. The use of a girl-child as the narrator is significant. Lenny tells the sad story of her Hindu Ayah. As the story begins Ayah is surrounded by her admirers who are Hindus, and Muslims. As partition nears Hindus leave Lahore. She is abducted by her own admirer and his gang. She becomes Mumtaj and is finally rescued by the Godmother. Through Lenny's observation Sidhwa depicts the religious differences exploited by politicians on the eve of partition. In the novel she describes:

> It is sudden, one day everybody is themselves and the next day they are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians. People shrink, dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer my all-encompassing Ayah—She is also a token, a Hindu. (94)

During partition things became violent. Houses were burnt. Lenny narrates the madness of Sikhs, "their wild long hair and beards, Rampant, large fevered eyes glowing in fanatic faces . . . roaring slogans, holding curved swords." Lenny further presents a hysteric picture of the mob: 'too many sightless eyes, deaf ears, mindless brains and tones of entwined entrails." Sidhwa also describes the brutal killings of Muslims by Sikhs in East Punjab; Sikhs, Sidhwa thinks, were organized and manipulated by Indian politicians. Pir Pindo, a small village, becomes a witness to the destruction of Muslims. The killing of villagers is narrated through another character Ranna: "Ranna saw his uncle beheaded. . . . The Sikhs were among them like hairy vengeful demons. . . . Ranna hears women sobbing, shrieking and crying. You'll kill me! Hai Allah. . . . Y'all will kill me." (201-2)

The novel, in its beginning also shows the non-committal attitude of Parsi community. Parsis assembled for Jashan Prayer, were unable to decide—they should stand with which community? The President of Parsi community warned his fellowmen: "If we are struck with Hindus, they'll swipe our business from under our noses and sell our grandfathers in the bargain, if we are struck with the Muslims, they'll convert us by the sword." (37)

Towards Parsi community, Lenny sets a neutral tone. But in the novel, nightmares of Lenny are of great symbolic significance. The first nightmare is of a Nazi-Soldier who comes to her, to get her on his motorcycle; second nightmare presents men in uniform cutting

the arm and leg of a child; and the third nightmare posits the picture of a lion. These nightmares explicate destruction, fear, phobia and communal disharmony. Lenny, as the novel unfolds, moves from the small world to a large circle, of violence and suffering. The feminine beauty of Ayah could not overcome religious intolerance. Lenny, the narrator, narrates the history of upheavals from early nineteen forties to the day of partition; it was an outcome of fundamentalism and hardened communal attitudes. Another picture of destruction of a small town surfaces in this novel when Shalmi is destroyed by explosions. "Skyline of the old city ablaze and people spattering each other with blood." The roaring lion in the zoo, reminds the narrator of slogans of "Satsri Akal, Pakistan Murdabad," and the burning of houses, venomous hatreds of Muslims against Hindus and brutal killings of Muslims by Sikhs, that presents a grim reality of partition. The fear and timidity of life is presented through Lenny's doll whose legs are separated and the doll is turned upside down.

The novel, though politically motivated is also a work of art; it exposes the concept of a great evil. It is a good blending of realism and autobiographical form. Sidhwa uses the organic from of the structure, because it lends a good shape and helps the writer articulate her point of view. A novel that deals with events and issues, and presents a great deal of characters, becomes an extended narrative. But Bapsi Sidhwa fails to present a subtle exploration of events. She only presents a kind of truth-telling history; in portrayal and narrative she becomes pedantic. The use of chronology is always factual and, if it is used mechanically, it becomes a mere documentation of facts and life. Sidhwa's expression of despair and hopelessness to some extent belongs to savage irony that suggests an existence without hope, warmth and humaneness. The point of view is a significant concern of the novelist. Lenny is a kind of intrusive narrator; she observes, comments and reports the views of the novelist who has a very narrow point of view. She is not a self-conscious narrator and does not take us into confidence about issues and events posited by her. Sidhwa, in her novel, uses indirect satire. She, through Lenny, satirizes Mahatma Gandhi and tries to make him ridiculous. The novel *Ice-Candy-Man* distills love-hate relationship of the Hindus and Muslims. The narrative technique looks very odd. Lenny is a child but she possesses adult mind in her observation of

our suffering. Child and adult Lenny become one. This blending does not produce artistic effects. Nonetheless the plot in the novel is designed to achieve tragic effects and Lenny is the protagonist who is pitted against antagonists like fundamentalism, religious frenzy and mindless violence.

Train to Pakistan is another significant novel based on partition written by Khushwant Singh with Indian perspective. It is one of the finest novels of post-world war II; it contains a well-thought structure. The novelist uses an absorbing narrative and naturalistic mode of expression. Khushwant Singh was born at Hadali in west Punjab (now in Pakistan). In early years of his life, he studied at Modern School and Stephen College at Delhi and Government College, Lahore. He studied law at King's College, London. He practised as a lawyer and taught Hindu law at Lahore. His novel *Train to Pakistan* (Mano Majra) was awarded the Grove Press India Fiction Prize in 1956. His personality and mind were shaped by Punjabi background and British education. Khushwant Singh as a writer of Indian writing in English, has many premises; the most important is India's projection to the western world. *Train to Pakistan* is a realistic novel that projects enormous human suffering caused by partition. It also explicates great tragic devastation and ghastly inhuman rendition. As a conscious writer he transcends the actual suffering of the people in his novel as the experience of our agony and pain. *Train to Pakistan* apparently seems to have a conventional plot that deals with a chronological sequence of the crucial events and time. In his novel, the writer blends action and character together. Consequently we find a novel of dramatic art in which there is a development of various dimensions of space and time. His concept of time and space, determines his narrative strategies. The art of narrative lends stress on style and content. Sometimes a writer uses a personal narrative to pass necessary information. But the account of a war or any political upheaval based on personal experience needs a kind of literary reconstruction. Khushwant Singh reconstructs the feelings of horror and dislocation in an objective manner. The narrative of action, is generally used for the presentation of physical details Khushwant Singh, in his novel, depicts the dislocation of life in Punjab. During partition thousands of people died and those who survived suffered as refugees. Consequently people lost their relatives, friends and properties, and countless women were raped. La-

hore and Punjab witnessed violence, rage and destruction. *Train to Pakistan* exposes a great catastrophe.

The original title of the novel was Mano Majra; it is the name of a village. Majra is used as a fixed point in space and the train symbolizes movement, crowd and multitudes of people. Thousands of Hindus, Sikhs and Sindhis travelled to India and millions of Muslims longed for a passage to Pakistan. The train in this novel stands for life and death. The depiction of the small Railway station. Mano Majra and the train is noticeable:

> One morning a train from Pakistan halted at Mano Majra railway station. At first glance, it had the look of the trains in the days of peace. No one sat on the roof. No one clung between the bogies. . . . But somehow it was different. There was something uneasy about it. It had a ghostly quality. (84)

The description presents a contrast. The past stands for peace and the present represents suspicion and uneasiness. As the novel unfolds, we are told that almost ten million people were trying to get a passage for their destinations. But one million people died in the flight. The ghostly train is a metaphor for death. It communicates horror and fear. Previously, at Mano Majra, Sikhs and Muslims were friendly to one another; they lived together for centuries. The small village was free from communal disharmony. On one night in the month of August, Ram Lal, a money-lender was killed by a dacoit. Juggat Singh, a Badmash, lives in the same village. He loves a Muslim girl Nooran. Hukum Chand, the divisional commissioner, tries to seduce Haseena. Policemen arrive at the village to look into the case of murder of Ramlal. Iqbal Singh, a westernized youngman also arrives by the same train. He is arrested in the case of the murder of Ramlal. The development in the novel presents the catastrophic events. The ghost train with corpses, from Pakistan, arrives at Mano-Majra. Sikhs and Muslims on the platform feel frightened; the sight benumbs them. They fall a prey to suspicion, distrust and hostility. Muslims go to Chandan Nagar, and they are transported to Pakistan. On his release from the jail, Juggat Singh goes to the railway station; he looks into every bogie to find Nooran. On rail track, he tries to neutralize the explosive plotted by a Hindu fanatic. But the train kills him and goes to Pakistan.

The novel has an artistic pattern; there are four divisions— *Dacoity, Mano Majra, Kalyug and Karma.* These titles are drawn

from Indian social life. The first part deals with actual robbery; it stands for inhuman action; *Kalyug* postulates Hindu view of time. Hostility, selfishness, callousness and cruelty are key factors of *Kalyug*. It also denotes devastation and ignoble strife; and Mano Majra, a small village with a small railway station, becomes the macrocosm of the world. *Karma* defines our deed. The novel opens with a description of summer of 1947. Summer, with its dust and dryness symbolize "heated state" of man; and the parched earth stands for violence. The summer presents a grim picture of the wasteland. The four parts constitute a significant pattern. In Mano Majra, there are Sikhs and Muslims. Ramlal is a Hindu. Hukum Chand is a man of the material world.

Mano Majra is the chief protagonist in this novel. The tiny village is a witness to the holocaust, mindless violence, suffering and helplessness of individuals and communities. *Train to Pakistan* is a realistic novel but its realism has a note of ethical humanism. Nonetheless, the novel is a male discourse that presents a world commanded by men. In this novel, women characters are pale shadows of their male counterparts. Sidhwa's novel *Ice-Candy-Man* is a testament of a geocentric view of reality; the novel has a feminine text. The novel is full of females characters—Lenny, Ayah and Godmother. Sidhwa uses two narrators—little Lenny and adult Lenny. The word 'Icy' in the novel describes the character of politicians in general. Sidhwa's sarcasm does not spare even Mahatma Gandhi, who is portrayed as a mere politician. The narrator observes: "I comprehended the concealed nature of the ice lurking deep beneath the hypnotic and dynamic femininity of Gandhi's non-violent exterior."

The two novels *Ice-Candy-Man* and *Train to Pakistan* make us understand the historical event of partition. But none of the writers of these novels lend a stress on rebuilding of positive ideas. They do not make any attempt to locate the real problems of the two nations. Now Pakistan is not a territory, it is a metaphor for a dream and a nightmare.

The two novels present a dark phase of life, killing of masses, narrow game of politicians and the holocaust of the partition are described in a framework of an epic dimension. They analyse sociopolitical issues and adapt a "history telling mode" of expression. Both the novelists, despite their different perspectives, use personal

and plain narrative and sometime objective narrative. But the theme of partition needs a narrative of pain and it needs a framework of a tragic dimension of mythos (plot). They appear as tragic novels; but the records and materials present them as memoirs. Partition is concerned with the history of the largest migration and dislocation of fourteen million innocent people and death of over one million. The sense of great human loss, intense fear and helplessness belong to 'Tragic Fictional Mode.' *Ice-Candy-Man* and *Train to Pakistan* have the elements of tragic dimension but they become works of the low mimetic tragedy, in which pity and fear are communicated externally. The tragic mode of such fictional works fails to arouse pity and fear and purge off our ill feelings. Religious fanaticism, greed, political stupidity and communal violence are integral parts of demonic symbolism. The demonic human world suggests a society obsessed with negative aspects of life. Sidhwa's novel is a postmodernist novel. It contains lyrical passages but its ironical exposure makes the novel extrovert and personal. Sidhwa defends Jinnah who is portrayed as caricature and is regarded as a villain by Indian authors. Sidhwa feels that Jinnah is dehumanized. But she projects Mahatma Gandhi as a politician whose business is to suit his "tongue to the moment." Sidhwa's narrator observes Gandhi as "an improbable mixture of demon and a clown." Is it the way of humanizing Gandhi? Sidhwa presents inaccurate details of history. She feels that partition favoured India over Pakistan. In her note *Why Do I Write*, she shows her concern to expose the nature of the great evil shaped and nourished by religion and politicians. Sidhwa's depiction of holocaust presents her Pakistani perspective. The male discourse of Khushwant Singh also presents his Indian perspective. Their main concerns are to expose a brutal fact how Muslims suffered in the hands of Sikhs and how Sikhs were killed by Muslim fanatics. The evil, as presented by them, does not produce the great effect of disorder. The calamity is of a large scale; it can be used as a grand tragic finale. The treatment of partition does not arouse genuine pathos. Sidhwa has a biased point of view and Khushwant Singh presents the physical details.

Partition was a traumatic experience. The psychological trauma constituted partition with crucial factors of violence, loot and murder. A trauma is "a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience."[6] The outside experience is

not described by these writers, because Sidhwa and Khushwant Singh use trauma with raw narrative. These two novels could be written with a deep psychological framework making characters articulate their suffering by using interior monologues. The typical event of Pakistan can shake the foundation of humanness, as it is described in a poem by Manto:

The Knife

Ripped through the stomach
Reached down to the penis.
The cord of the pyjama was cut.
The man with the knife
Exclaimed
With surprise
As if he was reading the Kalma to ward off evil,
Chi, Chi, Chi . . . I made a mistake.

Mere facts cannot be turned into fiction. The Indo-Pak fiction, in future, may bring out some more significant novels with an aim to rebuild our nations in right perspectives. *Ice-Candy-Man* and *Train to Pakistan* are significant works of fictional art.

NOTES

1. Sukeshi Kamra, *Bearing Witness, partition, Independence and Raj* (Lotus Collection, Roli Books, New Delhi 2002), p. 1.
2. Cited in *Points of Departure, International Writers on Writing and Politics,* Interview by David Montengro, 1989.
3. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Why Do I Write,* R.K. Dhawan, ed., *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa* (Prestige, New Delhi, 1996), pp. 31-32.
4. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), 1989, p. 140.
5. Sukeshi Karma, p.106.
6. *Ibid*, p.178.

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Indian Writing in English: A Critical Perspective

DEEPIKA SHARMA

Indian English literature is an endeavour of showcasing the rare gems of Indian writing in English. From being a curious native explosion, Indian English has become a new form of Indian culture, and voice in which India speaks. While Indian authors—poets, novelists, essayists, dramatists—have been making significant contribution to world literature since the pre-Independence era, the couple of recent decades have seen a massive flourishing of Indian English writing. It should be pondered why, even today, people of India like to read Indian writing in English. The answer can be a simple one, that is, because of the familiarity with the geographical or cultural setting. But is this the sole reason? People of India have an intense feeling of belongingness with Indian culture, Indian rituals, art, literature, with social structure, familial relations, with their functions and festivals, food and celebrations. Depiction of their culture in literary works persuades them to read the literary piece. Of course, the writer always writes with the purpose that his treatise will be read by one and all and seldom writes only for the purpose of literary critical evaluations. If we see from this point of view, the work should appeal to the common man.

The modified English over which the Indian writers have mastered is now used for an unbiased (supposedly) presentation of the Indian reality to reveal the 'true' scenario to the readers all over the world. But there are always 'many truths' of every country. India has rich culture and traditions; many people from all over the world come here in search of spiritual peace. At the same time India is a developing country with all the shortcomings of a developing country. Indian social systems are still traditional; there are gender prejudices, child labour, illiteracy, child marriages, corruption, rapid population growth, unemployment. But is there any geographical area on the globe that is totally problem free? Reason behind enu-

merating all this is that the English language in India carries with it a connotation of elitism, eroticizing their subject to appeal to a Western readership, focusing by and large on the picture of India that already exists in the western mind: progressing from snake-charmers and elephants, to rajahs and maharajahs, arranged marriages, gender oppression, exploitative and casteist society, exploitation in the name of religion superstitions, poverty and so on. Sometimes, it seems that the portrayal of underprivileged class, gender discrimination, hidden sexual exploitations, domestic violence, child labour is for satisfying the deep-rooted opinions about India, and gaining popularity by revealing the worst. However, an overemphasis on these subtle ironies tends to ignore other socio-political, psychological and economic realities of India.

Treatises of eminent authors and poets, whether in Hindi or English or in translation, are still read with deep sentiments. What are those factors that make the works of Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Toru Dutt, Saratchandra Chattopadhyaya, Premchand, Tarashankar Bandopadhyay Amrita Pritam, A.K. Ramanujan, Bakimchandra, Mulk Raj Anand R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai and many more rank among the world's best. The beauty and warmth of relations depicted in the works of these great writers truly showcases the mentality of Indian society. Psychologically, family members experience intense emotional interdependence. Economic activities, too, are deeply imbedded in a social nexus. Through a multitude of kinship ties, each person is linked with his relations in villages and towns near and far. Almost everywhere a person goes, he can find a relative from whom he can expect moral and practical support. Here we have variety of relationships, which is usually not seen in other literature, we don't have just uncle or aunt, grandfather and grandmother on both maternal and paternal side, we have dadi-dada, nani-nana, mama-mami, mausi-mausa, chacha-chachi, didi-jijaji, not simply brother-in-law and sister-in-law, bhaiya-bhabhi, devar-bhabhi, beti-damad, beta-bahu tao-tai bhua-phoopha jija-sali. People love these distinctive addresses and the warmth of the respective relation rather being called uncle and aunt. This also carries the feelings of guardianship, safety, belongingness, honour, regard, subtlety, and courtesy. The warmth in relations inheres in person's psy-

che rather than to be discovered out here. Eminent psychologist Maslow propounded in his theory of motivation that self-actualization is not possible until we fulfils our lower needs; feelings of safety and belongingness are those needs which should be fulfilled.

The strain of empathetic attitude prevails in the works of these writers. It is easy to show sympathy but it is difficult to put oneself in another's situation and to identify with another's feeling. We can deeply feel this empathic attitude in Saratchandra's novels. Another example is Nissim Ezekiel's well known poem "Night of the Scorpion." As soon as the news that scorpion had bitten the poet's mother spread in the village, the villagers rushed towards the poet's house. Why? Because they felt concerned with the family, the feeling of attachment forced them to go out on that rainy night. In Anita Desai's "The Accompanist" how can we explain the relation between Ustad Rahim Khan and Bhaiyaji? The bonding between them is inexplicable. Description of local places, images, markets, fairs, make the reader feel close to their culture.

Today, contemporary writers are culling from the outside, and choose to present the naked truths of society to the world, but in this pursuit we, somehow, have lost the link with the high cultural tune that had developed on our own soil. Indian women novelists have given new dimensions to the Indian literature. The last two decades have witnessed phenomenal success in feminist works of Indian writers. Most of them are western educated and describe the whole world of women with stunning frankness. The women characters of Shobha De are shown madly in love with male characters. Love, jealousy and manipulations are the prominent themes of Shobha De's books. Feminist writing is not limited to women writers only. Mahesh Dattani, the most famous contemporary Indian-English dramatists, deals with various bold themes like homosexuality, child sex abuse, gender discrimination etc. It seems that literature is manufactured for the foreign audience, in conformity with the western perception of Indian reality. Selection of bold themes to attract the elite class of India and international masses is the current trend. The writers write for the class where people see the reality through the painted glass. Even today, frankness to such an extent is not ap-

preciated in Indian middle class families. Literature should reach the hearts of the common man. It should communicate with fellow Indians. Wishing reformation in society is a noble thought but in this attempt are we not selling our worst to gain attention, to be popular within a short span of time.

Literature is a medium to bring revolution in the society. Literary endeavour must not betray the people from where it springs. Social commitment is certainly not incompatible with aesthetic value of a literary work. Literature trying to depict reality should not be devoid of moral concerns that run as undercurrent of the people being portrayed. Critical depiction of the faults and follies shall prove to be meaningful only when the criticism aims at correction. Just vulgarising the reality is essentially crafty salesmanship. People search their culture, their India, their rituals, their morals in Indian writings in English and if Indian writings speak in the western overtone, then the literary works will not able to quench the need of the heart of common man of India but also shall infuse unrealistic gloominess and hopelessness in the seekers' mind.

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Reading Jacobson's *The Finkler Question* as a Comic Novel

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Most powerful British journalist, writer, television personality, Man Booker winner for the year 2010, sixty-eight-year-old Howard Jacobson is known for his much discussed and debated 320-page comic novel *The Finkler Question* (2010). The special ceremony, arranged in the Gooldol Hall in London, conferred on him the coveted literary prize of England. He left behind other literary stalwarts: Daman Gulgutt, Peter Kare, Emma Dunge, Andrew Levie and Tom Macbeth in Man Booker Run. Jacobson's epoch-making novel defeated Emma's *Room*, Gulgutt's *In a Strange Room* and Kare's *Parrot and Oliver in America* who had won twice this prestigious award.

The story of this comic masterpiece is based upon three Jewish friends who live in London. They are both individual and type and both real and imaginary. The story is elemented with Swiftian irony, Chaucerian humour and Popean satire. Self-expression of Jewish temperament has been analyzed from various angles as we see in Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. The jury of the Man Booker Committee said: "The Man Booker Committee has been able to see the laughing face of the prize first time just after Jacobson's award." Jacobson occupies a special place among the writers like Dickens, Sterne, Jane Austen, Dostoevsky, Joseph Conrad, Saul Bellow, Mario Vargas Llosa and Chesterton for keeping the satirical tradition unfaded. The comic vein of Jacobson takes after William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe as hinted by the jury: "*The Finkler Question's* publication is a welcome deserving invention in the world of fiction. The novel represents two points of tears and laughters on a straight line of its new fashion and design. Three Jewish Londoners are the then producer of the British Broadcasting Corporation, Treslove, a well-known Jewish philosopher

Sam Finkler and their former teacher L. Sevcik." Andrew Motion, the Chief of the Booker Committee, said: "*The Finkler Question* is a wonderful book. It is an admixture of humour, irony, satire, tears and fears as well as anger. The dignity of the book has taken various twists of life in different angular visions."

Reacting to the award, Jacobson says: "The book is a type of autobiographical novel where I have tried my best to translate the language of my life in my own twist. Love, misfortune and lesbianism have been integrated into triangular frame through Jewish life. Without insulating the dark side of the life it has been asked to lead one towards the world of knowledge and wisdom. The book carries the solution of binary equation of both comprehensiveness and obscurity of life."

The relation between the teacher and the taught seems to be very strange and strategic. Sam Finkler is well-known Jewish philosopher who appears as a spokesman of life drama presented in the novel. He asks various questions on the life's multifaceted dimensions that bear the universality and truth. The question may arise in our mind why the novel is named after Finkler instead of Treslove and Sevcik. The answer may not be very easy and straightforward but very symbolic and meaningful that extends to the discussion of the justification of the title. Broadly speaking, the Finkler question may be philosophical and sociological question that further symbolizes the doubts on mysteries and miracles of life.

Three friends discuss and debate about what life means and how it is related to friendship and love. What are its functions in Jewish life and the life of Christians? Why should we discriminate between Christianity and Judaism? Why does misfortune come and what are ways to overcome it? Should Lesbianism be legalized or rejected in the Jewish society? All these are discussed on that pleasant night in the apartment. It is generally assumed that Jews are inferior to Christians. Christians have hatred towards them and they are caricatured by Christians. Shakespeare and Marlowe made fun of Jews in their plays *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Jew of Malta*.

Jacobson's fiction, especially the six novels he has published since 1998, is characterized by discursive humorous style. The major themes of his works include (a) Male-Female Relation, (b) The Jewish experience in England in the 21st century and (c) Lesbian-

ism. All these themes are portrayed in a humorous vein. Therefore, Jacobson has been compared with prominent Jewish American novelist Phillip Roth.

According to Aristotle, the comic hero comes of lower station or lower birth or from among masses. The main characters in this novel—Julian Treslove, Libor Sevcik and Sam Finkler—are men among us, not emperors or generals or kings or historical persons or legendary personalities. Julian Treslove is an unspectacular former BBC radio producer, Sam Finkler is a popular Jewish philosopher, writer and television personality and Libor Sevcik is their former teacher. The first two are school friends. Though they are now full grown men, they have never lost touch with each other or with their former teacher Libor Sevcik.

Dining together one pleasant night at Sevcik apartment, two Jewish widowers and the bachelor gentile Treslove share an anguished evening reminiscing their love and loss, enchantment and muddle of friendship. Then Treslove makes his way home but is mugged outside. As good luck would have it, he is spiritually regenerated like Lear in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and his sense of self-will is radically and inherently changed.

This novel also reminds one of various Jewish weaknesses and loopholes of life which have been caricatured by Jacobson. Treslove seems to question various problems of life that he himself is concerned with. He appears as a symbol of 'Finkler' or 'Jewish.' Jacobson brilliantly searches the Jewish identity through spectacular search of Treslove who very analytically and intuitively searches his own identity. The question for Jewish identity is sought through Jewish food habits, spurts of searches, sex with Jewish women and men, loving Jewish men and women.

Libor struggles to find the mysteries and miracles of life after death. His intense love for his wife leads him to be highly analytical and interrogative about Jewish faith on death and life. The three Jewish friends go on asking various questions on their race and religion.

> "Why would you have said the word Isrrral—and can we stop pronouncing it like that—if you only wanted to ask them without thinking of Jewish history you have put your mind to that?"
>
> "And why would that have been a problem for them?" (162)

Further they discuss that self-analysis is Jewish nature. He tells Julian: "Because Jews don't want to go round with nothing but their history. . . . Jew is not the only word in my vocabulary, but I am not prepared to have my Jewishness monkeyed about with. I can take care of myself." (162) This discussion of three friends shows that Jacobson's concept of Jewishness is more than the commoner's idea. I quote here what Jacobson says in one of his interviews:

> Q. Your talents are largely comic and you have admitted to being ruffled by the lack of respect for comedy among the literary establishment. Do you think most novels lose their footing without a comic hum?
>
> A: Comic is the cruellest word. Yes, I aspire to be funny. . . . Laughter can be as profound an act of intelligence as any other response.

According to him, a work of comic art should be highly intelligent with splendid fun-fare. Jacobson examines the complexities of identity and belonging, love and grief through the lens of contemporary Judaism. Julian Treslove, a celebrity double, feels out of sync with his long-time friend and sometimes school days rival Sam Finkler. They discuss the thorny relationship with a Jew:

> But then every one was drunk and vague. And the woman who had accosted him was drunk, vague and American. Even before she opened her mouth: Treslove had deduced all that from her demeanour. She looked too amazed by life to be English. Her curls were too curly. Her lips were too big. Her teeth too white and even like one big arc of tooth with regular vertical markings. And her breasts had too much elevation and attack in them to be English. Had Jane Austen's heroines had breasts like these, they would not have worried about ending up without a husband. (69)

Jacobson brilliantly contrasts Treslove's search for a Jewish identity through the sex image of a Jewish woman. This relationship is both individual and typical.

Julian Treslove is a 49-year-old gentile living in the present-day London whose life has been a series of disappointments. He has movie star good looks but can't seem to sustain a relationship with a woman for more than few months. He was relieved from his BBC work for his overly morbid program. He has fathered two boys, who ridicule and despise him.

Jacobson further analyzes Sam Finkler's character that looks into Jewishness in a comic spirit. He characterizes Sam Finkler as a pop-philosopher and radio and television personality who is the author of best-selling books such as *The Existentialist in the Kitchen* and *John Duns Scotus and Self-Esteem: A Manual for Menstruating* which made him widely popular:

> Finkler justified his reputation for shrewdness in Treslove's eyes by publishing first one and then another and then another of self-help practical philosophy books that made his fortune. *The Existentialist in the Kitchen* was the first of them. *The Little Book of Household Stoicism* was the second. (22)

The Finkler Question covers a number of other vital and compelling components: men and their relationships to each other; male competition, the insecurity of middle-aged men and women; infidelity and multiculturalism in the modern society. Jacobson brilliantly weaves these topics in this novel which is full of humour, irony and satire.

The story teaches the art of self-analysis which is the salient characteristic feature of the Finklers or Jews though that may lead to self-paralysis. Actually every one is left in two minds while reading this novel. No one can deny the quantum and quality of humour that doctors the spirit of comedy. Hence *The Finkler Question* is a metaphor of labyrinthine incomprehensiveness and obscurity in the 21st century.

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Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*: Discourse of Politics and Poetics

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Aravind Adiga's debut classic novel *The White Tiger* won him the esteemed Man Booker Prize for 2008. Like Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri, Adiga received his education in different parts of the world and came to realize the currents and cross-currents of the contemporary life and society. He started his career as a journalist in *The Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal.* After a short span, he switched over to *Times* as South-Asian correspondent for three years. While he was in New Delhi, this occupation offered him enough opportunity to be au fait with the Indian society as a whole. As a journalist, he reaped the harvest of success to get his mind-boggling articles published in international magazines and newspapers including *Times*, *The Financial Times* and *The Sunday Times.* His *Between the Assassinations* explores the context and pretext of Kittur, a town of India's South-Eastern Coast between Goa and Calicut that spotlights some events and incidents along with the killing of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi. "What Adiga offers is the map of Kittur—a moral map looming large over the physical map—and Kittur stands for an Indian town during the period."[1]

Broadly speaking, *The White Tiger* is a sociological saga of contemporary India describing a story about the metamorphosis of a driver in Delhi, a young man from Bihar, into an entrepreneur in Bangalore. The narrative is different in the sense that the protagonist does not transform himself on account of his suffering, rather he exploits the basic drawbacks of prevailing law and order situation in the country. The novelist diagnoses the Indian reality. The rallying feature of the novel is that the government hospitals, the ale-houses and red-light areas depicted in the novel are real. The novel is the story of two Indias: India of light and India of darkness. It is a study

of the contrast between India's rise as a modern global economy and the principal character who hails from rural background. The novel portrays a society that is engrossed in corruption and injustice where the poor are invariably the victims of brutal class system. As Amartya Sen says to his teacher Joan Robinson of Cambridge University:

> The frustrating thing about India is that whatever you can rightly say about it, the opposite is also true. Interestingly enough, you can say exactly the same thing about China. Globalization combines Capitalism with Communism, poverty and disparity with fast economic growth, impressive industrial development with neglect of its environment and a massive rural-urban divide. These contradictions exist in India as well, with the exception of the first one.[2]

Balram Halwai is supposed to be the White Tiger of the novel by virtue of being deemed the smartest boy in his village. We come across the protagonist's early years in the village including the short period of his student life and his service as a canteen-boy in the village tea-shop. His experiences as a driver in Delhi have been kept in focus where he was employed by the landlord's son who had returned from America and his profession as an entrepreneur in Bangalore. Later on, the scene and situation of murder and the helplessness of Indian political system expose the success of India, democracy, poverty and social discrimination.

The narrative pattern of the novel is unusual and it is carved out of a series of letters addressed to the premier of China, Wen Jiabao. The protagonist Balram Halwai regularly writes the letters which are occasioned by All India radio announcement that Jiabao was to visit Bangalore to have first-hand-knowledge about technology and other contemporary things. The central motive as well as reason behind addressing the Chinese premier is to offer information of (real) India through the details of his own life. It is apparent that Balram has not been caught by the police though he spent a great deal of time in Delhi after committing the murder. He rescued his nephew, a boy who shared his shelter in Delhi and then boarded a train to Bangalore with him where he lived in a hotel for four weeks to normalize himself and took a flat on rent. He moved here and there for a job by visiting different companies and persons and thereafter he started his own business. He has communicated his unsettling reali-

zation to the premier that the murderer is caught by the police only in Hindi movies and the same does not occur in real life. Balram has a fear that his nephew Dharam who is a school-going boy in Bangalore and speaks good English like a rich man's son may be harassed in future. He is also afraid that one day the murdered master's father may finish the entire Halwai family.

Adiga shows his superior skill in the conclusive part of his novel. Balram Halwai shows his mind that he will never tell the reason of crime he committed. But it does not mean that he justifies his stand. In the last letter, he writes his name Ashok Sharma, the white tiger of Bangalore and it is obvious that now he is not a servant and has adopted the name of his previous master who has been murdered by him. The thematic dimension of the novel is compellingly alive and makes us know that Balram's little knowledge proves to be useful in making him a successful businessman. He ever champions his shrewdness, the merit for which he was called the 'White Tiger' by his school teacher. Balram, anyhow, got success to be a driver of the landlord's son Ashok in Delhi. It may be noted that Ashok was very kind and helpful to Balram while others in the family do not like him. There is a saddening event when Ashok's wife Pinki crushed an unidentified boy to death. But by sheer luck Balram has not been arrested in that accident. Ashok has unflinching faith in him and Balram always draws huge amount from bank for his master to bribe the politicians in Delhi as well as the master's family business in Dhanbad. Balram made a plot to finish Ashok while he was alone in the car and to take the money drawn from bank. In order to get his work done, he used a broken bottle of whisky. He has come to know about several ways of murder from a magazine which was common among drivers in Delhi.

It is, however, difficult to know the mind of Balram behind killing his master. The author throws sufficient light on the mind-set of Balram and suggests that he has developed animosity and hatred for the rich. He also came into contact with a book seller who made him aware of pornographic magazines and the Naxal movement supported by China. Gradually, his detestation for the rich became acute and he used to express his anger by driving the car around the malls and looking at pretty girls coming from the privileged class. Even then he feels that Ashok is a good man who is corrupted by

others. Balram says in his letter to Mr. Jiabao: "what I am describing to you that happens to drivers in Delhi everyday Sir. The jails of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good solid middle-class masters. We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul and arse."[2] Adiga makes a severe attack on the corruption in the judiciary when Balram reveals about the money received by the driver's family and the inactivity of judges. Balram ironically says, "The judges? Wouldn't they see through this obviously forced confession? But they are in the racket too. They take their bribe, they ignore discrepancies in the case. And life goes on. For everyone but the drivers" (170). The author shows the terrible condition of Indian drivers who have been appointed as drivers but have to perform every type of work. They have to take care of the pets of their master by rubbing them and combing them. They massage the legs of their masters when their masters enjoy whisky in the sunshine and are treated bitterly if they commit a slight mistake.

Apart from exposing the reality of the rich Indians, Adiga offers a critical commentary on the integrity of marginalised Indian contrast to hypocrisy of those who represent wealth and glamour, "Indians are the world's most honest people like the Prime Minister's booklet will inform." (175) In India masters trust their servants with valuables like diamonds, that's why trustworthiness of servants is the basis of the entire Indian economy. Balram focuses his declined dignity in a very pitiable way. "From the start, Sir there was a way in which I could understand what he wanted to say, the way dogs understand their master." (112) The novelist also strikes at Indian democratic ideal of equality that is being shattered by the inhuman relationship of master and servant. In India, servants are expected to be so dedicated like Ram Bhakta Hanuman but masters are not touched by single ideal of Lord Ram. Through Balram, Adiga says, "Every day millions wake up at dawn, stand in dirty, crowded buses—get off at their master's posh houses—and then clean the floors, wash the dishes, weed the garden, feed their children, press their feet—all for a pittance. I will never envy the rich of America or England, Mr. Jiabao: they have no servants there. They cannot even begin to understand what a good life is." (176) The climax of cruelty comes to light when Balram is compelled and forced to take

blame of the car accident committed by Pinki Madam during her reckless driving. Balram has to sign a paper prepared by Mukesh that contains his confession. The master-servant relationship, time and again, offers a shocking reflection when Balram is blamed for the elopement of Madam Pinki. As a true servant, he follows the instruction of Madam Pinki and takes her to airport. He is caught and rudely pushed in the balcony by Mr. Ashok. He is not ready to listen to any explanation from Balram and blames him for ruining his family reputation. The emptiness of Indian morality is focused through the character of Mr. Ashok who demonstrates the double standard of morality. He shows family-concern and reputation while he himself is absorbed in illegal sexual relationship with a foreign prostitute in modern hotels. Pinki never notices the fact that her exposed body may arouse lust of the male servants in the house. She represents the modern women of dark India, far away from social, moral and family values and even does not hesitate to leave her husband without any genuine reason. A critic rightly says, "Step by step, Adiga bares the startling reality of a nation where unplanned haphazard urbanization and colonization is suffocating the already overburdened infrastructure, where the social fabric is being stretched to breaking point, where poverty, corruption, disease, moral degeneration still rule the day and where every known tradition is being put to test."[3]

The novelist visualizes India as big and boisterous jungle where hierarchy, sycophancy, corruption and ruthlessness are at the helm of the affair. He feels that after independence jungle-law has replaced zoo-law, where the youths are out of job and have become helpless. Instead of struggling and facing the challenges of life, they are busy in non-sense gossiping and watching photographs of film-actresses. Adiga argues: "Things are different in the darkness. There, every morning, tens of thousands of young men sit in the tea shops, reading the newspaper or lie on charpoy humming a tune, or sit in their rooms talking to a photo of a film actress. They have no job to do today. They know they won't get any job today. They've given up the fight." (54)

Aravind Adiga offers his strong dissent when he finds that India is not a real secular country as a Muslim is compelled to change his name to Ram Prasad and call himself a Hindu. The reason behind doing so is that he cannot seek a job as a Muslim in the Hindu fam-

ily. Balram witnesses a stark and dark reality of India where unfair means and injustice are at its climax. The rich class people drive the cars and vehicles in a drunken state and accidents take place but the police do not lodge any case against them. Everywhere, there is corruption, moral decay and harassment. The democratic system has become a farce and the political leaders are treated as embodiments of all-round corruption and mismanagement. Balram notes the darkness in every sphere of life and realizes that prostitution, debauchery, degradation and falsehood have become the common features of everyday life.

Truly speaking, the pull and pressure of social reality and circumstances metamorphose Balram into a bad character and finally he commits murder of his master, Mr. Ashok. Balram has adopted his own way of seeing social justice and in course of time he moves rapidly and comes to Bangalore accompanied by his nephew. There he gets himself established as a successful entrepreneur with the amount of seven lakh that he has stolen from the master. The most surprising fact is that the murder of Ashok is not simply a crime, it is an act of class warfare. As a matter of fact, Balram out of this heinous crime kills the character of Balram and projects himself as Ashok Sharma who is the proud owner of sixty SUYS which he uses as taxis and has drivers working for him. About master-servant relationship, he says: "I was a driver to a master, but now I am a master of drivers. I don't treat them like servants. I don't bully, or mock anyone. I don't insult anyone of them by calling them my family, either. They're my employees, I am their boss, that's all. I make them sign a contract and I sign it too and both of us must honour that contract." (302)

No literary work of art can be of sustaining interest and classical order if it does not have linguistic competency and capacity. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly raises this fundamental question and argues that the most significant challenge before the Indian English novelist is the task of using the English language in a way that will be distinctively Indian and still remain English.[4] The simplicity and readability of Adiga's English deeply impresses the people and in this context, we may say that the concept of good English varies not only from age to age but also from region to region.

For the last so many years, poverty has been the central subject and concern in the contemporary Indian English fiction. Indian economy is growing fast to overcome the challenge of poverty and it has been magnificently captured by Kiran Desai in *The Inheritance of Loss* and Aravind Adiga in *The White Tiger*. Adiga very ably analyzes the two worlds. He says, "The dreams of the rich, and the dreams of the poor they never overlap, do they? See, the poor dream all their lives of getting enough to eat and looking like the rich. And what do the rich dream? Losing weight and looking like the poor."[5] Amidst all fashion and fancy of India's growth, *The White Tiger* perhaps is a reminder to the wider world of how far India still has to go. "In short, contrary to the position of the critics, globalization has served as the agent of deliverance for India from economic stagnation and perpetual economic crises even as it has reduced poverty."[6] Somehow or the other, *The White Tiger* is a postmodern fiction but it cannot be called a literature of silence. Ihab Hassan "moves forwards by adopting the term postmodernism for what he earlier called the new literature, thus suggesting a decisive break between modernism and postmodernism, but he also suggests more continuity between the two than he did in "The literature of Silence"[7]

Aravind Adiga is accused of exaggerating India's poverty and corruption and of projecting the too dark picture of the area marked as darkness. Adiga's *The White Tiger* is full of wit and black humour, aiming a direct attack at the system of democracy in India. The corrupt politicians and the unholy nexus among the politicians, executives and the business community are ruthlessly exposed, making a poor-show of the much advertised "Shining India." The satire is direct everywhere breaking the myth of the poor but honest Indian people. Adiga finds that the poor people in India appear honest because they do not have the courage to steal. The novelist teases the Indian readers with facts that they carefully keep under the carpet lest those facts disturb the state of euphoria. The readers relish revelation of reality and at the same time become apprehensive of the protagonist's leg-pulling.

The protagonist is in no way a reader-friendly narrator. Adiga knows well that his readers will take the side of the murdered master Mr. Ashok, therefore he makes Ashok the target of attack. Ashok

represents the emerging middle-class Indian who got his education in America and came back with a Christian wife who later left him for the States. The novelist very tactfully presents the duality in Mr. Ashok. Once to his American wife, Ashok remarks, "The thing is, he [the driver] probably has . . . two, three years of schooling in him? He can read and write, but he doesn't get what he's read. He's half-baked. The country is full of people like him, I'll tell you that. And we entrust our glorious parliamentary democracy . . . to characters like these." (10) It has rightly been said that the decolonized nation, argue the postcolonials, under the guise of homogenising national stability, federalism, elide differences and perpetuate oppression of the marginalised—the women, the lower classes/ caste.[8] The narrative nuances of the novel are quite striking and absorbing. We come across Adiga's approach to peep into the middle class mentality. He charges the middle class for playing a supportive role to make corruption a day-to-day affair. "Thousands, sitting around teashops and universities and workplaces every day and every night were cursing corruption yet not one fellow has found a way to slay the demon without giving up his share of the loot of corruption."[9]

The dark India is portrayed in the novels of V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy also but Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga have made conscious effort to highlight the socio-political and cultural issues which carve out the very design of Indian life. This fearless attempt endorses their keen interest and involvement in Indian life and aims to introduce corrective measures. Balram is a typical voice of underclass, metaphorically described "Rooster Coop" (175) struggling to liberate age-old slavery and savagery. While the novel moves from country to city, the whole world of underclass also migrates. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* are remarkably a study of socio-political contour and concern of India. They can't be dismissed as merely traveller's account. *The White Tiger* as a novel in the form of black comedy focuses on the binary nature of a nation marching towards its tryst with destiny. The Indian English fictionists are globally acknowledged and acclaimed both for their form and content. R.K. Dhawan rightly says, "India has contributed significantly to the world literature. This contribution of India has been chiefly through the Indian writing in English novelists being in the forefront

in this respect. A good number of novelists on the contemporary scene have given expression to their creative urge in no other language than English and have brought credit to the Indian English fiction as a distinctive force in the world fiction."[10] *The White Tiger* is not at all a comfort book; it was never designed to make its readers sleep in peace. And it is as literary as they get, never mind the easy readability factor. Because it is simple on surface, the complexities and the paradoxes contained in the book are most interesting to grapple with.[11]

NOTES

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2. Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger,* (Harper Collins, New Delhi, 2008), pp. 168-70
3. Pratibha Nagpal "Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*: A Critical Response" *Four Indian Writers* (New Delhi: Prestige, 2009), p. 152.
4. Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Twice-Born Fiction* (Heinemann Educational Books, New Delhi, 1971), p. 170
5. Aravind Adiga, interview with Colm Tobin.
6. www.google.com FREAKONOMICS, *The New York Times*, May 19, 2009.
7. Hans Bertens, *the Idea of Postmodernism: A History* (Routledge, London and New York, 1995), p. 40.
8. Pramod K. Nayar, *Literary Theory Today* (Prestige, New Delhi, 2002), p. 111.
9. Day Two: The Bunder, *Between the Assassinations* (Picador 2008), p. 41.
10. *Four Indian Novelists* ed. R.K. Dhawan (Prestige, New Delhi, 2009), p. 8.
11. *Time*, Vol. 172, No. 16, 2008, p. 44

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The Dichotomy of Human Survival and the Destruction of the Ecosystem in the Sundarbans Archipelago: A Study of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

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On 23 October, 2004, Tehelka covered a report on the eviction of Sundarbans fishermen from Jambudwip Island by the West Bengal CPI Government. The report was prepared by V.K. Shashikumar. Over 10000 fishermen were evicted from Jambudwip Island in 2002. They were basically from the Jalia Kaibartha community of Chittagong hills, migrated to the Indian side of the Sundarbans after partition. They believe that their forceful eviction is deeply linked to Shahara's Tourism project. The other side of the story is the Sahara India Pariwar in a joint venture with the government of West Bengal is committed to developing the Sundarbans region into an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable destination through implementation of the Sundarbans tourism project, which is part of the Integrated Sahara Tourism Circuit in India. The government of West Bengal as well as the big corporate house like Sahara shared an identical perception that the transient fishermen community posed a threat to the Sundarbans ecology. The government, from July 2002 to Oct. 2003 adopted extreme measures to force them to leave that region. The report also highlighted the fact that the fishermen were not to be blamed for the depletion of reserve; they were rather its protectors. The fishermen community was fully aware of the symbiotic relationship between the mangroves and fish catch. The report made an interesting claim that no other forest in the Sundarbans has been saved like the Jambudwip and credit goes to that community. The reason for that is simple. The Island plays the role of life-saver during depression in the Bay of Bengal. The fishermen worship the trees of Jambudwip like god (Internet).

It is pertinent in this context to understand the fact that the attempt to project man as an adversary of nature is more a political move on the part of the government and the real motive is to appease the corporate interest for economic growth and not to address the genuine concerns of ecology. It is noteworthy to mention that the efforts to protect nature and environment and to achieve ecological balance by extirpating human existence are highly problematic as well as counter-productive. The sociological view of human exemptionalism to ecological paradigm has been rejected by the followers of human ecology. In the human ecology programme 'we see human as part of eco system—not as actors having an effect on the environment out there, but each one of us as part of the environment of everyone else, and as part of the environment of every other species' (Internet).

Human ecology conceives of human beings as one species out of many that basically interacts with a bounded natural environment, not as an exceptional species that is essentially a threat to nature. Apart from that it also claims that the human beings bring meaning values to the natural world, and have goals which they express through their relationship to that natural world. The concept of nature that includes issues like environment management, biodiversity conservation and human values and emotions, is affected by the cultural, social and political interactions of the human beings. The apparent simplistic, usually antithetical, relationship between man and nature turns out to be serious as well as complex which demand an esoteric study. Particularly from the point of view of Indian culture and traditions the relationship between man and nature is basically construed as harmonic, elevated and psycho-physical with a touch of divinity and subtlety. The conceptual anthropomorphism of the classical and the folk traditions of India, deeply embedded in their mnemonic self, involuntarily move from one generation to another and firmly uphold the indispensability of man to nature and vice-versa. Such views of Indian tradition do address some of the fundamental concerns of human ecology to a certain extent.

Another major event in recent history concerning specifically with the government of West Bengal's policy of refugee settlement in the Sundarbans, needs to be added with the debates concerning man and nature relationship. In May 1979, Marichjhapi—a tiny island in the Sundarbans archipelago, was witness to the massacre of

a few thousand homeless and helpless Dalits (Namasudra—Schedule Caste) engineered by the government of the West Bengal. The victims largely included women, children, and crippled old men belonging to the schedule caste community. It is just one incident in the tragic tale of one of the powerful Dalit communities—Namasudras of undivided Bengal—who first became the victims of Hindu-Muslim riot during the partition and later became the victims of caste politics in independent India. The state government's position was that the refugees were in an unauthorized occupation of Marichjhapi which was a part of the Sundarbans Government Reserve Forest, and thereby they had violated the Forest Act.

If we look at the Marichjhapi incident from a historical perspective we find that by the end of the year 1978 there were 30000 Dalit refugees in the Marichjhapi Island who actually came from the East Bengal (Bangladesh). They had the dream of resettling in the Sundarbans which they considered as part of their motherland. They rapidly established Marichjhapi as one of the best-developed islands of the Sundarbans. Within a few months, tube-wells had been dug, a viable fishing industry, saltpans, dispensaries, and schools were established. A thriving localized economy without any government support was built in the region. Deeply humiliated by the successful resettlement of Namasudra refugees in Marichjhapi, the Left-Front government started propaganda against them that the Dalits had violated the forest acts and had disturbed the existing potential forest wealth and thus had caused serious ecological imbalance. This claim of the government was a blatant lie as Marichjhapi actually did not fall under government Reserve Forest at all. The Bengali bhadralok leadership of the Left-Front government had to resort to such lies to take up environmental concerns as an excuse. As a result the west Bengal government launched a full frontal attack on the Marichjhapi and the Dalit refugees. It began with economic blockade. The police cordoned off the whole island, by cutting every communication links with the outside world. The settlements of the refugees were completely bull-dozed, destroyed and hundreds of women were raped and killed. Goons and gangsters from other communities were hired to unleash maximum brutalities on them. The dead bodies were either dumped in the water bodies or left to be eaten by the beasts of nearby jungles. This was one of the biggest genocides, ruthlessly carried out, in modern independent India (Internet). In

this context few lines of an appeal, sent to the-then Prime Minister of India Sri Morarji Desai, to stop the Marichjhapi operation, are referred here. On 20 August in 1978 at around 9 p.m., a phonogram was sent to the Prime Minister of India with copies to Sri Subramaniam Swami, M.P., Sri Shakti Sarkar, M.P., Sri Charan Singh, M.P., and others by S. Chatterji: the secretary of Nikhil Banga Nagarik Sangha: "Prime Minister, Your kind attention drawn to planned massacre of innocent refugees at Marichjhapi, Sundarbans in your name. Please take realistic stock of situation and kindly allow them to independently establish their stay irrespective of any political compulsion." (www.banglanama.wordpress.com). When the reports of police brutalities on hapless Namasudras and their sufferings appeared in media the-then Chief Minister of West Bengal termed it as a CIA conspiracy and he exhorted the media to support the government in national interest (Internet).

This paper makes an attempt to study Amitav Ghosh's (b.1956) *The Hungry Tide* (2004) in the light of above stated background and ecological paradigm. As an Indian English novelist Ghosh stands out as a master craftsman of narrative who blends scholarship, history, sociology and anthropology in his narrative for more serious reasons. Some of his best works include—*The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *In an Antique Land*, *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), and *The Sea of Poppies*. Christopher Rollason considers Ghosh as "one of the best-regarded of the Post-Rushdie generation of Expatriate Indian Writings in English" (Internet). Schulze-Engler looks at Ghosh as "one of the most seminal Indian authors writing today that engage in an intensive exploration of complexities, predicaments and opportunities. . . . Ghosh's novel is characterized by a fascinating generic mélange of autobiographical fiction, travel writing, scholarly research on the inter-connected history of North-Africa, Arabia, and India in the middle ages, as well as fictionalized history." (171).

The Hungry Tide is set in the Sundarbans archipelago, a delta created by the river Ganges in the eastern coast of India. Teeming with crocodiles, snakes, and man-eating tigers, it is a place where nature's beauty is harsh and vengeful and the survival of the human beings is tough. In 2004 Ghosh has declared in one of his interviews: "I wanted to write a book that is grounded in nature" (Qtd.

Rollason). The novel is clearly more than a tale of nature. It strives to explore the problematic as well as syncretic relationship between man and nature. The local micro-community, customs, human ecosystem have been placed in both complementary and conflictive relation to the making of its story. Piyali Roy, an American descent, Indian origin cetologist (one who studies marine mammals) meets Kanai, a suave Delhiite on her way to Lusibari in the Sundarbans. Piya was on a research project to study Irrawadi dolphins in the Sundarbans and Kanai was visiting his aunt Nilima who was running a NGO in Lusibari—Badabon Trust. Piya takes the help of Fokir, a young illiterate but a deft and diligent fisherman for her project. Kanai discovers a mysterious notebook left by his late uncle Nirmal for him at his aunt's residence. The notebook records his uncle's last days which he spent among the Bangladeshi refugees in a small island called Marichjhapi in the Sundarbans. Kanai reconstructs through his uncle's notebook the revolt of a group of resettled refugees from the-then East Pakistan, their creation of a short-lived community in the Sundarbans with visible utopian-rationalist features, and the bloody retaliation of state machinery. Several parallel plots, such as the plight of the displaced people, struggle for land, constant fight for survival in a dangerous and fragile ecosystem, and all those interconnections that strengthen human bonds, understanding and emotion, in the novel, are suggestive of Ghosh's complex engagement with the issue of man and nature relationship. Through the characters like Nirmal, Kusum, Horen, and later Piya, Fokir, Kanai, Ghosh explores the sense of connection between people that transcends class, culture, language and gender.

Amitav Ghosh has addressed several complex socio-cultural and environment-related issues of the Sundarbans by employing sociological and ethnographic perspectives that had gone unrepresented in the dominant paradigms of civil society. Ghosh's real intention behind choosing the Sundarbans as the setting of the novel was not to engage himself with the aesthetic beauty of its marine life and the natural environment of the Sundarbans archipelago; rather it was a cover for his sociologist self to speak out certain highly unacceptable, unpleasant and suppressed events of recent history, associated with the Marichjhapi incident. There are two different ways of looking at this novel. They are—the sociological aspect (Refugees resettlement & forcible eviction of refugees), and the cul-

tural or the ethnographic aspect which comments on the community life, man and nature relationship and religious views of the refugees in the Sundarbans. Ghosh has clearly acknowledged in 'Author's Note' of his novel of using the research inputs of three important scholars to write this novel. He mentions Annu Jalais—the author of a well-researched paper on Marichjhapi titled "Dwelling on Morichjhapi. . . . Tiger Food," Toss Mallick—the author of "Refugee Resettlement in Forest Reserves," and Nilanjana Chattarjee's unpublished dissertation titled "Midnight's Unwanted Children: East Bengal Refugees and the Politics of Rehabilitation." These three specific references of Ghosh are clearly suggestive of his desire to revisit the Marichjhapi tragedy and the life-world of the partition dalit refugees of Bengal. Ghosh has travelled extensively in the tide country (Sundarbans) in the company of Annu Jalais to know more about the history of the regions on which Jalais had considerable expertise.

Jalais's paper comprehensively talks about the history of the movement of the Bengali Hindu refugees from the East Pakistan to West Bengal in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (1757). Subsequently those refugees were forcibly sent to various refugee camps set up in inhospitable areas outside West Bengal, such as Dandakaranya forest in M.P. In 1975, many of the refugees started to move from the camps to the sand band called Morich Chak which was part of the Morichjhapi Island in the Gosaba police station of the Sundarbans. Some 16000 families probably settled there (1758). From May 1977, about 30000 SC refugees, under the leadership of Satish Monadol, President of Udabastu Unnayansil Samity (UUS), sailed to Marichjhapi and set up settlement there (*Ibid*). On 31 January 1979 the police opened fire killing thirty six refugees. And in May 1979 the government started forcible evacuation. Jalais has offered a detail account of the tragedy:

> Thirty police launches encircled the island thereby depriving the settlers of food and water; they were also tear-gassed, their huts razed, their boats sunk, their fisheries and tube wells destroyed, and those tried to cross the river were shot at. They were eventually forced to eat grass. Several hundred men, women, and children were believed to have died during that time and their bodies thrown into the river (1759).

Ghosh in the chapters titled 'Besieged' and 'Crimes' in *The Hungry Tide* has offered an almost identical account of the government brutalities on the refugees of Marichjhapi. Kusum, Fokir's mother is narrating the harrowing experiences of the refugees before Nirmal. Being an illiterate dalit woman she perhaps does not understand the logic behind killing innocent people for protecting the so-called reserve forest. She questions the civil society, the government and the environment activists in her characteristic way: "who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much so that they are willing to kill us for them? Where do they live, these people, do they have children, do they have mothers, fathers?" (262). These questions have been left unanswered in the novel as both Kusum and Nirmal get killed in the wave of violence. Jalais's observations on the tragedy come very close to Kusum's understanding of the event: "the ease and brutality with which the government wiped off all signs of bustling life which had been built there in last eighteen months were proof for the villages that they were considered completely irrelevant to the more influential urban Bengali community" (Jalais: 1760).

Ghosh has devoted some thirteen chapters with different subtitles to formulate a subversive narrative on Marichjhapi incident. The narrative is constructed through a kind of journalistic reporting, recorded in Nirmal's notebook. The notebook provides a detailed account of location, community, customs, life style, etc. of the Island and its people. Ross Mallick's paper and Annu Jalais's paper have provided him the necessary authentic data on Marichjhapi. A lot of commonalities are found between Nirmal's notebook details and the stated papers. The notebook narrates chronologically the slow build up to the infamous massacre. It begins with the movement of the refugees to Marichjhapi to settle down there. Because unlike the upper caste Hindu Bengali refugees who were allowed to settle down in big cities of West Bengal, the untouchable schedule caste dalits were sent to inhospitable refugee camps outside West Bengal. Kusum narrates the story of her travel to Marichjhapi:

> one night I heard tale of a great march to the east. They passed us next day—like ghosts, covered in dust, strung out in a line, shuffling beside the rail tracks. . . . Once we live in Bangladesh, in Khulna jilla; we ride country people, from the Sundarbans' edge. . . . Rivers ran in our heads, the tides were in our blood. (164-65)

A detailed account of the birth of a new nation of the refugees is given there: "It was an astonishing spectacle—as though an entire civilization had sprouted suddenly in the mud" (191). Ghosh looks at the resettlement of refugees in Marichjhapi as the creation of a new nation exclusively meant for disposed dalits: "a Dalit nation, a safe haven, a place of true freedom for the country's most oppressed" (191). In the chapters titled 'Habits,' 'Transformation' and 'Memory' Ghosh brings in the debates concerning man-environment relationship. He feels that raising the environment issue is just a plea on the part of the government to drive out the refugees from the island. He has shown the harmonious relationship that the refugees possess as far as dealing with nature is concerned. The myths of 'Bon Bibi,' the legends of 'Dokhin Rai' and their associated customs and rituals unequivocally establish the prevalent harmonic relationship between the refugees and the entire natural world including the animals and the marine creatures. The characters like Fokir, Horen, Kusum and others are clearly suggestive of the symbiotic relationship between man and nature. They can never be a threat to the environment which is an integral part of their religion, culture, faiths, and world-view. While sailing to the seat of Bon Bibi, Horen suddenly stops rowing and begins to mumble some mantras. Kusum explains that to Nirmal: "he is a bauley. He knows the mantras that shut the mouths of the big cats. He knows how to keep them from attacking us" (244). The cult of Bon Bibi is handed down through the generations, through the oral traditions of the songs. It is the tutelary deity of the islands. Kusum considers the dolphins to be her supernatural messengers. In addition to that, there is a peculiar fusion of name of Allah with rituals of a puja of Hindu deity, which is suggestive of transcultural fusion of elements from Hinduism and Islam (Rollason: 7).

The probability of the syncretic phenomena in the Sundarbans may be viewed as part and parcel of the Island's human ecosystem, which has a complex relationship with the natural eco system there. Rollason observes: "human ecosystem is, of course, inserted problematically into a natural eco system—or eco-poly system. The migratory dolphins have their own logic, while that of tigers and crocodiles, if part of greater natural whole, is not in any immediate sense compatible with that of the human community those animals they prey on." (*Ibid.*)

Ross Mallick, in the paper 'Refugee Resettlement,' looks at the Marichjhapi incident both as a problem of social discrimination and a crisis of representation. Mallick discovers that even the central Government's Schedule Castes and Tribes Commission did not record the tragedy in its annual report despite being aware of the massacre (111). It was really strange to find that the supporters of certain political party were allowed to occupy and utilize the facilities left by the evicted refugees. The issues of the environment and the forest act were forgotten then (112). The academies, the intellectuals, creative writings of Bengal were surprisingly indifferent to the issue. Mallick claims: "rural untouchable segregation and discrimination is hardly touched on in the Bengali literature" (120). The subaltern series of subaltern voices did not adequately figure out these dalits; it was only in theory not in practice (122). Mallick claims that "the Marichjhapi massacre was soon forgotten by nearly every one except the relatives of the victims" (122). Annu Jalais explains the Marichjhapi incident as a matter of double betrayal for the Sundarbans islanders. Metaphorically, she formulates her opinion to tell that the islanders had become just 'tiger food for Kolkata's Bhadralok' (1758). The islanders had an impression that they were considered lesser mortals situated at the periphery marginalized due to their social inferiority by the Bhadralok—the anglicized, well-connected, educated, moneyed, essentially Hindu upper castes and mainly urban Bengalis (Jalais: 1757). The other betrayal of course came from the then government of West Bengal. The Left Front minister Ram Chatterji had visited the refugee camps which is widely reported to have encouraged them to settle them in the Sundarbans (Mallick: 107). Out of 15000 families, some 4128 families (as many as 17,000) died in transit, from starvation, exhaustion and police firings (114). Jalais puts the figure at seventy-five percent of the Marichjhapi refugees (1761). Kusum in the novel makes a similar observation on the discriminatory attitude of the government as the civil society towards the refugees in the Sundarbans. She says: "the worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It was to sit here, helpless, and listen to the policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, was worth less than the dirt or dust" (261). The characters like Nilima, Kanai, and Piyali in the novel symbolize the government's as well

as the civil society's position on the refugees; where as Kusum, Fokir, Horen, and Nirmal are suggestive of the victims' position.

Amitav Ghosh in *The Hungry Tide* makes a sincere attempt to revisit the Marichjhapi massacre of 1979 and presents a bitter critique on the issue of refugee settlement in the West Bengal. The issue of representation of marginalization of the suppressed voice of the Dalits—the subalterns, has been truly the big agenda of the novel that Ghosh deceptively hides under the cover of man versus nature relationship. The novel raises some highly debatable issues relating to the intricacies of human-environment relationship and the hypocrisy and betrayal relating to the refugee resettlement in the Sundarbans archipelago.

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Diasporic Dilemma and Multiculturalism: A Study of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

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Jhumpa Lahiri is widely acclaimed as an outstanding writer of Asian diaspora in general and Indian diaspora in particular. Though not a writer of large volumes, two anthologies of short stories named *Interpreter of Maladies*: *Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond* and *Unaccustomed Earth* and a novel *The Namesake* has led her to be counted among leading writers like Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Gita Mehta, Shashi Tharoor, Manju Kapur, Shobha De, Rohinton Mistry, Kiran Desai and others. The basic theme of her writings is immigrant experience relating to different sociological components—religion, race and culture based upon loneliness, homelessness, rootlessness, nihilism, existentialism, cultural confrontation in the globalised society, inter pooling and inter netting cross culture, search for root or identity, above all diasporic dilemma. The present paper looks at the diasporic dilemma and cross-culturalism in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*.

The word 'Diaspora' is Greek in origin which means the dispersion of people from their traditional homeland or 'Native Culture' to any other 'Willed Home' or accepted culture. The expression 'Diasporic' is derived from the word 'Diaspora' that means 'Dispersed' or 'fractured' or 'scattered.' 'Dilemma' is also Greek word that means a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between alternatives that are equally undesirable. The coinage 'Diasporic Dilemma' refers to dispersed situation of the people from a land to another culture that makes the migrant difficult to choose. They are within two horns of dilemma where they neither choose nor reject that puts them in the Hamletian mind (to be or not to be). Vassanji categorically and outrightly speaks the reality of diaspora who look into their origin being confronted by

two cultures: "We are but creatures of own origin and however stalworthy we march, paving new road, seeking new worlds, the ghosts from our past . . . are not easily shaken off" (2).

Basically it is seen, all third world texts are mental odysseys towards search for home or identity. These are no better than the allegories of search for real root. They try to express the quantum of their emotional vacancy to compromise with the 'willed home' or 'origin culture' as it is quite exemplary in the case of Caribbean Nobel Laureates like V.S. Naipaul and Derek Walcott. Paul Gilroy discusses the distinct dimension of colonial hybridity, i.e. the intellectual, political and psychological cross-fertilization that resulted from black diasporas (people from Africa & Asia to Europe or Americas). Gilroy points out these movements as 'A Black Atlantic' which defines as an "inter cultural and transnational formation." Gilory shows the extent to which African, American, British and Caribbean diasporic cultures shape each other to a sizeable extent. Such diasporas have generated new and complex identities whose analysis demands new conceptual tools. In this context, Stuart Hall points out: "The term ethnicity has dominantly been used to indicate biologically and culturally stable identities." For Hall, the new black ethnicities visible in contemporary Britain are results of the 'Cut and Mix' process of cultural Diasporaization" (446-47)

Bhabaic and Fanonian theories on Diasporaization speak more about the psychology and genesis of multiculturalization and its formulation. The word 'Multicultural' means more than one culture or several cultural or ethnic groups. Also it relates to cross-culture, a confrontation/ configuration of two or more than two cultures. Now-a-days, the cultural crisis is also a burning and agonizing problem in the psyches of the people of diasporic school. They do not simply suffer, they confess and canonize through their works of art. Their aims and objectives are to find out an easy solution to overtake their psychological tensions that make them hopeless without a home land culture or 'Root.' They are blurred by various spectrums of cultural and ethnic focuses. Very often it is seen that such conflict between traditions creates generational gap that leads to multicultural crisis.

The theme of 'Identity crisis' or 'Root Search' crisis arises out of such cultural blurring and conflicts. This choice process includes the question of assimilation and dissimilation or acceptance. This process is displayed in the works of art. So diasporaization and multiculturalization go hand in hand. There are involvements of different factors, loss of language, family ties and support, insecurity of life for evaluating different cultural vacancies at the cost of religion, race, caste and creed. Rushdie says in his *Imaginary Homelands*: "A full migrant suffers traditionally, a triple disruption. He loses his place, he enters in to alien language, and he finds himself surrounded by beings, whose social behaviour and codes are unlike and sometimes even offensive to his own. And this is what makes a migrant such pathetic figure because norms have been three of the most important parts of the definition of what it is to be a human being."

The writers of this school are also haunted by sense of loss and loneliness and feel even inferior to the people of 'willed home in spite of being enlightened and acclaimed as elites. As they land on the alien shores, their dreams of dollars, better base of belonging, wide range of reputation, sense of superiority are shattered to pieces. As Rushdie tells: "Writers in my position, exiles, immigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some large to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutilated into pillars of salt."

The present paper proposes to discuss Lahiri's sense of diasporic dilemma and cross-cultural contrast presented in her novel *The Namesake*. A sense of homesickness creates dilemmatic mood in the minds of diasporas. The novel opens with a sense of loneliness in the 'willed home'. The female protagonist Ashima, the wife of Ashoke, seems to be in the depth of Indian culture, especially Bengali culture and tradition. In an advanced stage of pregnancy, Indian woman is fond of pickles and sour items. Ashima likes to eat puffed rice that is rich in spice. The Calcuttan Bengali pregnant ladies like to take their fast food at the footpath. That is the homeland memory of Ashima to rehabilitate again in her life being so much engrossed with her homeland tradition.

Ashoke is a Bostonian scholar in technology who suffers from self-imposed migration. Though he is well settled, nostalgic mood

to get back to India and to have Bengali lifestyle and culture haunts his mind. Sometimes, he is blurred by the Hamletian dilemma and feels homeless and helpless. He is disgusted with alien culture and desires to accept his homeland culture. In this way he neither rejects alien culture nor accepts the root absolutely. This is what happens to the actual life of the author Jhumpa Lahiri herself. That's why the novel is supposed to be fictionalised autobiography.

The novel is a story of diasporic dilemma of two generations based upon the confrontation of two cultures—Ashoke and Ashima in one and Gogol and Sonia on another. They go through the constant mental clash of two different cultures—root (Bengali-Indian) and alien (Boston-American] culture. The time period of two generations seems to be about thirty years. They face different problems of two cultures. Their minds oscillate like the pendulum of a clock between the two cultural identities.

Ashima is confined within four walls reading only parents' letters and fine Bengali novels once again. She always broods over Bengali festivals and feasts like Holi and Diwali and Raksha Bandhan. She suffers from female immigrant loneliness—neither an Indian housewife nor a Bostonian woman. The multiple stresses of two different cultures overburden her mind.

Ashima gives birth to a child who is named Gogol after the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. The child is brought up in no-man's land. He is neither considered absolute American nor an Indian in true sense. As Lahiri says: "They all come home to Calcutta and for this reason alone they are all friends. Most of them live within walking distance of one another in Cambridge." (38) This shows the shared history of the diasporic community that suffers from loneliness and cultural dislocation.

Both Ashoke and Ashima can't avoid Bengali festivals & feasts, religious ceremonies and rituals though they have been properly Americanised. They neither reject their homeland culture nor absolutely accept willed land culture. This is quite clear in the involvement of Ashoke and Ashima in the Bengali culture. They celebrate *Annaprasanna* ceremony (New Rice eating festival) of their six-month old Gogol. They accommodate and adjust their diasporic dilemma at this angle. This confrontation of two cultures makes them

ethnically confused. All the near and dear ones are called to share the feast prepared by child's parents. At the same time there is a tension that they may be ridiculed by American neighbours as Indian rustics. So far as their dresses are concerned, Ashoke wears white Punjabi Kurta and Pantaloon and Ashima silvery saree. This shows that the sense of uprootedness disturbs them. In this context one may quote Edward Said: "The person who finds his homeland sweet is still 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 foreign place." (407)

The immigrants find solace in their fellow community. Ashima makes halwa from cream of wheat. American born Gogol is confused socio-culturally at the submission of a project. He can't rub his palms on the gravestone to find the name of a dead man. As Lahiri says: "He was old enough to know that he himself would be burned not buried: his body would occupy no plot of earth, that no stone in the country will bear his name beyond life." (7)

Another transference of culture is seen among diasporas. The first generation diaspora wants to have their homeland culture and transfer it to the second generation. It is through the eyes of older generation that the younger generation thinks the importance of homeland culture and learns to practise it. Ashima sends Gogol to Bengali classes to learn Bengali language and culture. This may be diasporic double standard of life. As Lahiri speaks: "For the sake of Gogol and Sonia they celebrated with progressively increasing fanfare, the birth of Christ, an event children look forward to more than the worship of Durga and Saraswati." (64)

This shows that the Bengali Ganguli couple suffers from multicultural or cross-cultural ailment. Both the Indian Bengali culture and European culture confuse them. They neither absolutely think to live within European culture for the sake of their children nor in their born-culture. They jumble each other—European culture for the sake of their alien dignity since they are under its influence and birth culture for the sake of their root or nativity since they are born and brought up there though educated and established in American culture. They do not want to disturb Gogol and Sonia in their cultural environment. Both Ashoke and Ashima adjust with the food

habits of Gogol and Sonia. Though both Ashoke and Ashima are fond of Bengali food, they don't disturb Gogol and Sonia's American dinner. Diasporic dilemma and cross-culturalism certainly make Indian diasporas unhappy and insecure in their 'willed home.' Here western and Eastern culture inter-cross each other and somehow put both the couple in dilemma as we see this in Kiran Desai's Sai and Gyan episode in their love and romance as well as retired judge's own life in the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*.

There is another instance of dilemma in sociological dimension that relates to the cultures: 'East' and 'West' or 'Homeland' and 'Willed Home.' When Gogol falls in love with an American girl Ruth, both the parents disapprove it. They are not proud of his making friendship in American style. There is intercourse of two cultures to form a hybridized one. They just tell Gogol: "You are too old to get involved with in that way." (17)

Lahiri is proficient in delineating the diasporic tussle in the minds of diasporics. Their dilemmatic position in the society of willed home forces them to build a separate social belongingness to preserve their identity by excelling their traditional values. As Safran says: "They continue to relate personally or vicariously to the homeland in one way or other and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such relationship" (80).

Further Jhumpa Lahiri very successfully presents multicultural context fitting hybridized culture by rejection and acceptance through proper assimilation. Her narration has become living and real about diasporic dilemma and multiculturalism in the story of the Ganguli couple. During their stay in the new home and interaction with the representative culture, the subjectivities and modes of thinking of diaspora also reserve their mind in taking proper decision in the cultural discourse of the dominant culture. Here, hybridized identities are negotiated at the reserve or may remain reserved for ever. Ashoke and Ashima accept the perspective of Gogol and Sonia's second generational multiculture. The children in turn also experience pain and suffering of their parents.

Finally, Ashima decides to live six months in Calcutta and six months in America with Gogol and Sonia—one based on homeland

culture and another on the host culture—nowhere and everywhere. This is nothing but immigrant dilemma. "She is without a home of her own . . . a resident every where" (276).

Gogol's search for identity is a never-ending process. He can neither reject the Indian culture nor accept the alien culture. He belongs to the no man's land, not able to reject or accept. In one of her interviews, Jhumpa Lahiri remarks: "The question of identities is always a difficult one, but especially for those who are culturally displaced as immigrants and who grow up in two worlds simultaneously" (9).

To conclude, since a creative artist sounds the plight and voice of the average and throws the prismatic light on the human dilemmas, one must see that Lahiri never goes out of her parlour in portraying the trauma and tussle of diaspora.

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The Poignant Human Relationship in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth"

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The dazzling story writer Jhumpa Lahiri has penned the collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* not for the Indians that have settled in America but for the next generation born and brought up in the alien land facing the two conflicting cultures: Indian and American. The generation of Ruma and Romi doesn't want to be dragged against their wishes across the globe to visit Calcutta. They feel India as an alien land; they reconcile themselves to the American milieu and adopt its culture and forget the land of their ancestors. But there is a character like Ruma's father who is seventy and who wishes that his grandson Akash should learn some Bengali words and during his stay at his daughter Ruma's house, he attempts to teach Bengali to his grandson. He wants to keep the Indian culture vibrant through at least Bengali:

> "What colour is it?" her father asked.
> "Red."
> "And in Bengali?"
> "Lal."
> "Good."
> "And neel," Akash cried out, "pointing to the sky."[1]

The setting is American. The title story "Unaccustomed Earth" is the story of Romi and Ruma who were born and brought up in America by their Bengali parents.[2] *Unaccustomed Earth* mirrors the conflicting situation of Indian and American cultural milieus which the older generations settled long ago in America have to face and indulge themselves in reminiscences and nostalgia of their far off country called India.

Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* has two parts. Part one contains the title story "Unaccustomed Earth." "Hell-Heaven, A Choice of Accommodations," "Only Goodness, Nobody's Busi-

ness" and the second part contains "Once in a Lifetime," "Year's End," "Going Ashore." My paper focuses on the title story of the book.

Jhumpa Lahiri was born as Nilanjana Sudeshna in London in July 1967 and brought up in South Kingstown, Rhode Island. She won the 2000 Pulitzer prize for her book *Interpreter of Maladies*, the first Asian to do so. She did her bachelors in English literature, following it up with an M.A. in English, an M.A. in Creative Writing, an M.A. in Comparative Literature and finally a Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies. She tied the nuptial knot with Alberto Vourvoulias-Bush, a journalist, in 2001. Her debut book *Interpreter of Maladies* looks into issues concerning the lives of Indians and Indian Immigrants.[3]

The Namesake is Jhumpa Lahiri's first novel. It spans thirty year in the lives of Ganguli family. If offers a novel look at NRIs in the US. Adapted into a film, this one made Jhumpa an icon of Indian writing in English.[4]

After *Interpreter of Maladies* and *Namesake* Jhumpa Lahiri published her third book *Unaccustomed Earth* which was a roaring success. Jhumpa Lahiri stayed put on both Indian and US bestseller charts. *Unaccustomed Earth* by this second generation American sold 45,000 copies in India, spelling huge success for Random House India. The amazing thing about Jhumpa Lahiri was to see an established author break her track-record and emerge more popular than ever.[5]

Ruma was living in a suburb of Seattle with her American husband Adam. They had recently moved in from Brooklyn to Seattle in the spring, for Adam's job. They had a little son Akash. Ruma's mother was not favourably disposed towards Adam as he was an American. She had married Adam against her parents' wishes. "Her mother had told her again and again that, you are ashamed of yourself of being an Indian that is the bottom line." "Ruma knew what a shock it was, she had kept her other involvements with American men a secret from her parents until the day she announced she was engaged." (26) Later on, Ruma's mother reconciled herself with Adam especially after her grandson Akash was born. Ruma's father had been working for decades in a pharmaceutical company. He re-

tired shortly after his wife's demise. All were full of expectations and assumptions that she would recover after a minor surgery for gallstone but she had died on the operation table as she had reacted adversely to the Rocuronium used to relax her muscles for the procedure." (20)

Shortly after his wife's death Ruma's father had set out on package tours, travelling in Europe. He had most recently visited Italy and was arranging to visit Prague. He was feeling impatient to go on the tour as he was going to meet Mrs. Bagchi, sixty years old rather younger than his wife and of Indian origin especially Bengali. He was going to "sleep next to her at night." (53)

Before going to Prague, he had decided to visit and spend at least a week with his daughter. He was visiting his daughter Ruma, her husband Adam and his grandson Akash for the first time after they had moved in from Brooklyn to Seattle. Whenever he was on package tours, she kept herself informed about his scheduled flights, she did not miss the news on T.V. to be sure that her father's plane did not meet with an accident and that he was safe. This indicates Ruma's filial love and care towards her father. She nostalgically remembers that her father respected her brother Romi more for having graduated from Princeton and getting a Fulbright to go abroad. She knew she had disappointed him, getting rejected by all the Ivy Leagues. The frail bond existed between Ruma and her father. His son Romi had forsaken his parents and settled somewhere in New Zealand. His son was not to be blamed as he had also left his old parents behind in Calcutta and settled in America with his young wife, Ruma's mother. He visited his old parents occasionally, flying from the west coast of America via Bangkok by Thai airlines. He was not present when his parents breathed their last or at the operation table when his wife kicked the bucket. At that time he was sipping a coffee in the hospital's cafeteria.

Ruma's father was overcome with dread that he would be alone while facing death as he was living alone in Pennsylvania. That's why he was probably hungering after companionship in his old age. It was not for the sake of carnal and erotic desire but for the habit of companionship especially after his wife's death. Mrs. Meenakshi Bagchi was the only Bengali woman on his package tours, she was

sixty, younger than his dead wife, and he was already seventy. He lied to his daughter, telling her that he was not in love with any woman. But the spirit, vitality and energetic disposition that he displayed during his stay at Ruma betrayed him. And the postcard completely exposed him after his departure. He kept this secret to his heart lest it should explode the myth that her father still loved and reminisced his wife. But the video cassette shot by him during the package tours while being shown on Ruma's TV, she had a glimpse of the Bengali woman in the film. And the way he exuded liveliness and vibrancy during his stay at his daughter's house gave her indirect hints that her father had fallen in love with someone. Later on, the postcard which he had written to Mrs. Bagchi in Bengali strengthens her doubt that he was in love.

The story of Mrs. Meenakshi Bagchi is poignant and depressing. The man whom she had loved since her girlhood and married him was no more; he had met with an accident. She had left India before her parents could marry her off again. She had overcome all odds in America as she was the Indian in that alien land called America and on acquiring a Ph.D. she had started her career as a professor and had not remarried. She remembered her husband. Even after the eternal separation by death, she was faithful to him. On the package tour Ruma's father and Mrs. Bagchi were the two Indians belonging to one culture and both were experiencing the excruciating pangs of separation from one's life partner, so they might have fallen in love with each other just for sake of the habit of companionship.

> The prospect of her companionship all the more appealing. He closed his eyes and thought of her face, which was still full, though he guessed she was probably almost sixty, only five or six years younger than his wife. She wore Western clothing, cardigans and black pull-on slacks and styled her thick dark hair in a bun. It was her voice that appealed to him most, well modulated her words always measured. (9)

During his sojourn at his daughter's house he takes a voluntary charge of her kitchen and the garden. He lends his helpful hand to her as his daughter is expecting her second child and Adam her husband is away on a business tour. He is expert in washing and drying dishes after dinner. He doesn't let the water overflow in the sink. He

has learnt these chores, especially after his wife's death. As he lives alone in Pennsylvania in a small apartment, he has got to carry out these chores. In the garden he plants the flowering bushes and waters them. He is an expert in nurturing the garden.

His passion for gardening reminds Ruma of how her father stayed out in the garden until it grew dark, subjecting himself to bug bites and rashes and neither Romi nor Ruma was interested in helping him in the garden. Both Ruma and Romi have no green fingers. Ruma knew her father missed gardening and that is why he had all of a sudden shown keen interest in her garden in the backyard. She also remembers that her father had grown expert in cultivating things in the garden her mother liked to cook. When he entered the garden, he saw delphiniums were in the pathetic condition. They were drooping, he knew if he did not water them, they would not survive. He asked for a kettle and started watering the plants.

> She stood by the window and watched her father water the flowers, his head bent, his eyebrows raised. She listened to the sound of the water hitting the earth in a forceful, steady stream. It was a sound that vaguely embarrassed her as if he were urinating in her presence.'17)

She felt flattered as he showed keen interest in her garden. He wanted to make it beautiful. One day in the morning he bought bags of topsoil, a shovel, a rake, and a hose. He dug and worked in the garden until it was dusk because after dusk mosquitoes were out. He got more things; a bale of peat moss, bags of mulch and composted manure. By the time he was about to leave, the garden was beautiful. While working in the garden, he taught a few Bengali words to his grandson Akash. This indicated he has forgotten neither his mother tongue nor his culture while the generation of his daughter Ruma and son Romi have forgotten their Indian culture in its entirety and merged completely with the alien culture and milieu. As for Ruma's father, he has adhered to his culture: while his wife was alive, he did not cheat on her. The only fault that he has is reticence.

Ruma knew her father was good at washing and drying dishes. "He often claimed that standing up right for fifteen minutes helped him to digest." (16) Her father never ran the water while he soaped everything. He waited until the plates and pans were ready to be rinsed and until then it was only the quiet, persistent sound of the

sponge that could be heard." (24) He knew how to do and dry the dishes and scrub and dry the inside of the sink. He made his breakfast and coffee for him and cereals sometimes for his grandson. His relationship with Akash improves and he starts doting on him. He helped him put on his pajamas, brush his teeth, and combed his soft damp hair. He took him for a walk along the lake, bought a special tub for him and allowed him to play in the garden while he was working there. Akash called him Dadu. He advised his daughter to work and build her career by reminding her of the importance of self-reliance and by telling her that life is full of surprises. "Self-reliance is important, Ruma," he continued, "life, is full of surprises. Today you can depend on Adam, on Adam's job. Tomorrow, who knows." (38)

At this time Ruma remembers her mother that if she had been alive, she would have been proud of her and supportive to her, and she might not have insisted on her working.

Before saying a goodbye to Ruma, he gave her instructions about how to take care and nurture the garden especially the hydrangea which he had planted in the memory of his wife but Ruma assumed that it did not prove that he had really loved and respected her mother.

She asks her father to live with them because she has understood that her father is self-sufficient and self-reliant and he can be of great help to her in the kitchen and in the garden as well. He realizes that it is not her sincere filial duty and love but selfishness and meanness that make her say that he should stay and help her. He makes it clear to her that he doesn't want to be a burden on her.

He writes a postcard to Mrs. Bagchi in Bengali and intends dropping it in the mailbox on his way home. He asks Ruma for a stamp, too. After writing the postcard he tucks it into a book about the city of Seattle. But just before leaving he realizes to his horror that the postcard is missing from the book. He rummages through the contents of everything but to no avail. As he gets delayed, he leaves for the airport. Akash wakes up to find that his Dadu has left. He looks for his Dadu and following him in the garden she stumbles on a soiled postcard written in Bengali and addressed to Mrs. Bagchi. She cannot decipher Bengali. Her mother knew Bengali. If she

were alive, she would read it for her. However, this revelation confirms her doubt that her father has fallen in love with the Bengali woman she had seen in that video film on her T.V. She realizes that her father has lied to her. Nevertheless, she cleans the postcard and affixes a stamp and decides to mail it to Mrs. Bagchi, the newly-found love and companion of her father. Ruma's consideration shows her understating, sympathy and the need of her father for companionship in his old age. "From the drawer she took out the roll of stamps and affixed to the card, for the mailman, later in the day, to take away."(59)

Jhumpa Lahiri's creative writing is exceptionally appealing. As far as her style is concerned, it can be ranked with that of Ernest Hemingway, Ruskin Bond and William Dalrymple. All these writers write with an almost biblical simplicity. Jhumpa uses eloquent dialogues to put her ideas across. Her style hardly borders on high-flown, turgid, and grandiose, e.g. "I am about to head off to dinner with a client. How is Akash?" I wish I could fall asleep," Adam said, "I am wiped"[25]

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Women in Manju Kapur's Novels: Journey from Caterpillar to Butterfly

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The cocoon containing the larva inside though appears dormant and inactive to human eyes, yet scientific research proves long chains of processes going on inside, to change it finally into a beautiful butterfly. The process is full of pain and agony and each larva has to face it to win as a reward the first flight of freedom it takes in the open air. The same process of strains and immeasurable pain, women protagonists—externally appearing dormant—undergo in the novels of Manju Kapur, to change themselves from 'social woman' or the woman society wants them to be to 'individual woman' or the woman they want themselves to be. No matter how agonizing the whole process is, the final emancipation is worth all the pains.

Though all the three women characters under study (Virmati, Astha and Nina) are placed in different situations, hail from different family backgrounds and tied in different modes of marriage, yet their basic problem is the same, 'identity crisis,' both at natal and marital homes. They all grow up with an idea of themselves, an image rather, and spend their lives trying to live up to it.

A time comes when these women find themselves trapped and absorbed in daily routine of living like the conventional women, whose urge always is to survive. But survival is not the only intention and interest of Kapur's women protagonists. They don't simply want to live life because they are born; fulfilling the roles imposed on them socially. They in fact want to live with dignity, with their heads held high at least in front of their own image in mirror. They want to remain honest to their own selves—their real selves. They have their individual demands and desires which cannot be crushed simply because they are daughters, wives and mothers. First and foremost they are human beings—individuals. Their conscious minds always keep them aware of the bit by bit erosion of their per-

sonalities. Though their innate feminine traits of patience and forbearance keep them quiet for some time but that doesn't mean they are scared to revolt. They rather try their best to keep a balance between their individuality and social responsibility. They are like Shashi Deshpande's cliffhangers—hanging on to their expected social roles by the tips of their fingers, but when it threatens to completely wash out their individualities, they let go and this 'letting go' is the final stage in their emancipation.

The three novels of Manju Kapur under study, *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman* and *The Immigrant* can be read both individually and also as part of an oeuvre that depicts the journey of women from self-negation to self-recognition. These novels show a progression in the development of feminist thought. The women in each novel grow up intellectually and psychologically. The movement is always forward; it is from self-denial to self-acceptance, from a woman fulfilling social roles to self-fulfilling-individual.

Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* is portrayed as a woman fighting for her own choice of life both as a young girl and as an adult. Born in an orthodox patriarchal family, she had to fight for her rights from an early childhood. Virmati had seen her mother uncomplainingly toiling in the confined boundaries of her marital home. The responsibility of younger siblings and aiding the ailing mother in her domestic work had robbed away her childhood from Virmati. It also hindered her studies. Even as a small girl, she was not impressed by her mother's life or her silent forbearance. Her cousin sister Shakuntala's carefree and independent life had opened up before her the prospect of huge arena which could be a part of woman's destiny.

Virmati's struggle for establishing and then sustaining her 'personhood' was tougher because she had to undergo a severe trauma both before and after marriage. She had to suffer physically, mentally and emotionally. Virmati's torture began the moment she decided to live a life of her own choice. She fell in love with Harish, a professor and married man and revolted against the loveless marriage which her parents had arranged. Though the affair between Virmati and the professor was based on mutual consent, yet she was sure that she will have to fight her own battle without looking up to the professor for any support. Her drastic step of attempting suicide

shows the sternness of her decision of not compromising with her choice of life even if she had to die for it. However she is saved and she had to undergo a hellish experience for her bold step.

Being a woman naturally gifted with the virtue of patience, Virmati stood physical pain much better, and she was capable of stoical courage as the circumstances demanded it. Though she lacked 'aggressive audacity' but she had 'the tenacity in passive resistance' (Beauvoir). She continued her struggle in the darkness of storeroom where she was confined. She found herself reduced to the level of lifeless sacks of grains there. But her mind continued ceaselessly exercising on the treadmill of just one thought—her devotion for the professors' love. However, the professor's wife's pregnancy gave a severe blow to Virmati. She sought solace, from this betrayal, in furthering her studies.

Virmati's love for the professor was in no way an adolescent infatuation which could be easily erased from her memory. The rebel in her challenged the social taboos by responding to her bodily desires and surrendering physically to the man of her life. What followed next was a panorama of heart-rending events which demanded a Herculean effort to remain intact to one's choice in life. Her distraction from her studies, her unwanted pregnancy and the agonizing abortion—all Virmati had to bear alone. Whenever she needed the professor he was not there; he rather remained busy in his familial duties. Virmati's self-centred world and her loneliness was more emphasized by being in the midst of women who had made graver and dignified issues, concerning the nation, their priority in life.

The pull and push factor, between the traditional and modern woman inside Virmati, was so intense that we are always in a state of confusion as to who will take over whom. In spite of so many variations in decisions, she finally succeeded in marrying the professor. But was it a success in the true sense? Had her struggle come to an end? Surely not. Her struggle and her fight for her proper right at her marital home were equally painful. Virmati's awareness of her emotional exploitation at the hands of the professor had unnerved her even before marriage but now, when he was her husband, she could not let herself be corroded internally. Leaving her

marital home, her husband, her rival Ganga behind, she once again went to Lahore. There the activity and mental strength of a small girl shook her, as if, from a stupor. She assessed herself: 'I too must take a stand. I have tried adjustment and compromise, now I will try non-cooperation.' She resolved to no longer fight Ganga with 'cunning guile or seduction.' The New Woman in her 'didn't care if she never had a home, children, if she cut off her nose to spite her face.' She declared boldly that she would not return to her husband's home so far her 'deserving space' is not provided to her and she remained resolute. She returned to him only when the professor sent away his whole family to Kanpur.

Virmati abandoned her journey midway. The right for which she fought so long, though she gained it at last, yet her emancipation was not complete. She grew wings but her wings were crippled by marital obligations. She accepted silently the tamed life of a house wife and a traditional mother who saw in her daughter as Simone De Beauvoir says 'the duplication of the past.' Though from a feminist viewpoint her journey remained incomplete, yet the fact that Virmati was an iconoclast—breaking the mute mumbling image of a woman—cannot be denied. Neither can we overlook the small victories which she gained while rebelling against the prescribed conventional norms and values. Her partially complete journey was continued by Astha, the protagonist of Manju Kapur's second novel—*A Married Woman*.

'Astha was brought up properly, as befits a woman, with large supplements of fear.' As a small child Astha never exposed her feeling of emotional negligence to any one; even to her own parents who could not understand her field of interest. She was tired of their over-care and over-expectation, which crushed her individual personality. Her parents, not much bothered about her likes and dislikes, wanted her to like and expect the things which social norms find fit for a girl.

The financial insecurity of her family taught Astha to adjust and compromise and it never let her original self bloom. Two unsuccessful love affairs made her desperate to get settled and yearn for marital security. Her real struggle began after she got married to the foreign returned Hemant. After marriage she was hopeful of finding

her soul mate in her husband, who would give full recognition to every aspect of her personality. However Astha realized with dismay that 'the tragedy of marriage is not that it fails to assure woman the promised happiness—there is no such thing as assurance in regard to happiness—but that it mutilates her; it dooms her to repletion and routine.' (Beauvoir)

The repetition of daily chores and the belittling attitude of her husband made Astha realize the nothingness to which she was gradually reduced. She fulfilled the social roles of a daughter, a wife and a mother but in doing so, somewhere she had lost Astha the woman. She realized this on meeting Aijaz—a man who trusted her worth. His encouragement and faith in her, rekindled Astha's desire to live a life which Astha—the woman—would have liked to live. Aijaz's death, on the other, gave her a purpose in life. She became a part of the 'manch.' Her talent of painting which was subdued from her childhood now got a vent. It won her a prestigious position in the outside world and the financial security which her teaching job had given her but partially. She became woman of the world.

Failure to find a soul-mate in a patronizing husband and her inability to help her widowed mother emotionally drained Astha. She badly needed a strong emotional support. In this tumultuous state of emotions. Astha came across Pipeelika—the young vibrant widow of Aijaz. Looking down from the safe dull haven of her family life, her husband, her children, Astha envied Pip's freedom, her bohemian life style, her independence in her small two-roomed flat. She too took courage and responded to the demands of woman inside her. It was the time she needed to shift the focus from her husband, children or mother to herself. Her relation with Pipeelika gave her the emotional, spiritual and physical pleasure which she found wanting in men's world. She had sexual gratification from her husband but she always nursed a feeling of being unloved and emotionally neglected. She could be satisfied with physical and material pleasures only in the phase of immaturity. A mature and conscious woman inside Astha could not stand the fragmented recognition of her individuality. She fought for it. She stretched her individuality only to the extent it did not reach the 'breaking point' and before it

she recoiled herself back to the expected normal position. The elasticity of her personality shows the development in her.

Though the typical social values did not let her become emotionally free from her marital home, we know that it is her husband who will have to accommodate the changed reality because Astha has crossed what Malashri Lal calls the 'threshold.' She need not leave her marital home or continue the open revolt but she certainly has changed the place she inhabits. She is now aware of her needs and desires and ready to fight for them anytime. The 'dumb dame stigma' has now withered away. Her negating Pipilika's proposal and coming back to Hemant kept her journey incomplete. The larva had come out of the cocoon and even changed into butterfly but the wings were still immature. However, they carried her higher in the horizon from where the orthodox patriarchal bias appeared just as miniature black dots representing birds returning to their nests, in the huge canvas of a sunset scenery. This developed woman's journey is completed by Nina—the woman protagonist of Manju Kapur's next novel *The Immigrant*.

Nina's journey begins where Astha's ends. Nina is already a financially independent woman running her family which comprises herself and her mother. Her teaching profession gives her a decent life. Her unmarried status does not debar her from fulfilling her physical passions with her married colleague, Rahul. Her marriage with Ananda is not as arranged as was Astha's to a completely new man. In fact Nina takes her own time, in giving positive response to Ananda's offer. Again it is her own choice not to work after marriage and enjoy cozy home life. She is not a submissive shy wife attending to husband's errands. However her problem is different. The sexual weakness of her husband does not let her enjoy her conjugal life fully and it poses a barrier in her way to motherhood.

Nina's struggle begins with her fight for motherhood which she considers as a natural right of every woman. However, the husband's disability unconsciously develops inferiority complex in him which in turn never lets him emotionally reach out to his wife. His male ego does not let him opt for couple therapy for his sexual weakness. He rather prefers a surrogate for his treatment. On disclosure of this, Nina gets a severe jolt. She could somehow bear a bar-

ren womb but could never bear an emotionally barren relationship, in which the husband takes his wife for granted. Nina is completely unaware of any details about her husband except the fact that he is a dentist and he had struggled hard to establish himself in Canada. Her loneliness in a small flat in a foreign land is very similar to the loneliness of Maya in a new city in Shobha De's novel *Second Thoughts*. Except routine sex (which every time failed to gratify her passions) with her husband there is nothing which would give her the false illusion of a happy marriage. With bitterness and anguish, Nina faces the pangs when she is forced to accept the superiority of culture and way of life of Canadians and feel obliged to her husband for providing her the luxuries of life. But neither the materialistic pleasures nor the tag of NRI could fill in the vacuum which emotional bankruptcy had brought in her life.

Nina starts her own struggle and joins a part-time job in a library. She becomes a member of the feminist club much against her husband's wish. She starts pursuing library science course. Her unsatisfied sex life brings her close to Anton. 'Her loneliness welled up and overcame her' and she surrenders herself physically to him. Sexual fulfillment made her realize the difference between 'staying alive' and 'living a life.' Not an iota of guilt was there in her for 'who can feel guilty about living.' She is a 'New Woman' and for her every woman has equal right to sexual pleasure as their male counterparts. For the first time 'she had a sense of her own self, entirely separate from other people, autonomous, independent.' She hopes of getting involved in a permanent affair with Anton, but her hopes are shattered to see his indifference at the institute. 'She has the wherewithal to acquire a lover, but not the ability to sustain a life in which her emotions were independent of men.'

Nina tasted the liberating force of sex with Anton. She rationalized her extra-marital relation on the ground that she had every right to happiness and every kind of pleasure. However both—love without sexual fulfillment and sexual gratification without love—brought nothing but distress in her life. Nina started loving Anton but for him she was just a body he enjoyed and this he had kept clear right from the beginning. For Nina, Anton changed from a body to an understanding human being who could comprehend even

her unspoken words and then to a man who made her feel desirable. Nina not only liked Anton's virility, she also started finding in him an escape from the cold, drab, passionless and forever obliging life with her husband.

No matter how liberating sex with a virile foreigner had appeared to her initially but to her dismay she discovered that in her struggle for her sexual rights, she was actually degenerated into a mere body with no heart and emotion. She had turned out into a sex machine between the two men in her life—her husband who used her to gain sexual efficiency and Anton who used her as a time pass, compensating for his wife's absence. None of them were concerned about the throbbing heart inside the body they used so freely. Nina's visit to India; her home and her friend Zenobia, made her turn the lens towards her own self and she saw the woman inside in a dilapidated condition. She decides to take charge of her own life and preserve her real self against any exploitation. However she is totally unaware of the greater catastrophe awaiting her when she returns to Canada—her rape by Anton to whom she had willingly submitted for so long; her mother's sudden death and her discovery of her husband's infidelity at a time when she is struggling all alone with her dead mother's last rights. All these incidents engulf her one after the other like the gradually increasing waves of Tsunami. But instead of letting her shattered self scatter into pieces and get submerged under the huge waves eternally, she musters herself and vows to be her own anchor instead of finding it in someone else. This vow makes her a strong person and finally enables her to free herself from every bond. With her academic success and her hope of getting a job, she finally confronts her husband and boldly declares 'I need to be by myself . . . away from you.' The emancipation of woman is complete here. Nina packing her bags and leaving for Fredericton is an enhanced personality. 'She has sloughed off her old skin and made a quiet but decisive break with the past.'

The struggle and straining does not however end in Nina. The three protagonists symbolize the small ripples which are seen in the vast water bodies before the arrival of huge Tsunami waves, which would one day drown all the biased patriarchal norms and taboos which constrain woman's life. Many Virmatis, Asthas and Ninas all over the world, will have to fight their individual battles and con-

tribute to the waves which would wipe out the gender discrimination which women have to bear from eternity. It might take days, months or years for this Tsunami of social change to come but it has to come one day. No heroic Gods would land from Mount Olympus to bring this change. It has to be brought by the so-called meek, fragile and delicate women themselves. It has to come from inside. No man-made weapon, no armor would achieve the freedom women have been expecting from time immemorial. The most crucial weapon is the urge to be free, the mental power and the determination to achieve this freedom.

The women worldwide are struggling and suffering in process of their emancipation. Though their suffering lacks heroic grandeur expected of a tragic heroine yet their contribution in adjusting the lens of social binoculars, to view 'an individual' inside every woman, cannot be neglected. What Manju Kapur intends to show us through the struggle of her heroines is how common women realize their rights, priorities; identify ungratified desires and work towards their fulfillment. They are not hesitant to express their passions, whims or frivolities. Their little victories are important for they finally lead to their emancipation. And these women are very common and contemporary. They represent the women in my home, or may be the lady next door or the one I met at the bus stop or at the parking lot or the one who collided with me at the mega mart yesterday. Or is it the one I saw in the mirror of my washroom this morning!!

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Research Scholar

Shifting Identities: Re-Invention of the Self in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices*

DEVASREE CHAKRAVARTI & G.A. GHANSHYAM

> It is easier to live through someone else than to complete yourself. The freedom to lead and plan your own life is frightening if you have never faced it before. It is frightening when a woman finally realizes that there is no answer to the question 'who am I' except the voice inside herself. (Betty Friedan)

The quest for identity has been an eternal one plaguing mankind since times immemorial. However for a woman the search for her identity was even unthinkable in a patriarchal setup a few centuries ago. But 'she' has walked quite a long distance from those times and has arrived at an important juncture wherein myriad possibilities and pathways to self-identification entice her to choose.

A woman is like the sand dunes that transform every second into a new form and shape; like the desert sand she blows with the wind creating new identities for herself. In case of a migrant, the process of self-identification is more complex and fluid. A migrant in the words of Rushdie come unstuck from their roots and for a woman to thrive without them is an impossible task. So she has to strike her roots into the new soil and create herself anew.

A woman has always been an enigma; a mystery, who is far more capable of adaptation and flexible to change; a capability she imbibes from a young age as a result of social conditioning. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has given a voice to the enigmatic persona of a woman; the carrier and protector of her culture, and the disguised enchantress possessing secret powers of magic. In *The Mistress of*

Spices she represents the shifting nature of a woman's identity and her powers of transformation.

Tilo, the protagonist of her novel, represents the journey of a woman not only from innocence to maturity but a voyage that criss-crosses the realm of reality and magic, and transcends the confines of geographical borders and cultural specifications. She symbolizes a woman's quest for identity that evolves and transforms with every milestone in her life.

Born as Nayan Tara, she is the unwelcome arrival for her parents: "They named me Nayan Tara, Star of the Eye, but my parents' faces were heavy with fallen hope at another girl-child, and this one coloured like mud" (7). To be born a woman in a patriarchal society that prefers male heirs to a female one to the extent that a girl child is killed at birth, is a burden in itself but to be born in shades of brown; a colour we as Indians are genetically inclined towards is an added curse. We criticize other cultures for their prejudice against coloured people but we ourselves subject our own to the same treatment. Just look up any matrimonial advertisement and try finding a single ad for a bride that doesn't include the word 'fair' as a part of the specifications.

Nayan Tara grows up unloved but she does have a latent gift that empowers her. Alienated and ignored, the emptiness inside her gradually transforms into a rage that gives her the power to foresee. She became "Nayan Tara, the name which also means Star-seer" (8). But love she did not receive and the fear that made people bow down before her filled her with disdain; it could not fill the sad emptiness growing inside her.

Her urge to escape is realized when the pirates pillage her village and kidnap her. She now becomes Bhagyawati, "Bringer of Luck" (19). The loss of her family and the ensuing pain within, she carries forth into her new life as the queen of the pirates. Even in her situation, she takes all blame upon herself. A woman has no desire, no dreams to dream and no goal to reach. If she does break this circle, only disaster can happen and the torment of guilt is for her to bear.

Divakaruni alludes to the realm of the magic silently working out its spell beyond the veils of reality when she mentions the snakes. "Snakes. Oldest of creatures, closest to the earth mother, all

sinew and glide against her breast. Always I have loved them" (21). Tilo is enamoured of the snakes; the myth of the snakes that is associated with the fertility ritual. They are the symbols of the feminine principle, the mother goddess that have been marginalized in a patriarchal cultural set-up. Divakaruni presents the snakes as the hidden truth of this world; invisible to the human eye, living in the depths of the oceans.

> All fertility goddesses, including Kali, are associated with snakes. Snakes are symbols of renewal—they shed their skin regularly and rejuvenate themselves just like the earth restores its fertility each year. Snakes are also symbols of kundalini, the seed of occult wisdom that lies coiled in all beings, waiting to be aroused by various Tantrik practices. (Mohanty 18)

Tilo's fascination with the snakes symbolizes the deep connection that Divakaruni establishes with the feminine principle integral to nature and to a woman. The snakes renew themselves and are also mythologized to have the shape-shifting ability; likewise Tilo also renews herself every time in a new situation and in a new environment.

It is the sea serpents that tell Tilo about the magical island of the spices. They plead with her to stay as their Sarpa Kanya, snake maiden, but the call of destiny is too strong for her to dismiss. She sets out for a secret world that is beyond the realms of this ordinary, geographical world of our reality; a world of women, a world of spices and magic. Reaching the island to be born again, she wipes off all memories of her past. "Who am I? I could not say. Already my name had faded in the rising sun, like a star from a night that has passed away" (33).

A fighter she is and even in the world of spices, she remains a strong-willed woman with a mind of her own. She is no longer a captive of her circumstances but aware of the destiny calling out to her. Here it is she who chooses a name for herself, "Tilottama, the essence of til, life-giver, restorer of health and hope" (42). But she is also the namesake of the beautiful apsara of Indra's court, the most elegant dancer who disobeys and is banished to live the life of a mortal on earth. Tilo is however unperturbed and chooses the name; a sign of the path that her own life would soon take her along.

She is destined to live in a land synonymous with freedom and liberty; the land of dreams, America, yet even there she is bound to her oath as the mistress of the spices. Performing the role of the soothsayer and healer, she brings respite to the problems and ailments of the people flocking to her store. Everyone reaches out to her for a remedy but she herself cannot reach out to anybody. This is the life she chose for herself; a life of isolation and loneliness, bound by the secret oath to her art and tied down to a body not her own. She is the old, wrinkled, old lady of the spice store; unattractive and withered. A woman is an enticer, an enchantress; her innate fire of life is to be restrained otherwise it will burn and scald.

In French Feminist criticism, woman's writing is an expression of her through her body; body is language through which the woman gives an expression to her feminine experience and consciousness. To behold a young, attractive body wouldn't suit the stereotyped image of the healer and soothsayer; it would be too much of a temptation to resist. And so Tilo when she becomes the spice shop owner is transformed into an old woman. In conventional patriarchal imagination, a strong, independent, free-willed and beautiful woman is a threat to the patriarchal set-up; she either needs to be restrained and confined or stripped of her external glory. A woman can be revered as the Devi or the slave; she has no right to be human. Her identity as a female is not complementary to that of a human being positioned at an equal level with the man, in fact it exists at the sub-human level; the other.

In the traditional mythologies, Devi or the goddess is portrayed as a celestial being in possession of divine powers and great beauty; the divine mother, Gauri or Lakshmi. Here again she is not human but more than human; someone who is to be venerated and worshipped, someone to be held in awe of and admired from a distance.

Tilo is stripped of her youth and constrained in her role as the mistress of the spices, yet her original 'self' is not destroyed only suppressed, which often reveals itself in her silent rage; "This disguise falling like old snakes around her feet, and I rising red and new and wet-gleaming." (49). Tilo is not a Devi, she is a lone woman; her unbridled spirit is domesticated in her withered image like the "female deities [who] were either sidelined or demonized"

(Mohanty 120) with the gradual transformation of the human society into a patriarchal one.

She is to heal and empathize with her own people but is not to get involved in their sufferings personally. It is in her role as the mistress that she becomes aware of the struggles and trauma of the immigrants like her; re-creating their identity in an alien land. Haroun, Geeta and her grandfather, Jaggi and Lalita are some of the immigrant characters portrayed in the novel who seek the help of the mistress to solve their problems; physical, emotional and psychological.

Her own invisible identity as an immigrant; bound by tradition and aspiring for assimilation into the new is a reflection of all the immigrant identities around her. Haroun and Jaggi face the usual dilemma of an immigrant like problems of adjustment, racism and alienation. The women on the other hand walk the tight rope between their dual roles of being a preserver and carrier of culture and her emerging new identity in the host culture. Geeta is the only daughter of her parents, their pride and love but the moment she voices her individuality, her family falls apart and she has to leave home. Her choice of a partner not from her community, but a white man, a Chicano, breaks the traditional link that binds her to her community and her family; a dishonour. Incidents similar to this particular incident are not uncommon and have often led to violence and murder. Rushdie cites such an incident as one of the inspirations for his novel *Shame*, wherein the father kills his daughter in the name of honour.

The other woman immigrant whose plight stands out in the novel is that of Lalita. Married to a man much older to her in age, she is devoid of identity and is merely referred to as Ahuja's wife. Her interaction with Tilo and the magic of her remedy gives her the strength to fight back her abusive husband and finally flee from the trauma of marital rape and violence. Tilo, true to her name is the giver of life and strength to this battered woman. The magic she creates that results in the emergence and assertion of Lalita's identity are not merely the magic of the spices but her own; it is inherent in her empathy and concern for another human being.

Identity for a woman can never be static but bound by her relations, transforming as they transform: she is born as a daughter,

grows up to be a wife and ages as the mother. The answer to the crucial question 'Who am I?' is not one but manifold and shifting. Tilo heals the people who come to her; she always has a solution for their problems but when it comes to her own life, she is confused and afraid. She is apprehensive of the outcome if she stepped out of the line; the 'lakshman rekha' that kept her in 'place.' The first time she decides to break the code set out for the mistress of the spices, she muses, "Today I plan to stretch my wings, to crack perhaps these shells and emerge into the infinite spaces of the outside world. It frightens me a little. I must admit this" (125).

Her sensitive heart and a willingness to help others makes Tilo reach out to Lalita, Geeta, Haroun and finally to Raven. Defying all codes of conduct and warnings of the spices and the Old One she embraces the love of Raven in whose quest of identity and struggle she recognizes her own dilemma. Nayan Tara's journey reaches its destination in the acceptance of her own desires and dreams; the actual destiny that she was avoiding and hiding away from. The disguise behind which she had so long hidden is torn away by the spices and she is abandoned by them. To be born anew again she is stripped of the identity she had been possessing. Raven gives her a new name, Maya, "In the old language it can mean many things. Illusion, spell, enchantment, the power that keeps this imperfect world going day after day" (317), and Tilo wants such a name to move forth in her life: "I need a name like that, I who now have only myself to hold me up." (317). She leaves with her love in search for his dream but reality beckons her back. She breaks free of all illusions and accepts her new identity, relation and responsibility.

Jasbir Jain in the article "Positioning the 'Post' in Post-Feminism: Reworking of Strategies" claims that the contemporary era is the era of post-feminism, which is the third stage in the feminist struggle. According to Jain, "It is an attempt to extend the area of women's roles and of their questioning of relationships in order to drive home the point that the self does not exist in isolation." (Jain 83). Tilo or finally Maya, realizes: she makes her own choice in life to break free from the things that were holding her back, she chooses her path herself by listening to her heart. However her choice cannot be termed an escape or a path of self-gratification because she also chooses to come back to the city and the people who

still need her rather than escape into the dreams of an earthly paradise.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has very dexterously juxtaposed the world of spices with that of women, as a metaphor of her life and identity; the ever-changing, altering world of the spices that creates something new whenever they are used. A woman also assimilates, transforms and evolves with the changing circumstances of her life, especially when she is placed in the position of an immigrant. Tilo's search and final realization of the self is a result of the ongoing process of self-identification that characterizes the shifting nature of a woman's identity.

> If you try to view yourself through the lenses that others offer you, all you will see are distortions; your own light and beauty will become blurred, awkward, and ugly. Your sense of inner beauty has to remain a very private thing. (John O'Donohue, Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom)

Conventionally the identity of a woman is dictated by what others perceive her to be as per the dictates of the society. She is not her own person but an image adjusting and accommodating as per the image pre-determined for her. This identity is not the genuine identity but a distortion of the self; an illusion. The real Tilo remains a false image till she realizes her true calling as Maya; a persona in which her 'self,' the inherent 'I' in her identity amalgamates with her other 'I's constructed out of her identity with her people and her love.

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The Legacy of Diaspora in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and *Desirable Daughters*

KAVITA TYAGI

> On the margin of European culture, and alienated from his own, the 'coloured' (person) is an artifact of colonial history, marginal man par excellence. He is a creature of two worlds, and of none. Thrown by a specific history, he remains stranded on its shores even as it recedes; and what he comes into is not so much a twilight world, as a world of false shadows and false light. (A. Sivanandan, *Alien Gods*, 104-18)

Migration was a common phenomenon in the twentieth century. Derived from the Greek verb (speiro) which means to sow and the preposition (dia) over, the term diaspora has multiple meanings in the present context. People moved for various reasons from the land of their birth and adopted different cultures, languages and traditions as their own. People have moved in the hope of bettering themselves or under severe economic compulsions at home.

Desire for knowledge and curiosity to explore is also an important cause for the increased mobility. In the age of globalization, the issues of diaspora, transnationalism, cultural mongrelization, hybridity, identity crisis continuously enrich the diasporic literatures of the twenty-first century. Topographical shifting, cultural transaction, multiculturalism, fluid identity form a complex framework in the field of global migration. Apart from these, the concept of root, home, nostalgia, memory, alienation, hybrid identity are interlinked with the diasporic phenomenon. According to the various critics, scholars and academics like Safran, Bhabha, Brah, Clifford Geertz and Appadurai, multifaceted factors are interwoven with the diasporic phenomenon. Diasporic elements are a recurrent theme in the writings of Salman Rushdie, Agha Shahid Ali, Amitav Ghosh, V.S. Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and many others.

Mass migration in the twentieth century has given rise to vast cultural mosaics. Diasporic writing, born out of migrant experience, voices the multiple experience and identities that make up a migrant's world. Migration even activates the creative impulse of the writer. Diasporic literature, thus, emerges as a counter discourse which fictionalizes 'otherness' and 'difference' in the context of self and environment. It straddles cultures and reflects on experiential reality, both of which combine to create new 'literary nations' rooted in interpretations and constructions.

Diaspora means dislocation on the one hand but it is also a sign of renewal on the other. Writing is also an attempt to make identity, to reconstruct through inter subjectivity. In the writings of Bharati Mukherjee, men and women seek to redefine and relocate their identity in a new culture. Displacement, whether forced or self-imposed, is in many ways a calamity. A peculiar point to be noted is that writers in their displaced existence generally tend to excel in their work, as if the changed atmosphere acts as a stimulant for them. Marriage and education are also the compelling factors that led to women's moving away from the east to the west. For Bharati Mukherjee, shift from India to Canada and later to America was a conscious shift; "each phase required a repudiation of all previous 'avatars' [births], an almost total rebirth." After having spent more than thirty years, she now has a sense of belonging. "I have appropriated both worlds; I like to think it's been enriching rather than destructive."

The modern diasporic Indian writers can be grouped into two distinct classes. One class comprises those who have spent a part of their life in India and have carried the baggage of their native land offshore. The other class comprises those who have been bred since childhood outside India. They have had a view of their country only from the outside as an exotic place of their origin. The writers of the former group have a literal displacement whereas those belonging to the latter group find themselves rootless. Both the groups of writers have produced an enviable corpus of English literature.

Migrations have both erased and re-inscribed patterns of being and belonging, producing a self with multiple and partial identification which is simultaneously both individualized and community oriented. Thus, the diasporic writer occupies a space of exile and cultural solitude which can be called a hybrid location of antago-

nism, perpetual tension and pregnant chaos. Here the reality of the body, a material production of one local culture, and the abstraction of the mind, a cultural sub-text of a global experience, provide the intertwining threads of the diasporic existence of a writer. This metastasis is also seen in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee, who is one of the most celebrated writers of the Asian immigrant experience in America. Her writings are largely honed by the multiple dislocations of her personal biography, which itself has been described as a text in a kind of perennial immigration. Lying at the heart of Mukherjee's cultural poetics is her espousal of the immigrant aesthetics, integral to which is a rejection of fixed conceptions of national cultural identity.

To elucidate her viewpoint, Mukherjee describes her narratives as "stories of broken identities and discarded languages" that nevertheless, represent her characters as fired by the "will to bond to a new community" (Introduction, *Darkness*). Discarding nostalgia, they are willing to be changed and open to the act of transformation, adopting new possibilities as offered by the narrative of assimilation. Thus, we see her protagonist Jasmine, boldly asserting: "I changed because I wanted to. To bunker oneself inside nostalgia, to sheathe the heart in a bullet-proof vest, was to be a coward." (185)

The story of Jasmine, the protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee's novel of the same name, begins as Jyoti, in a small village of Hasnapur in Punjab. She is renamed Jasmine after her marriage to Prakash Vijh. Prakash wants her to become a modern city woman and he aids her in her transformation from 'Jyoti' to 'Jasmine.' She becomes the figure that Prakash desires to create. Mukherjee is depicting identity formation as a complex process that is dependent not solely upon the agency of the individual, but also upon the surrounding environment. Her renaming is a sign of her initial migration away from traditional India. Jyoti and Jasmine are two separate selves, yet Jasmine finds herself occupying both identities.

Suddenly Prakash is murdered and Jasmine emigrates to America all alone to fulfill his dreams. Upon her arrival in Florida, she meets Half-Face, the captain of the ship on which she entered the country, and his disrespectful treatment gives her, her first taste of American racial categorization. Half-Face sees her only as a sexual being and after the rape Jasmine finds that she cannot escape this new perception of her identity. Thus she turns to violence in order to

express the conflict she is experiencing. She stabs Half-Face to death and in this act she finds the strength to continue living and vows to start a new life in America, separate from India and the naive identity of her past. Hence, Jasmine's identity is formed not through construction alone, but also by the destruction of her existing self.

Jasmine then meets Lillian Gordon, with whom begins her process of assimilation by learning how to become American. Lillian bestows upon her the nickname 'Jazzy,' a symbol of her entrance into and acceptance of American culture which she welcomes gladly. After that she moves in with a traditional Indian family in Hushing, New York. Jasmine soon finds herself stifled by the inertia of this home for it was completely isolated from everything American. Considering it to be a stasis in her progression towards a new life, she tries to separate herself from all that is Indian and forget her past completely.

She proceeds with her migratory pattern and moves to New York City. With Taylor, his wife Wylie and their daughter Duff, she creates yet another identity upon a new perception of herself. But though Jasmine creates a new identity for every new situation, her former identities are never completely erased. They emerge in specific moments in the text and exacerbate the tension, thereby causing Jasmine to create another more dominant identity, different from all those that came before. While living with the Hayes, Jasmine begins to master the English language, empowering herself to further appropriate American culture.

Taylor begins to call her 'Jase' suggesting that again she does not have an agency in the creation of her new self since Taylor constructs it for her. Also, for the first time in the Hayes household, Jasmine becomes aware of her racial identity because Taylor and his friends understood that she was from South Asia and tried to associate her with that community. Taylor's friends essentialize Jasmine, falling prey to the Orientalist habit of assuming knowledge of the other and expecting an essence from her because of her background. Thus, she is discriminated, as her racial identity is now subject to the prejudice of incorrect distinction.

Before long Taylor gets romantically involved with Jasmine and embraces her different ethnicity without orientalizing her into an exotic fantasy. Jasmine transforms but this time the change is not

from a reaction, but rather from her very own yearning for personal change. In becoming Jase, Jasmine gets increasingly comfortable with her sexuality which she always tried to repress earlier, more so, after her traumatic experience. But the relationship between Taylor and Jasmine ends abruptly. The inescapability of memory, and the boundless nature of time and space is stressed once again and Jasmine finds her life distorted by the different consciousness through which she now experiences the world. She loses even her sense of self-expression. Unable to live with this plethora of conflicting identities, she flees to Baden County, Iowa to give her life a new beginning.

In Baden County she meets Bud Wipplemeyer, an American banker who instantly falls in love with her. They eventually marry and Bud renames Jasmine 'Jane,' yet another sign of her evolution. Bud encourages Jasmine to freely change roles from caregiver to temptress whenever she feels the desire to and views her sexuality through the lenses of his own oriental fantasy. This, instead of denigrating Jasmine, serves to imbue her with a sexual confidence and she thrives on it. Her racial identity also morphs in Baden. The community attempts to see her as familiar instead of alien. This new perception of her race is an essential portion of her identity as Jane because now she becomes the typical American.

At the end of the novel Jasmine moves to California with Taylor, uncertain of what the future will bring but nevertheless confident in her decision to leave. This sense of movement further reinforces the notion that her identity is forever evolving, she cannot remain in a stable life because disruption and change are the means of her survival. The surrounding environments influence the formation of her identities and she navigates between temporal and spatial locations, her perception of herself changes, thereby resulting in a multiplicity of consciousness. These create a tension within her and she feels the need to reconcile these conflicting perceptions so that they do not wage a psychological war inside her. We see her reinventing her identity completely.

In Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*, the creation of identity emerges as a continuous process, forever transforming and never complete. Tara lata is a savvy, cosmopolitan world-traveller having beauty, brain, wealth and a privileged life as the wife of a Silicon Valley magnate. She emigrates after marrying Bishwapriya Chatter-

jee, and arrives in America steeped in Indian culture exhibiting the behaviour of the paradigmatic Indian wife. Back at home, she had led a sheltered life where she was inundated with culture, tradition and values though inculcated with education by the Catholic nuns. When Taralata reaches America she feels the tug between tradition and freedom as she tries to meet expectations that are often wildly contradictory. But she tries to embrace American culture. She attempts to assimilate as best as she can to the new society.

Taralata's frustration at her endeavours to assimilate and Bish's lack of it eventually leads to a divorce. It marks her transition into a new identity and a liberated self. She soon recognizes that her sexuality is also an aspect of her identity, which she can possess and embrace, after being accosted by the same men who had been respectful towards her during her marriage. She realizes the sexual double standard, the unfair distinction between male and female sexuality in the Indian culture. Yet her life remains surrounded by her ex-husband Bishwapriya Chatterjee, her son Rabi, and her lover Andy Karolyi, a Hungarian Buddhist. It is only with Andy that her perceptions of sexuality get altered as for the first time she becomes selfish, intimate and involved in a relationship without any expectations. She creates a new sexual identity that does not come in conflict with her previous self-perceptions. They merely get replaced by the new and different perceptions. In parallel projection are the two men in her life who symbolize two diverse cultures and her cultural dilemma. Initially she tries to seek solace by clinging on to the past through people, memories, visits or calls and by bonding with her two elder sisters, Parvati and Padma, who serve as links to a past that Taralata has begun to forget. But the appearance of the mysterious Chris Dey exposes the shallow intercontinental relationship of the three sisters. He acts as both Taralata's catharsis and nemesis. Finally Taralata is shaken out of her complacency, her emotional paralysis shattered, as her family is stalked by menace.

Taralata's boyfriend Andy warns her about the consequences of investigating the past, as it has the power to dominate one's entire present. Nevertheless, Taralata proceeds with her quest and as the mystery unfolds, Taralata is forced to face her family, her past and a culture that she has distanced herself from, resulting in a conflict between old modes of thinking and new forms of consciousness that have been created. When her house is firebombed she is completely

exhausted making her yearning for homeland and traditional life more acute. A trip back to India rekindles a desire to find her family's ancestral roots and their place in the history of pre-independent India. Hence, we find Taralata Chatterjee trying to discover herself and how she fits into her place in the universe. While she is struggling with the thought of getting back to her ex-husband and being pregnant with his child, she tries to understand her heritage and the actions of her ancestors which may or may not have contributed to the sum total of the person she has evolved into. As a diasporic writer, the author in this novel delicately associates the element of nostalgia with the protagonist's quest for root. In general terms, nostalgia is defined as the state of being homesick, a sentimental yearning for return to a past period or irrecoverable condition.

The significance of nostalgia in this novel is repetitively revealed. Being the part of the diasporic community, the writers always tend to illuminate on the paradisal past and tormenting present situation they lie in. The meeting point of the past and the present too are intensified by the nostalgic representation of the characters endeavoured by the writers. In this novel, through the nostalgic exploration, Taralata has juxtaposed the past and the present situation. In the main theme, the infiltration of the mysterious story of a stranger Chris Dey, adds to the plot a different flavour. And to unearth the unknown identity of a stranger, Taralata's inner self's yearning to come back to her original root is unravelled. The sudden nostalgic exploration acts as a catalyst to discover her inner self. When Taralata hears about the robbery in the flat of Parvati, her nostalgic power explores the village deity, Shitala's story of the old days on Ballygunge Park Road. In the USA, Taralata's eyes cannot evade the American women's willingness to create their own scandals in public sphere. Taralata's homesick mind recedes faraway in India when along with their sisters she used to read movie magazines and women magazines secretly in their bedrooms.

The urge to reclaim antiquity is not simply archaeological, as it renews the past. The outcome of this interaction between past and present is the production of cultural identities which are in transition and transformation. To extend the explanation, writers situate their work in the past, other than presently lived in. A past time or place is not so much recovered or even discovered, but brought into being, invented, made and unmade so that it helps to understand the con-

cept of home as a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination.

Taralata finds that she comprises multiple selves accepting or rejecting certain aspects of both Indian and American culture. She comes to terms with the idea that she never will have a single identity but rather be dispersed between being Indian and American. She does not fight with her multiplicity but rather accepts it as part of her progressive capacity. The Sanskrit poem in the novel's foreword itself lays out Taralata's mission: "No one behind, no one ahead. The path the ancients cleared has closed. And the other path, everyone's path, easy and wide, goes nowhere. I am alone and find my way."

It suggests a space of liminality and also portrays identity as a continuous journey rather than a fixed construction. Unlike Jasmine, in Taralata there is no struggle between the emerging selves that caused Jasmine to remain always on the move and invent completely new identities. Instead Taralata's multiplicity evolves in a continuous process that she welcomes. She recognizes that living in the past, whether temporally, spatially or both, is dangerous for the development of one's identity. She keeps on changing and evolving but at the same time does not lose the identities she had once possessed. Instead of transplanting Indian culture or disposing it off altogether she tries to assimilate her Indianness through reinventing her identity as experiences forever keep on moulding it into something new.

Nostalgia and memory are equally interlinked with the search for one's root. One's original root does not seem to indicate having many roots like the roots of a mangrove plant without any beginning or end. Root generally implies having a single root like a carrot. Necessarily in the present novel, root seems to signify fixity of belongingness—no fluidity of belongingness. Through the lens of recollection, Taralata, the immigrant tries to seek her lost past in the present things. Through the flashback technique, Taralata presents before the readers the stories of her two sisters along with her Bengali orthodox family. The free life in America, reminds her of the previous circumscribed life where the three sisters are not permitted to walk out independently in the Ballygunge Park Road. In this faraway country, the films of Satyajit Ray, eminent director of Bengali movies in India, actor and actresses like Soumitra Chatterjee, Shar-

mila Tagore and Aparna Sen crowd in the memory of Taralata. In the alien environment, Taralata's anxiety over Didi's illegal relationship with Ronald Dey, focuses on the golden past memory in Calcutta where she lived with her 'protective parents,' 'the Brahmin's pride,' 'the Bengali arrogance' and the 'Calcutta sophistication.' Parallely when in New Jersey, Taralata and Padma at jewellery shop, Taralata muses over their family's visiting the gold stores in Bhowanipur which ends at Sirkar's. Through such revelation, it is conveyed that Taralata's present American life is replete with the reminiscences of the golden past. Past incidents act as receptacles to provide the necessary ingredients to her present American life.

Alienation is one of the significant ingredients that denote an immigrant's transplantation, exile, uprooting and sense of solitariness in a new atmosphere. In the present novel, Taralata's settlement in the USA with her spouse Bishwapriya Chatterjee and later her live-in-lover Hungarian Buddhist Andy never provide her solace which Ballygunge has provided. She cannot cope with the American society, though there are some changes in her costume wearing. Her husband's traditional mental attitude to constrain Taralata's full freedom makes the American life boring. Even in this unknown country, she is treated as a 'pariah' by the Atherton wives and not a single friend she has. Hence, isolation and detachment in the new society engulf her life. Nevertheless Taralata's feeling of anguish and embarrassment emanates from Padma's Bengali friend circle in New Jersey. Taralata's sense of pang and embarrassment is repetitively expressed in the foreign country: "Loneliness had made me a little wanton; wantonness had made me very lonely." (262) Taralata as a mother feels the solitariness of her only son Rabi when they are for some days in Bombay at Parvati's home. Rabi as an Indo-American son probably does not feel quite at home there.

Dual or hybrid identity constructs an identity crisis in one's constructing a true home of proximity in the alien environment. *Desirable Daughters* depicts the immigrant Taralata's oscillation between Indianness and Americanness. The hyphenated position creates no congenial atmosphere for Rabi to be relieved in Bombay at his Parvati masi's home. Taralata feels Rabi's uneasiness to make a kind of emotional bondage with his cousins, Bhupesh and Dinesh in Bombay; as Rabi is accustomed to inhabit American environment. In spite of prolonged staying in the USA, Taralata's inner self pines

for returning to her native land where she can find her original root. The question can be raised 'Will Taralata ever be able to get rid of the hyphenated identity?' The heart-rending statement of Taralata comes out when she is a kindergarten teacher in foreign country: "I'm not the only blue-jeaned woman with a Pashmina shawl around my shoulders. . . . I am not the only Indian on the block. . . . I don't belong here." (79)

Taralata's willingness to live as an American woman by shunning the Indian culture makes her surprised when Taralata is acknowledged in New Jersey about Padma's clinging to the Indian friends, clothes, food and charming accent in the alien environment whereas Padma preserves the Indian culture and costumes by wearing sari, but the ideological values of the original culture hardly get any importance from Taralata. Taralata feels awkward when she wears sari after a long time at didi's home in New Jersey. Moreover, as the Bengali immigrant, Taralata breaks up the tradition of the holy bond of the marriage, yet she is well aware of the tradition of her family regarding marriage: "Divorce was not in our family vocabulary in the sixties." (101) Taralata's traditional Bengali culture does not make her tolerate the uncouth sight of some girls' lighting up cigarettes from a man in the USA; the memory of this scene produces before her that "in Calcutta a man brushing up against a woman in a rush-hour bus or tram might cause a riot." (80) Though Taralata intends to avoid the Bengali culture to become an American woman yet she does not shed it completely.

Desirable Daughters not only presents the 'epistemological crisis' of the protagonist, but also her aspiration to return to the native land as revealed by the author. Her anguish, her sense of alienation, isolation, solitariness along with the use of memory, nostalgia has aptly and appropriately affected the theme of searching for true roots.

Due to globalization, diasporic phenomenon, mongrelization in culture, food, creolization in language and cross-cultural networks are incorporated with the fluidity and uncertainty of identity and belongingness. These components predominate the diasporic writings in the twenty-first century. Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* and *Jasmine* are the successful products in the present era. Movement of the people among the different countries and transcultural factors overlap with the current issue of searching for roots.

Today, though an immigrant in an alien country attempts to build a new home of emotional attachment, but his or her recollection of the past events cannot erase the original home which is involved with the sentiments, intimacy, love etc.

The characters in Mukherjee's novel develop multiple consciousnesses. Their self is neither unified nor hybrid, but rather fragmented. As the protagonists perceive both their race and sexuality through new and different lenses throughout the course of the text, they come to realize that the notion of a singular identity is a fallacy and the reality of the diasporic experience is the indeterminacy of multiplicity. This multiplicity at times becomes a significant plight for the characters, as their different consciousnesses contradict each other. Finally, they become capable of living in a world where individuals exist not as a unified one, but as many, bound by no borders and infinite in the possibility of inventing identities.

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The Concept of Marriage in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande

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Murali Manohar in his seminal work *Indian English Women's Fiction: A Study of Marriage, Career and Divorce* (2007) has dealt extensively with the issue of marriage with reference to modern Indian women's fiction and placed 'marriage' into three categories: "Love marriage, love-cum-arranged marriage, and arranged marriage" (180). According to him love marriage is the best marriage from the couple's point of view as it is agreeable to the couples but not to the parents. Here it is love which leads to marriage. Arranged marriage, on the other hand, is the best from the parents' point of view as it is agreeable to the parents but not to the couples. Here it is marriage which is supposed to lead to love. However, love-cum-arranged marriage is the best from both the couple and the parents' point of view. The author also expresses his preferences and places them in this order: love-cum-arranged marriage, love marriage and arranged marriage. Though the number of love marriages and love-cum-arranged marriages is gradually increasing, the total number of arranged marriages is more than that of both put together. His preferences, however, are based on his conviction that the success of marriage is the responsibility of the couples and not of their parents. Deshpande's novels deal with all the three types of marriage and show how a certain type of marriage determines the conjugal life of the couples.

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), Sarita alias Saru, the protagonist, goes for a love marriage with Manohar alias Manu who belongs to a lower caste and works as a lecturer in a private college. Her parents are opposed to their marriage. Her mother tells Saru: "I know all these 'love marriages.' It's love for a few days, and then quarrels all the time. Don't come crying to us then." "To you? God, that's the one thing I'll do. Never!" (69) Manohar, having a patriar-

chal mind-set, changes Sarita's name twice and she accepts it willingly. But the real problems begin when Manu cannot reconcile with the rising income and social status of Saru and develops inferiority complex. He avenges himself on her by acting out regular scenes of marital rape in the night. She does not how to deal with the monster that her husband becomes at night. Manu who is used to a comfortable life with her income does not allow her to give up her practice as a doctor and become a housewife. Disappearance of love in her conjugal life and her desire to advance her career push her to forge an extra-marital relationship with Boozie, her teacher. However, this relationship does not affect her marriage nor does it lead to divorce because Boozie is a gay. Saru does not feel guilty of this relationship, rather she enjoys the discomfiture of Manu on seeing her flirting with Boozie. All these further vitiate her relationship with Manu. She considers him a hindrance in the way of fulfillment of her dreams and ambitions. She escapes to her parental home but her concern for her children, her patients, her home and husband brings her back with the realization, "All right, so I'm alone but so's everyone else. Human beings . . . they're going to fail you. But because there's just us, because there's no one else, we have to go on trying" (220). She will no longer be a puppet. She would hold on to her marriage and profession and make the best of them. She had married out of love but now she is going to sustain it by adjustment.

Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows* (1983) also presents a love marriage. Indu goes in for a love marriage with Jayant defying her authoritarian family. Akka who is the guardian and head of the family does not approve of her marriage with Jayant. She says: "Such marriages never work. Different castes, different languages . . . it's all right for a while. Then they realize." (67-68) They are not invited to join the family after marriage. They carry on but problems crop up in their conjugal life because Jayant has a typical patriarchal attitude. He tries to control Indu in every respect. The novelist describes her married life as a pair of bullocks yoked together: "What was marriage after all, but two people brought together after cold-blooded bargaining to meet, mate and reproduce so that the generations might continue." (3)

Indu, like a traditional Indian wife, surrenders to him but feels unhappy. She looks down at marriage as a trap: "A trap? Or a cage?.—a cage with two trapped animals glorifying hatred at each other." (67) But when Akka makes Indu her legal heir and Indu moves to her ancestral house to take charge of the property and stays away from Jayant, she develops an extra-marital relationship with her childhood friend Naren. Though initially she resists his advances to remain a chaste wife, later on she yields to her own physical urge and offers herself to Naren. She does not feel guilty of her extra-marital relationship and enjoys it whole-heartedly because it is her body's requirement of which she does not have any control. She toys with the idea of leaving Jayant but she is afraid of society. So she goes back to Jayant with the hope that things will change and she would not tell Jayant about her affairs with Naren. Their love marriage, like that of Saru and Manu, is going to survive on adjustment.

In *That Long Silence* (1988), Jaya has an arranged marriage with Mohan who wanted an educated, cultured wife. But for Jaya, Mohan is her brother's choice and she had no reason to reject him and disappoint her brother who "wanted to be free of his responsibility for an unmarried young sister, so that he could go ahead with his own plan." (93) Besides, she sees marriage as a passport to freedom from the oppressive control of the parental home. But after marriage, her dream of freedom is shattered. Her name is changed from Jaya to Suhasini. Her husband who wanted an educated wife was not in favour of her trying for a teaching position in a school. He had also discouraged her creative writing talent when she participated in the story writing contest and won a prize. He identified himself with the male character and thought that people would think that the story was about Mohan and Jaya. Since then she had lost interest in writing stories. She has another shock when Mohan puts pressure on her to "take up a job" when he is apprehensive about losing his job in a corruption case. She is surprised to find how he could manage to do things according to his convenience. She avails this opportunity of independence and empowerment and chooses a career of creative writing and, through her career, she develops a close relationship with Kamat, who is her guide and guru. She be-

comes so intimate with him that she discusses things with him that she does not discuss with her husband, Mohan. She uses his typewriter and his address for her mail. She forgets Mohan when Kamat calls her by her name and develops physical intimacy with her. Her husband's disregard of her sentiments pushes her into the arms of Kamat. There grows a silence between the husband and the wife which creates a gap between them. But at the end, she feels suffocated and chooses to break her silence and talk to her husband. In this novel again, marriage is going to sustain on the basis of adjustment.

Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* (1992) presents a love-cum-arranged marriage. Urmila marries Kishore who is in Navy. They are childhood friends and are in love with each other. They have the consent and support of their family members. Their conjugal life is based on deep love and perfect understanding. They do not quarrel even on the first night when Urmila walks out on Kishore without having sex and the next day they continue with their daily routine as if nothing had happened. She pursues the career of her choice; she becomes a teacher because she loves teaching and enjoys it. She is also able to strike a balance between work and family—she keeps her doctoral work pending to take proper care of her growing up child. She is also reconciled to the distance which exists between her and her husband as she realizes that Kishore "will never remove his humour, there is something in him I will never reach. I have lived with the hope that some day I will. Each relationship, always imperfect, survives on hope. Am I to give up this hope?" (141)There is reference to another marriage in this novel: Kishore's father marries Mira after he had seen her in a marriage he was attending and fallen in love with her at first sight. His wife had allowed him to marry Mira as a second wife. But their conjugal life is not happy. Mira suffers sexual abuse at the hands of her husband and develops an intense physical revulsion for him. Unable to adjust with the possessive egoistical love of her husband, she dies in the second childbirth. The success of the one and the failure of the other marriage in the novel show that marriage cannot bring happiness to both the spouses unless they surrender their ego and merge with each other.

A Matter of Time, published in 1996, again presents a love marriage. Sumitra, the protagonist, has love marriage with a professor named Gopal. They love each other and marry disregarding their parents' wish. It is an intercaste and interlingual marriage. But their marriage falls apart as Gopal, having a patriarchal mind-set, gets tired of living with his wife and three daughters, having no male company in the family. He cannot manage his family without a son being there. He abandons Urmila who returns to her family home in Bangalore. Urmila, being a traditional Indian wife, does not demand divorce or maintenance from her husband. Even her elder daughter's insistence that she should claim her rights and seek punishment for her husband does not cut ice with her. She faces the universal problem—not just the difficulty in her marriage but the conflict within her family as well.

Small Remedies (2000) also deals with love marriage. Madhu, the protagonist, marries Som. They have a son, Adit, from their marriage. But Madhu had a secret—she was assaulted by her father's artist friend when she was 15 year old. Her husband, Som, looks upon her with suspicion when he discovers that Madhu was not a virgin at the time of their marriage, and that the act of sex in which she engaged before marriage was desired and consensual (although performed in innocence and ignorance). Their estranged relationship affects their relationship with their son, Adit, who had begun to avoid them. Adit's death in a bomb blast at the age of 17 again adversely affects their relationship. But Madhu is disturbed not actually at the death of her son but at the breakdown of communication with her husband. To cope with the depression, she writes the biography of Savitribai, a famous singer of Gwalior Gharana, and her former next-door neighbour.

A study of marriages in the aforesaid novels shows that love marriages have mostly failed leading to emotional breakdowns, extra-marital relationship or separation. Even the arranged marriage of Akka and Kishore's father in *The Binding Vine* fails because of their inability to have a child. But love-cum-arranged marriage is thoroughly successful as we see that of Urmila and Kishore in *The Binding Vine*. In her later novels *Moving On* (2004) and *In the Country of Deceit* (2008) the protagonists, Manjari and Devayani respec-

tively, seek fulfillment outside or without marriage. They represent the 'new women' who have patience, courage and enviable spirit to face life as it comes; they know how to move on and make the most of their life. Manjari's relationship with Rajan and Devayani's with Ashok Chinappa undermines marriage as a social institution for family and fulfilment. According to Jasbir Jain, "Marriage is a bond to many a woman, but it is not necessarily the same kind of bond. Some are protected by it, some create their own space, others are irked by the dependence and the bondages it imposes on them. Yet marriage is valued by society because widowhood circumscribes a woman's life and is considered inauspicious." (2003: 82)

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Feminism in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Transition is an eternal law. It can be seen everywhere in the world. Therefore, the world has undergone a sea-change. These changes may be social, political economic or cultural. With these changes occurring in the world, new problems are emerging and they are affecting various aspects of life. Among them one is concerned with the women. It is one of the most striking problems prevalent in the society. Indeed, women have been leading their life under the supervision of men for a long time. They have been enduring their husband's callousness for ages. We should know one thing in a very clear-cut way that this problem is not new. It is old, but in ancient times it was not taken into notice. But at present it is taken very seriously. Even a group of women writers came forward in the support of the exploited women. These women writers gave their vent against women oppression. They gave the slogan of women empowerment, women liberation, women development etc. Later on, this slogan changed into a movement which we call "Feministic Movement" or Feminism. In fact, feminism refers to the freedom of women in the male-dominated society. It demands right to property, right to vote and legal rights. In the present male-dominated society, there are women who demand equality and are raising many more issues regarding women's status in the family as well as society. In fact, they want their due opportunity and due respect. Their participation should be equal in the society. Among women writers in commonwealth literature, Arundhati Roy has a unique place. She has a keen sense and imaginative power. She has minutely studied the female psyche. In her novel, *The God of Small Things*, Ammu is not given due respect by her family members. This is the reason why she suffers a lot throughout her life. The present paper aims at exploring feminism in *The God of Small Things*.

The novel deals with the life of a helpless woman whose name is Ammu. Right from her childhood, she has to face number of difficulties, for she is a woman. We know that childhood is the world of innocence and simplicity. In this stage, a child's work is just to eat, drink, and play. But Ammu has a bitter experience of her childhood: she has seen her father beating her mother with brass vase. Even he tears her new pair of shoes which her mother has purchased for herself. Here she is the *Mombatti* who cannot face the blow of the wind. Ammu is badly treated by her Pappachi. She gets a step-motherly treatment in her house. In the present society generally it is seen that the women remain deprived of the basic needs of life on account of gender bias, and Ammu is no exception to this. She is never sent to college for her education while her brother is sent to Balliol College in Oxford University. Her father thinks that when a girl is sent to college, she becomes corrupt. Pappachi suffers from schizophrenia, and his schizophrenic behaviour is seen when he breaks the furniture into pieces; he smashes the table lamp and tears the curtains. The atmosphere of Ammu's house is dreadful in which feels suffocated. Her life is full of frustrations and she wants to make herself free from all shackles of this uncongenial atmosphere as well as the apathetic attitude of her family members. She also wants to come out of her Ayemenem house which is just like a prison for her:

> All day she dreamt of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother. She hatched several wretched little plans. Eventually, one worked. Pappachi agreed to let her spend the summer with distant aunt who lived in Calcutta.[1]

Ammu feels relaxed when she is allowed by her father to go to Calcutta. In Calcutta she goes to attend a wedding reception. There she meets her would-be husband, Baba, who is an assistant manager of a tea estate in Assam. Now he is on vacation. Ammu makes haste to marry Baba, because she knows that people of Ayemenem would not approve of her proposal. This idea gets a vivid expression in the following lines:

> Ammu didn't pretend to be in love with him. She just weighed the odds and accepted. She thought that anything anyone at all, would be

better than returning to Ayemenem. She wrote to her parents informing them of her decision. They did not reply. (39)

After her marriage, the realisation very soon comes to Ammu that she has committed a blunder by marrying Baba as he is a big drunkard. He pressurizes her over and over again to smoke. During this period she gives birth to twins. Mr. Hollick is Baba's boss. He is attracted towards Ammu. He threatens Baba to drive him out of his job if he does not offer his wife to him. His boss's bad intention is expressed in the following lines: "You are very lucky man, you have wonderful family, beautiful children, such an attractive wife." (42) Thus it is quite clear that her husband wants to trade her modesty for his job survival. As soon as Ammu comes to know about this, she hits Baba with a heavy book. She leaves her husband's house with her two kids and comes back to Ayemenem. But here she finds that the response of her parents towards her is very cold. They are also indifferent towards her children. Even her father does not believe that an Englishman may destroy the chastity of a woman: "An Englishman, any Englishman, would covet another man's wife." (42) Her brother, Chacko does not hesitate to comment on her twins: "Estha and Rahel were indecently healthy. And so was Sophie Mol. He said it was because that didn't suffer from inbreeding like most other Syrian Christians. And Parsees." (61)

In Indian society, generally we see that if a girl is not supported by her father, her mother tries her best to uphold her daughter as far as possible for her. But Ammu's case is reverse to this. Her mother, Mammachi's view is similar to that of her father: "What her grand children suffered from was far worse than inbreeding. She meant having parents who were divorced. As though these were the only choices available to people. Inbreeding or divorce." (61)

In this novel gender discrimination is clearly seen through the behaviour of Ammu's parents meted out to her and her brother. Chacko, after being separated from his wife, Lady Margaret, returns to Ayemenem. Here he is warmly received by his family members and is made the in-charge of the Ayemenem House, and then, he starts asserting his right over the whole property. He also wants to usurp the share of Ammu, and his bad intention becomes clear from this line: "What is yours is mine, what is mine is also mine." (57)

This happens to Ammu simply because she is a female, and as a daughter she has no right to property. The irony of the Indian society is that when a daughter is divorced by her husband, she is tortured in her own house while a son divorced by his wife is gifted with all the legacy and becomes the rightful heir of his family fortune. After his wife's divorce, Chacko is attracted towards a lowly woman, and he is supported by Pappachi. He says that it is Man's needs. But, on the other hand, when Ammu loves Velutha, her love is taken as illicit, untraditional and sinful act. She is locked up in a room and is beaten up severely.

Baby Kochamma is a lady who is absolutely frustrated. When she was young, she wanted Father Mulligan and left no stone unturned to attract him. But she fails in her mission. The result is that her inner struggle, torment, torture and frustration change her into a sadist. Therefore, she does not want to see any woman happy though a woman should have sympathy for a woman. Therefore, she is dead against Ammu. Her principle is, "If I do not get, you do not get any either." This shows the perverted mentality of a woman towards a woman as it happens to Ammu. In this way it is quite apparent that Ammu has got no support, no sympathy from anywhere. She has no ray of hope in her life. Therefore, she leaves the big Ayemenem House and meets her doom "in a grimy room in the Bharat Lodge in Allepey where she had gone for a job interview as someone's secretary, she died alone." (161) In the morning her dead body is discovered by a sweeper when he comes to clean the room. Her pathetic condition, even after her death, becomes clear from these lines: "A platoon of ants carried a dead cockroach sedately through the door, demonstrating what should be done with corpses." (162)

In fact, Ammu's funeral rites are not performed in a proper way, for this ill-fated lady has already been disowned by the Church. Therefore, her dead body is not buried in the graveyard of the Church. Chacko hires a van and takes her dead body to an electric crematorium where "Nobody except beggars, derelicts . . . were cremated there." (162) At this time no one other than Chacko from her family is present there. There is none to shed tears for her. This

idea is reflected in the following lines: "The door of the furnace clanged shut. There were no tears." (163)

Thus Ammu proves to be a true tragic figure who has been tortured and abused by everyone around her whether it is her parents, brother, husband or aunt. Not to talk of the male characters, even the female characters like Mammachi and Baby Kochamma are held responsible for her downfall. Through Ammu, Arundhati Roy has tried to portray the real plight of the Indian women living in the present society. Roy, by attacking this male-dominated society, also wants to prove that woman is the axis of a family. The family may disintegrate if her heart is broken. This is what happens to Ammu and her two innocent children. Here Arundhati Roy wants to convey a message to us: what Ammu undergoes in her father's and husband's house is based on gender discrimination and not on the principle of equality. In her opinion woman is not only an object of pleasure for man, rather she is the backbone of the society. Therefore, she must get her due regard.

To sum up, we may say that *The God of Small Things* is a novel about women's struggle for freedom. Women should be given their due share in all the spheres so that they may develop themselves and attain a distinguished place in the family as well as the society.

NOTE

1. Roy, Arundhati, *The God of Small Things*, India Ink, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 38-39.

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Anita Desai and Her Social Consciousness

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Being a very celebrated and reputed Indian English novelist, Anita Desai has acquired her illustrious and most prestigious position as a brilliant fictionist with feminism and social consciousness. Her literary career has been brilliant and she is still giving novel after novel acquiring award after award adding to her glory and lustre. Unlike her other contemporaries like R.K. Narayan etc., she has penetrated very deep into female psychology with her consciousness of the problems of women, their depression, their neuroticism and their neglect in male-oriented society. Her very first epoch-making novel *Cry, the Peacock*, gives a unique study of female psychology—the depressed one or a neurotic lady like Maya who tries to kill the shadow of her husband in the mirror and then tries to commit suicide under the pensive state of neuroticism and being disillusioned by the supposed neglect of her husband Gautama.

Through the cries of the peacock, Anita Desai symbolises the universal suffering and anguish of Indian women. She is lost in the world of predicament, she is constantly tortured within with all the facilities provided by her husband who being a wise and practical advocate tries to teach her the lessons of Karma and detachment but in vain. Being in the hellish agonies, she cries out in despair: "Am I gone insane! Father! Brother! Husband! Who is my saviour? I am in need of one, I am dying, and I am in love with living, I am in love and I am dying. God, let me sleep, forget, rest. But no, I'll never sleep again. There is no rest any more—only death and waiting."[1]

There is no compatibility between the husband and wife—Gautama and Maya, he is more mature and elderly than his wife, she is neurotic and always haunted by the fear of an astrological prediction that some serious tragedy or death is impending her. *Cry, the Peacock* is a unique and wonderful novel of complicated relation-

ships between a depressed wife and a sensible and smart husband. Anita Desai gives an analysis of intricate relationships "caused by marital incompatibility and disharmony and compounded by age-old complications."[2]

The dance of the peacock is symbolic of female suffering, death and all dismay in the universe: Anita Desai has depicted it most pathetically and poetically. "Do you not hear the peacocks call in the wilds? 'Pia, Pia' they cry "Lover, Lover,' Mio, Mio—I die, I die." (95) These peacocks further represent the hidden agonies of women: "They spread out their splendid tails and begin to dance, but like Shiva's their dance of joy is the dance of death and they dance, knowing that they and their lovers are all to die perhaps even before the monsoons come to an end. Is it not agony for them?" (95)

Consequently, Maya undergoes mental frustration and isolationism to the extent of killing her husband and committing suicide. She meditates that there has been no love on the part of her husband Gautama: "There was no bond, no love—hardly any love." (108) Actually, she being the childless immature mother is extremely shattered after the death of her pet dog Toto. Gautama takes it easy and does not sympathise with her as she has aspired in her heart of hearts. Further, she has no capacity of reconciling between reality and idealism. Apropos of this, her husband Gautama remarks: "Like most young people, you can not understand that reality and idealism are one and the same thing. Life is a matter of distinguishing between the two, but of reconciling them." (21)

Anita Desai represents the role of environment in human life in her very popular novel *Voices in the City*. Set in the late 1950s, the novel depicts Indian society still in transition more than a decade after India's independence from British rule. The impact of the city of Calcutta is so great that even relationships are tremendously altered. Anita Desai 'seeks to relate the subjective world of the individual to the spirit of the place.'[3] She has gone very deep to delineate a sensitivity to locate as it operates 'within the consciousness of her characters.'[4]

Nirode, being frustrated by his journalistic pursuits, is mentally perplexed between two complexes of attachment and detachment. Bose is enjoying the *Panchtantra*, Sunny is involved in export busi-

ness, Dharma aspires for art, Anita has a passion for business. Ironically, all characters suffer from broken relationships and isolationisms. Nirode has been presented as a dehumanized person: "He loathed the world that could offer him no crusade, pilgrimages and he loathed himself for not having the true unwavering spirit of either within him. There was only this endless waiting, hollowed out in intricate knowledge that there was nothing to wait for."

In another novel *Bye, Bye, Blackbird*, Anita Desai has depicted the intensity of alienation. Dev has joined the London School of Economics in England with the object of 'approaching the professors and impressing them with the subtle complexities and the deep wisdom of the oriental mind.'[5] Dev's English wife Sarah is a victim of alienation, the former pines for his country while the latter abhors going to India. On the contrary, his friend Adit is enamoured of English civilization, 'the magic of English, her grace, her peace, her abundance and the embroidery of her history and traditions.' (180)

Her another novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* centers around a desperate Sita pining for her escape from the slavery of marriage into the isolated island of her father at Manori. But she realises that the deep impact of her father's place which 'engulfed her at a time when she was still very young and quite alone' has been vanishing and at last she calls her husband and goes back.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, Anita Desai has explored the effective escapism of an old lady Nanda Kaul, the wife of V.C. Kaul who has had his life-long relations with a Christian lady Miss David into the isolated country of Kasauli and passes her days in peaceful seclusion. Nanda's isolation is also broken by the sudden arrival of her great grand-daughter Raka who has also been a victim of disturbed relationships between her mother and father. Her friend Ila Das is mercilessly killed in the village, Nanda is obsessed with agony and intrinsic pain with memories of melancholia: "Nor had her husband loved and cherished her and kept her like a queen—he had only done enough to keep her quiet while he carried on a life-long affair with Miss David, the mathematics mistress, whom he had not married because she was a Christian but whom he had loved all his life. And her children—the children were all alien to her nature, she neither understood nor loved them."[6]

In *Clear Light of Day*, Anita Desai presents a very positive and optimistic approach to life. Bimla the protagonist, a lecturer at a Delhi College, ultimately reconciles to all the developments of her household—the neglect of her parents, the indifference of sister and the partiality of her brother Raja and the constant suffering of her handicapped brother—Baba, becomes an independent lady, advises other neighbourly Mishra girls to be educated and independent. Her isolation is glorified by an old singer who sings passionately with wishful memories of his own while he is the only singer and the only listener, 'the old man listening along in the veranda and the singer lifted a shaking hand in acknowledgement.'[7] The song is full of haunting memories of love, pining, the anguish and sweet possessiveness: "In your world, I am subjected and constrained, but over my world you have dominion." (285)

In *In Custody*, a social comedy, Anita Desai presents a conflict in the mind of a middle-aged man Deven Sharma who wants to be a poet but becomes a teacher of Hindi under the pressure of circumstances. In her another novel *Fasting, Feasting* she has represented the marginalization of both the Indian and the American women under the present circumstances. She has depicted the family life both in the East and the West. The Indian family consists of a lawyer, his wife and their three children—two daughters and a son. The lady protagonist Uma is a victim of Indians' partiality for boys in comparison to girls. Even women add to the suffering of the women in Indian society. In America, Mrs. Patton, a rich man's wife, is always craving for her husband's love.

Anita Desai has been read more in the western countries than in India mainly because the fictionist has probed very deep into the neglected aspects of Indian culture, especially of women. Her social consciousness has been coloured by her multicultural dimension of contemporary Indian society. Some critics blame that she deals with the mundane and the trivial, while other defend her that the same imparts a life-like reality and warmth to her novels. She is simply superb for presenting the complexities of Indian family life. Apropos of this Jasbir Jain opines: "The world of Anita Desai's novels is an ambivalent one, it is a world where the central harmony is aspired to but not arrived at, and the desire to love and live clashes—

at times violently—with the desire to withdraw and achieve harmony."[7]

NOTES

1. Anita Desai, *Cry, the Peacock* (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1980), p. 98.
2. H.W. Frink, 'Morbid Fears and Compulsions: Their Psychology and Psychoanalytical Treatment' (London: Kegan Paul, 1929), pp. 163-64.
3. Meena Belliappa, *Anita Desai—A Study of Her Fiction* (Calcutta: Writers' Workshop, 1971), p. 26.
4. Anita Desai, *Voices in the City* (London: Peter Owen, 1965), p. 64.
5. Anita Desai, *Bye, Bye, Black Bird* (Delhi: Hindi Pocket Books, 1971), p. 9.
6. Anita Desai, *Fire on the Mountain* (London: William Heinemann, 1977), p. 145.
7. Anita Desai, *Clear Light of Day* (New Delhi: Random House, 2007), p. 285.
8. Jasbir Jain, *Stairs to the Attic—The Novels of Anita Desai* (Jaipur: Printwell, 1987), p. 16

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Truly a Professor's Novel: Ramesh Srivastava's *Coils of the Serpent*

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M.K. Naik and Shyamala A. Narayan in *Indian English Literature* (1980-2000) have commented on the degeneration of moral values in Indian society: "Last but not [the] least, is the increasing corrosion of values in the Indian middle class; and this is all the more alarming, because it is the middle class that is generally the custodian of values in a society" (15). *Coils of the Serpent* by Ramesh K. Srivastava largely justifies the above comments in the sense that this novel is basically about how the moral fabric of our society is torn asunder by viciously gripping and constricting coils of corruption in the realm of human relationship. Lust is the key word here, because it is both the lust for woman and lust for money that finally lead to the fury of vengeance that untimely kills three persons in the novel: Nawab Hashmi and Chandan Mohan of Danpur and Munsoor Alam of Aligarh. But the three hundred plus pages of *Coils of the Serpent* also depict the other related shades of life. As the blurb of the book says:

> The novel depicts . . . the binary worlds of dreams and disillusionments, of primitive innocence and urban craftiness, of feudal idealism and modern pragmatism, of unshakable devotion of a docile rural wife and prismatic flirtations of an urban seductress. It also examines the tangled and puzzling questions of traditional and modern values, deceptions of men and guiles of women, as also the theatrical display of male-dictated punishment and meticulously planned female vindictiveness.

As a sincere teacher formalizes his whole course into neat chapters, so the plot of this novel is sequential according to the chronology of events. Danpur, a remote North Indian village, is realistically described as "an abandoned child deprived of its life-sustaining necessities like food and water" (1). The comprehensive presentation of

this village is such that it becomes an epitome of any Indian village, a maltreated step-brother of the big city. In such a village, life does not move, it drags—the boring stillness of Danpur needs the periodic frenzy of a tazia procession or a sex-scandal of a village virgin found at night with her lover with whom she is soon to be married. While the first event is pacified by Chandan Mohan with clever intelligence, in the second he becomes unintentional instrument of the rich and corrupt Nawab Hashmi, who himself wants to marry Shabana, a beautiful but poor girl of Danpur. But as is usually found in such a drama of passion, Shabana has already given her heart to Ishraq, resulting into fury and frustration of Nawab Hashmi, who lays a trap with the help of Chandan Mohan, and the bewildered lovers are caught on the spot. This leads to a medieval punishment of a donkey-ride for Shabana, her father, and her lover who are paraded through the village with blackened face to a huge wave of thrill passing through the deriding eyes of the people, always hungry for such a hilarious scene. There is a strange similarity between this event and a stage-managed donkey-ride in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. But because in Hardy's novel, it is only a mock-ride, so it leads only to the serious illness of Lucetta; here in *Coils of the Serpent*, it results in the suicide of Shabana's father, who cannot bear such a humiliation. This dislocates, and subsequently destroys, her entire family.

After this suicide, Shabana's family sells the ancestral house of Danpur and, with heavy heart, all of them move to Aligarh to resurrect a shattered life. Shabana, being the eldest child, takes on sewing and sundry works to support her family and her younger sister Najama, who has gone to Agra for higher studies. Being beautiful, hardworking, and upright, Shabana becomes a focal point of praise in the surrounding society and gets married to Imtiaz Jamal working in a bank. Blessed with two adorable daughters, Shabana's early years of marriage are just blissful. But bad days too are not far behind; Jamal dies in a road accident, and an innocent, impractical Shabana does not try for the bank's job on grounds of compassion. What is even worse, she is cheated of almost half of the money that she receives from the bank as savings in provident fund and life insurance by a crafty Munsoor Alam. The rest of her money too is wasted in court-case that she files against Alam, pushing her and her

daughters to the brink of starvation. A day comes, when she does not have even a single penny with her; totally dejected she sells her body for a hundred bucks, feeds her daughters bellyful of food, and after the temporary satisfaction that she has looking at their satisfied faces, she writes a confessional letter, and poisons herself and her daughters to death, simply because she cannot tolerate the suffering of her kids any longer. A close reading of the events related to her tragedy would make it obvious that initially she faces her ordeals with determination, but she had to give up when the dead-ends come because of the system's weakness and social cruelty. In an over-all analysis: "Shabana was a brave woman who fought bravely and died bravely" (83).

Shabana was a traditional woman, never inclined to take up dubious means. But her sister Najama is made of different stuff; she is a modern girl, endowed with the modern strategy of guile and deception. She goes to Danpur as a press reporter with the name of Nagina, ensnares the ever-lustful Nawab Hashmi by her bewitching beauty, marries him, makes him sell all his property one by one, and then kills him by humiliating infidelity, cruel behaviour and heavy drinking.

She has started enticing Chandan Mohan too while her husband was alive; interestingly, it was through apple-sauce, reminding one of Eve's tempting of Adam by an apple in the Garden of Eden. In the presence of Nawab Hashmi, Nagina treats Chandan merely as her husband's confidant; but "in her husband's absence, she was all soft and supple, music and magic" (149). After the death of Hashmi, she forces Chandan Mohan to change his name and religion, and subjects him too to humiliation, hurt and heavy drinking. Finally, Chandan Mohan dies a miserable death in Agra, unknown, unwept, unsung. So, Nagina acts as a 'nagin,' a serpent-woman killing for revenge. She is a modern-day Lamia, tempting idealistic Lycius to ravage and ruin. Munsoor Alam also dies, in the meanwhile, apparently in an accident, engineered supernaturally by the ghost of Shabana. Thus, while the deaths of Hashmi and Chandan Mohan are on account of revenge, that of Alam is a kind of retribution.

The novel has a well-knit plot; before *Coils of the Serpent*, Srivastava had published five collections of stories—*Love and Animality* (1984), *Cooperative Colony* (1985), *Masks and Men* (1986),

Games They Play and Other Stories (1989) and *Under the Lamp* (1993), and a novel, *Neema* (1986). So, he has a long experience of writing fiction. In addition, he has written much on fiction-criticism in the forms of books and essays. As a consequence, his plot-construction looks flawless, as is his immaculate expression. But while the older generation would enjoy his sedate pace, the younger one would clamour for a little more speed. But to defend the novelist of such a charge, Barinder K. Sharma points out: "A good literary work is not like the modern fast food that one gobbles up before going about one's mundane activities, but an elaborately prepared delicacy behind which lie submerged numerous ingredients" (219).

When it comes to exact expression, Srivastava is superb, particularly in describing the rural scene of India. Like Wessex of Hardy, the idyllic beauty of the rural activities of India comes alive in his pages with ploughing, planting, chopping, digging, harvesting, grinding, husking, and milking. To add raw power of authenticity, Srivastava, at many places, has Indianized English, as has already been done by Mulk Raj Anand and Khushwant Singh. Some of such examples are: "going for a pilgrimage after eating nine mice" (1); "segregating water from milk" (69); "They can steal even a lampblack from your eyes" (189); "One doesn't kick a cow till it has been milked dry first" (213); "I have eaten your salt" (224) and "it is you throwing mud on me" (253). Such expressions add vigour to Indian English creative expressions, though a few purists may frown at this type of liberty.

Another strong point of the novel is characterization. While comparing the characters of Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* had found in Austen's characters some different quality: "But the best reply is that her characters, though smaller than his, are more highly organized" (79). That is precisely the case with the well-formed characters of *Coils of the Serpent*. Nawab Hashmi, Chandan Mohan, his wife Dularia, Shabana, her mother Haseena, Seth Karore Lal, even the villainous Munsoor Alam and virtuous Punit Kumar are all life-like. The little problem is with Nagina (or Najama); she looks too dramatic and improbable for rural and semi-urban parts of India. Yet, the craft of Srivastava is so persuasive that the reader is almost forced to will-

ingly suspend his disbelief and accept Nagina as a charming temptress who, by the sheer magic of her beauty, can do the impossible.

The novel is highly symbolic too; it suggests an archetypal fight between good and evil, between innocence and experience, between traditional values and modern ways, between male-dominance and female-resistance. The symbolic dimension of serpent, with both the Eastern and Western connotations, add profundity to the novel. Liladhar Jagori, one of the very few educated characters in the novel, relates the caption and concept of the novel to the Indian thought of *maya*:

> The ways of the world, even the people of the world, are a captivating illusion—*maya*—like the coils of the serpent—beautiful, silky, smooth as long as you don't confront it, but cross its path, poke your finger at it and it would have you by your throat. (19)

When everything is said, it should also be mentioned that finally it is truly a professor's novel, written in the mood of delivering lectures to the students with all the moral control. It seems that the novel is not meant for the common reader interested in literature. Otherwise why does the novelist not go further than the beautiful face, big eyes and bewitching smile of Nagina? The major part of the story deals with almost deceptive love of Nagina for Hashmi's ever-lecherous desire, and the immoral love of Chandan Mohan for the same seemingly corrupt and corrupting woman. A few lines about the beauty of other parts of her limbs would have been the demand of the story-line. But the novelist, who is closely known to me and is a different person altogether in his jokes, referring liberally to carnal suggestions when the occasion so demands, pulls all brakes in this novel to restrict his expression of the physicality of love. A sensitive reader (if not a sane critic) like me feels puzzled by that too much constricting coils tightening around the imagination of otherwise such a creative writer and critic as Srivastava. Here, I am reminded of another senior academic Vasant A. Shahane's *Prajapati: God of the People* (1984) and *Dr Fauste* (1986)—who too, in a different context, looks like Arnold penning a novel. On the other hand is the other extreme of B.S. Naikar's too much tantalizing stories oozing out honey-drops of lust in large amount (*The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories*, 1999). Yet, the same cannot

be said of Shiv K. Kumar's novel, *Infatuation: The Crescent and the Vermillion* (2000). At times, there is rather a heavy dose of sex, but then it is justified by the theme of the novel. There is no harm in carnal description if the story demands so. Otherwise, it would be like describing the sweets without sugar.

As a liberal man of literature living in India, which is changing fast yet remaining traditional to a great extent, a balance between theme and expression, between the matter on the page and the matching manner of expression is called for. Where the thematic demand is for a dose of close physical details, at least some suggestive lines are definitely required. Would it be love between the earlier ideal husband Chandan Mohan and his traditional, rural-bred wife Dularia, there would be no question at all of exposing their hush-hush love. But the case of Nawab Hashmi-Nagina and Chandan Mohan-Nagina is quite different altogether.

Despite this lone drawback, *Coils of the Serpent* is a good read, giving a vivid picture of corrupt society, which, on a larger scale, was once done by W.M. Thackeray. The elaborate plot-design, the empathic understanding of the needs, desires, strifes and miserable plight of the rural people, are all presented with a gusto that gives the idea that the novelist has first felt them in his creative imagination and then given them a lively shape.

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Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: From Postcolonial Perspective

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Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. (Chinua Achebe)

Postcolonial Studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines the global impact of European colonialism, from its beginning in the fifteenth century up to the present. Broadly speaking, it aims at describing the mechanism of colonial power, to recover excluded or marginalized "subaltern" voices, and to theorize the complexities of colonial and postcolonial identity, national belonging, and globalization. Similarly postcolonial literary criticism focuses specifically on literature produced by subjects in the context of colonial domination, most notably in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Building on knowledge of the institutions of western education and the hybrid nature of culture, the analysis of postcolonial literature characteristically explores the complex interactions and antagonisms between native, indigenous, "pre-colonial" cultures and the imperial cultures imposed on them (Leitch 25).

The present paper is an attempt to present this encounter between the East and the West—the colonized and the colonizer. I sought to bring to fore this domination and resistance encapsulated wonderfully by the great Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe in his widely acclaimed and most celebrated literary sensation *Things Fall Apart*.

Chinua Achebe has rightly been called the father of modern African Fiction. His fiction presents exemplary texts of nationalistic contestation of colonialist myth and distortion of Africans and Africa. He is very critical of aesthetic aspect of literature as Art for Art's Sake, and strongly believes in 'Art for Society's Sake.' He presupposes a social theory of art and holds the view that art reflects and propagates social views and values. In his *Novelist as a Teacher*, he underscores literature's pedagogical mission and its

ethical and political responsibilities. His mission is to reclaim the glory of Africa and African culture, and at the same time he foregrounds the seamy side of it with utmost sincerity and objectivity.

Achebe's first novel *Things Fall* Apart (1958) depicts traditional Igbo culture and its clash with European culture. It is the story of the postcolonial conflict between Africa and Europe, as well as the conflict between the Western way of doing things and the tribal consciousness. It is the story of the psychological and social consequences of the transition from the tribal indigenous society to the Western mode brought about by the imperialistic takeover. The novel deals with the phase of actual conquest when the European missionaries backed by an administrative-military structure produced a destabilizing effect in the African social fabric through the introduction of an alien administrative system, religion, education and culture. He examines the destructive and disruptive impact of the crucial encounter. It is a kind of violence that most of the African countries have experienced. Franz Fanon's attitude is similar to that of Mahatma Gandhi so far as colonialism is concerned. B.N. Ganguli observes that: "to Fanon colonialism is violence—political, economic, cultural and psychological. To Gandhi also colonialism is broad-based violence" (432).

The title of the novel is a phrasal statement from W.B Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosened upon the world.[3]

In these lines Yeats enunciates the collapse of Christian civilization. He ascribes it to the loss of human values, culture and faith in the two thousand years of its existence. Utter chaos is created as the centre has lost its hold, and the whole civilization is moving towards its destruction. Achebe reads the changes in the Igbo cultural set up of Umuofia. He seems to say that this miniature world of Umuofia is jolted by the intervention of the Whiteman, his culture, religion and government. The so-called civilizing mission of the colonizers has failed, because "they are the ignorant destroyer of the Igbo civilization, arrogant servants of a powerful queen, who disrupt a well ordered, cohesive, absolutely moral society by imposing on it their own forms of government and religious worship" (Lindfors 256).

Things Fall Apart delineates the vigorous vitality and delicate rhythms of self-sustained Igbo world where adjustment in human relationships and a fine balance between the community and the individual constitute the texture of society living in harmony, flexibility, non-authoritarianism and collective participation in the community's well being characterized this society which has its strengths and weaknesses like any other human society. Characterized by the typical Igbo policy of extreme democracy, tradition and culture embody a vital role in the lives of the people.

Igbo are a single people speaking many dialects. They are close to nature. They call themselves the sons of nature. They depend on nature for making a living. They are the owner of land, forest and the sources of water. Each individual can harness any amount of land around his village. The word Umuofia is a compound word made of 'Umu' and 'Ofia' meaning children of the forest. They grow what is essential and necessary. Thus, Igbo have their own historicity. They have their own rich tradition, culture and convention. As a writer Achebe remarks:

> First I had to tell Europe that arrogance on which she sought to excuse her pillage of Africa, i.e., that Africa was the primordial void was sheer humbug: that Africa had a history, a religion, a civilization. We constructed this civilization, and history, and displayed it to challenge the stereotype and cliché. (qtd. Ravenscroft 19-20)

Okonkwo is the most representative man of the Igbo culture. He struggles not only to dissociate himself from the image of his father but also towards the development of a hard and stern 'masculine' image opposite to his father's soft and effeminate character. His rejection of his father's values assumes importance in the context of the Igbo social relations where material achievement was considered the necessary sign of success. His classification of the values he admired as 'manly' leads him to despise his son's desire for the 'womanly' stories told by the mother. Gentleness, tenderness and tolerance are classified as 'womanly' as he nurtures a regret that his daughter, Ezinma who embodies the value he cherishes happens to be a girl. He consciously and consistently upholds Igbo culture and tradition and this leads him to commit the heinous act of killing. He has to kill the boy, as the oracle announces the death of Ikemefuna. He watched the boy's affinity and influence on his own son Nwoye. The act is upheld by the community as justice, but acknowledged as

the gruesome act at the individual level. Achebe makes rigorous attempt to reconstruct an initialized past. Achebe's significant portrayal of these unpleasant aspects of the Igbo society points to the authenticity with which he had delineated the African past. His undaunted stand to point out the flaws inscribed in African societies, is crucial for objective understanding of the past. It reveals the extent to which Achebe as a writer attempts to place things in proper perspective.

Okonkwo and his son Nwoye stand for native African and Western culture respectively. Nwoye finds his culture—religion, tradition and customs—repulsive. A rift between father and son emerges when Nwoye learns about his father's involvement in the killing of Ikemefuna. He can never forgive the enormity and magnitude of the crime committed by his father and his community. A growing sense of estrangement and alienation from the values of manliness, bravery and courage, along with the cultural practices of his society engulfs him. An internal conflict in Nwoye's disturbed mind makes him look beyond the contours of his culture to find peace and solace. It indicates the self-destructive tendencies in Igbo culture and traditional values. Jawaharlal Nehru also makes observations about the backwardness of African culture, "Africa being very backward, except for Egypt it could offer no effective resistance to Europe, so the European power fell on it in a mad race for empire and divided up this huge continent" (Nehru 411). Okonkwo remains in exile for accidental killing of Ezeudu's son. During his exile he learns of whiteman's incursion in Africa, and about the brutalities committed by them. Obierika narrates: "they killed him and tied up his iron horse. They have a big market in Abame on every other Afro day, and as you know the whole clan gathers there. That was the day it happened. The three white men and the very large number of other men surrounded the market. And they do shoot. Everybody was killed except the old and the sick who were at home." (160)

By the time Okonkwo comes back he finds drastically altered Umuofia where the whiteman had established his supremacy along with the imposition of a colonial administration and Christian religion. Umuofia becomes part of a new world, where the colonizer, his culture and values have penetrated every level of existence. More disturbing was the alien religion threatening menacingly to disrupt the fabric of Igbo society. Thus introduction of English language,

education and religion by the British into Igbo society leads to "cultural imperialism"; as a result the society falls apart and this fall is very well represented by the rift between the father and the son. In *Literature and Society* (1973), Ngugi Thiong'o spells out a direct connection between culture and politics, viewing the influence of dominant culture as a central vehicle for continued colonial culture or cultural imperialism. Nwoye's act of deserting his father, culture and tradition symbolizes the rupture in the society. An ominous hint is provided in the novel as Nwoye decides to take his mother, brothers and sister for conversion to Christianity. As family falls apart, the Christian missionaries delight in their success thrust even more vigorously. Oberika and Okonkwo express their anguish over this fall of their society. Oberika deplores the state of affairs in Umuofia and interrogates the validity of white man's domination:

> Does the white man understand our custom about land? How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (145)

Ngugi also criticizes the make-believe strategies of the colonizer in the same vein:

> The oppressed and the exploited of the earth maintain their defiance: liberty from theft. But the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. (78)

Okonkwo no longer tolerates the oppression of the white man and kills the head messenger of the white man's government. He at this moment realizes that people gathered over there do not stand by him. He finds himself too lonely to resist the rule of foreign men, and ultimately he commits suicide by hanging himself. Colonization finally drives Okonkwo to take his own life because the oppression

is too great for his divided tribe to overcome. Okonkwo can't take living under the rule of foreign men who don't speak his language or know his customs. So, rather than bear the yoke of colonization, he hangs himself.

In nutshell, Achebe only condemns European colonialism, but also recognizes its civilizing mission. Africa's encounter with European powers, no doubt brought about some reformation in Africa and African people. Postcolonial writers like Achebe feel more comfortable to live in European countries like America due to its more liberal and civilized fabric of society. In one of the interviews Achebe acknowledges that he would prefer to stay in America than Africa, as he said if he were to stay with Okonkwo, he would never do so. The protagonist Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* is epitome of cruelty, illiteracy, oppression, superstition embedded in Igbo culture, and at the same time resistance to territorial and cultural imperialism in the guise of Europeans civilizing mission. Yet, Achebe is not unmindful of imperial nature of European powers which erased out native African civilization, whatsoever, which Achebe and Ngugi claim to have reclaimed in their fictional and non-fictional writings.

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Husband-Wife Relationship in the Novels of Anne Tyler

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Anne Tyler, a postmodern southern writer, emerged as one of the contemporary and leading novelists in the U.S.A. during 1980s. Few contemporary novelists have been as steadily productive as Anne Tyler. At mid-life Anne Tyler has achieved a record of publication that is little short of extraordinary: fifteen novels, more than fifty short stories, and reams of articles and highly regarded book reviews. She has written about the late twentieth-century American family in each of her novels. Her novels focus on the problems of communication, the themes of isolation and thwarted ideals.[1] Such distinguished writers as Gail Godwin, Joyce Carol Oates, Larry Mac Murthy, John Updike, and Eudora Welty have praised Tyler's literary work. John Updike has repeatedly praised Tyler's remarkable 'power to see, and guess to know, and her ability to observe life' with a tolerance and precision unexcelled among contemporary writers.[2] Tyler's novels are published in many languages around the world. *The Accidental Tourist*, published in 1985, and *Breathing Lessons*, in 1989, received wide critical acclaim and earned prestigious literary prizes—the National Book Critic Circle Award and Pulitzer Prize.

Anne Tyler doesn't find an idealistic relationship between husband and wife in her novels. In the novel, *Earthly Possessions*, Charlotte always attempts to escape her husband, Saul, and the joint and overcrowded family. She runs away with a robber. Jake Simms. The very first sentence of this novel suggests that there is no cordial relationship between them. Charlotte says: "The marriage wasn't going well and I decided to leave my husband" (3). In her novels, Anne Tyler portrays the great weakness of the American family relationship. The family members require proximity rather than intimacy. "People are trying to live on the surface as a family. They go in search of another as an antidote to loneliness and as a way of restoring a sense of connectedness, however superficial."[3]

Anne Tyler's fictional husband and wife need other people because they are incomplete by themselves. The American family is seriously threatened and the challenge to the integrity of family consists of ingrained emotional regression and reticence. Anne Tyler tells to the interviewer Wendy Lamb: "I haven't always known how to let my characters go. But if I have something in mind and they're going to make it impossible to do it, I find it out pretty early. I've had several angry letters and calls from people who've wanted a happy ending for *Celestial Navigation*—they wanted the man and woman to stay together. All along I wanted that ending, too, and I was sure I'd be able to work out a way. I kept pushing toward it, but that writing felt wooden; my sentences were jerky when I looked back at them. In a way I felt I was trying to cover up a lie, and then I thought, I may as well tell the truth: the woman leaves the man. The problem in *Celestial Navigation* was that those characters were too absolutely separate people, and they couldn't possibly have stayed together."[4]

However, it is clear from the cited statements that the separation between husband and wife is the first and foremost concern of Anne Tyler. Many factors may be responsible for not letting the consummation of the couple flourish into fertile and benefiting marital life, but the presumption we get from the scrutiny of her novels is that most of the couples are temperamentally unyielding and emotionally withdrawn from each other. Instead of being in 'two hearts beating one'-state, they retain their individuality till the last. Often they lack flexibility and the adoption of any kind and such stiffness in their nature prohibits the desired flow of sweetness in their relationship. They are driven to seek some kind of wholeness and do not communicate clearly with each other. They are unresponsive to each other's needs.

Though herself, a content married lady, Anne Tyler is interested more in the analysis of those married individuals who are not able to get even an iota of contentment or bliss, which is the custom of marriage. She herself reveals her concern as a writer: "I write because I want more than one life; I insist on a wider selection. Although I am happily married, I spend a great deal of time mentally living with incompatible husband."[7] In the novel, *If Morning Ever Comes*, there exists a delicate balance in husband-wife relationship. There is a lack of communication between Dr. Philip Hawkes and Ellen

Hawkes. Dr. Philip Hawkes does not get family satisfaction from his wife, Ellen. So he maintains illicit relationship with another woman, Lili Belle. But Ellen does not talk with her husband at all about this emotional matter. Then Dr. Philip Hawkes goes to live with a woman outside of his family.[8] Ellen does not take it seriously. She maintains her own affairs along with her children. When she learns about the birth of her husband's illegitimate baby, Philip, she "clamed her mouth shut and said that was his outlook." Dr. Philip Hawkes probably suffers more from his wife's silence. On another level, Ellen's silence may be seen as childish denial of reality. Lili Belle's words express a tone of sadness to the affair.

> I don't guess my letter would have made any change in him one way or other, if your mother'd said one word he'd have stayed with her, always would have. He was just wanting her to ask him. But she didn't. He waited two weeks, and I guess he would have waited that long if I'd sent fourteen letters, even. Then he came back to me, not even planning to but just drunk and tired, and I took him in. (113)

In *A Slipping Down Life*, Evie is attracted to Drumstrings Casey when she hears his interview on the radio. It is time for Evie, at seventeen, to be interested in a man. Drum seems mysteriously creative, laconic, and superior. Evie tracks him down at a rock show in the Stardust Movie Theatre. One night, she carves his name into her forehead with fingernail scissors, it is a rare instance of violence for a Tyler novel, but it is an expression of affection.

Then she attends all Drum's shows where people can see her. She becomes an attraction to the people. Drum feels that she is the newspaper lady to advertise his shows. Drum's show manager David convinces him about Evie's service. He tells: 'she is doing you just a magnificent service, Bertram' (96). Evie loves and praises his singing. Drumstrings Casey also becomes interested in Evie to fulfill his emotional need. But Drum's motive to marry Evie, is even more complex and insubstantial. Practically speaking, he needs some place to live. He feels that Evie would bring him good luck and some change.

> Look. I like you. I want to get married. I feel like things are just petering out all around me and want to get married to someone. I like and have me a house and change. Make a change. Isn't that enough? Don't you want to change your life around some? (130)

Evie also wants his courtship and accepts his marriage proposal. She says: "'I could listen all day when you play.' 'Well, then,' said Drum. It seemed to be what he had come for" (123). But these multiple motives for Drum and Evie's family relationship are not found in this novel.

After marriage, Drum and Evie's relationship is passionless. Evie yearns for normal husband-wife relationship but she does not get genuine love, in spite of it, she gets a kiss from Drum's 'cool blank lips.' Drum also feels that his relationship with Evie has made condition worst. He has suffered from the professional insecurity.

In *Searching for Caleb*, Anne Tyler treats the familiar conflict between husband and wife who rebel against their family. Through the course of the novel, Justine becomes more and more dissatisfied in her life with her husband, Duncan, particularly, after her daughter, Meg, marries and her grandfather, Daniel, dies. Her romantic love turns into worst thing. She sheds her tears while sharing her family problem with Alonzo.

Justine is not happy with her husband's headlong pursuit of change and adventure. Once she tells her husband: "Sometimes I wonder why we travel with so much stuff" (299). The couple loses their self-identities. Finally Justine wants to live with the Peck family in Baltimore, but her husband, Duncan, hates her idea to settle with Peck. The novel is concerned with the intricacies of husband and wife relationship and the growth of the individual.

In *Earthly Possessions*, Charlotte's first sentence announces her unwillingness to live with her husband. She claims her husband is a total cipher and wonders why she ever married him. Charlotte blames her own fate:

> Really, we're a very unhappy family. I don't know why it should come as any surprise, I think. It feels so natural. It's my luck. I'm unlucky, I've lived in unhappy families all my life. I never really expected anything different. (137)

After her marriage with Saul, Charlotte reflects on her acceptance of his proposal.

> I should have refused. I wasn't helpless after all. I should have said, I'm sorry. I can't fit you in. I never planned to take a second person on this trip. (76-77)

Charlotte accepted Saul's proposal and adopted various methods of dealing with being a preacher's wife. Being unsatisfied with her husband, Charlotte maintains illicit relationship with Amos. She argues all time with her husband. Charlotte can't ignore her desire for freedom. She begins to move out Saul's mother's furniture piece by piece. She buys a pair of excellent walking shoes and acquires 100 traveller's cheque. She desires not only to travel but also to escape from the family burdens. Jake Simms proves to be the agent of her escape. Being a robber, he traps her and takes her as a hostage while she was withdrawing money from the Maryland Safety Saving Bank. She enters fully into the process of escape. Charlotte tells him her family problems. When Jake expresses astonishment at Charlotte's ability to sit up all night patiently, she replies:

> "If you like," he said, "you can sleep in the back tonight. I aim't sleeping anyhow. I plan to just sit here and go crazy."
> "Okay."
> "I don't see how you stand this." He said.
> "You forget," I told him, "I've been married." (99)

Thus in *Earthly Possessions*, we observe that in American family, freedom is translated concretely into separate residence. If you ask a middle class white American, "who are the members of your family?" he will probably mention first his wife and children. If he mentions his father, mother, sisters and brothers, he regards them as a separate unit. This is unlike the situation in the Indian joint family. In America, co-residence is generally regarded as undesirable. In Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*, the heroine Isabel's stance is reflective of the quest for freedom of the emerging young American woman. Though an innocent person, she is over-confident in her desire to be free from the bondage of customs and societal suppression.[9] She loves liberty more than anything else in the world:

> I try to judge things for myself, to judge wrong, I think is more honourable than not to judge at all, I don't wish to be a mere sheep in the flock: I wish to choose my fate and know something of human affairs beyond what other people think it compatible with propriety to tell me (159).

In *Breathing Lessons*, Anne Tyler explores the issue of husband-wife relationship by focusing on three different families. Jesse Moran and Fiona Stuckey fail at the outset. The other two involve

middle-aged contemporaries Max and Serena Gill, and Ira and Maggie Moran. Each couple has been based on particular needs and expectations. Each succeeds or fails as a result of different internal and external pressures. They offer a sensitive and complex portrait of what is wrong and right with family life as an institution in late twentieth-century America.

A historian Stephanie Coontz says: "to operate social obligation and interdependency in the twenty-first century, husband and wife must abandon any illusion that they can or should revive some largely mythical traditional family. They need to invent new family traditions and find ways of reviving older community. There are good grounds for hope that they can develop new traditions but only if they discard simplistic solutions based on romanticism of the past."

NOTES

1. Gunton R. Sharon, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Volume 18 (Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit Michigan), p. 529.
2. John Updike, "Loosened Roots," rev. of *Earthly Possessions*, *The New Yorker*, 53 (6 June1977), p. 130.
3. John Sirjamaki, *The American Family in the Twentieth Century* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1953), p. 77.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
5. Marguerite Michaels, "Anne Tyler, Writer 8.05 to 3.30," *New York Times Book Review* (8 May 1977), p. 43.
7. Nesanovich Stella, "The Individual in the Family: Anne Tyler's *Searching for Caleb* and *Earthly Possessions*," *Southern Review*, 14 (January 1978), p. 74.
8. Mainiero Lina, *American Women Writers*, (Frederic Unger, New York), p. 226.
9 Conrad M. Arensberg, "The American Family in the Perspective of Other Cultures," Eli Ginsberg, ed., *The Nation's Children*, Vol. 1: The Family and Social Change (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

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V.S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street*: Narratives of Non-Achievers

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Naipaul's first collection of short stories *Miguel Street* consists of seventeen short stories narrated by a nameless, precocious boy who is an enthusiastic observant of his colonial society. He is the prime character through whose sensibility the reader is made to pick up the raw realities of life. The distance between the narrator and his characters is implicit in the contrast between the Standard English of the former and the Creole speech of his characters. He regards *Miguel Street* as his first serious work, the book in which he discovered "the trick of writing": He says,

> There's a building near the B.B.C. called the Langham Hotel, where characters in Sherlock Holmes used to stay, and Room 235 was reserved for freelance writers. There was a very old typewriter in it. I remember, late one afternoon, putting in a bit of paper, setting it at single space, and without pausing writing the first story of *Miguel Street*.[1]

Miguel Street may be regarded as the young Naipaul's tribute to the Trinidad he left behind in 1950. The tone is appreciably nostalgic and indulgent. Further, the short stories expose a tendency on Naipaul's part to utilize the sharper focus of the short story in testing the fictional possibilities of events, incidents, places, and characters and master the art of giving them an imaginative extension and support. The child narrator narrates the stories in an open-eyed innocence accepting the values of the street. The seventeen stories depict the instability of the West Indian society and its individuals who try to get away from reality and escape into fantasy and who are forced by eccentricity, ambition or sheer romanticism.

In *Miguel Street*, Naipaul attempts something more than what his father had done in his stories. He is interested not merely in the observed details of life but also the pattern that controls them and the creative perception that transforms what is seen and felt.

The authorial voice in all stories implies a tone of sympathy for the derelict and victimized characters. The strictly measured sequence of narratives centre around the outcasts, eccentrics, mavericks, and tricksters of the West Indian community, all bound together by a common feeling of abandonment. The editorial voice of the narrator in order to transform the Miguel Street from a transcript into a myth of locality or into a "sthala—purana," holds the centripetal attractions of the place and the centrifugal distractions of time in an exquisite balance, and also succeeding in presenting a fairly objective view of life.

Taken as a whole work, the unity of *Miguel Street* is derived from the spatial metaphor of the street itself as well as from a time-structure implicit but undeclared till the very end. The temporal pattern of *Miguel Street* is made explicit in the last happening, "How I Left Miguel Street." The unnamed narrator of the stories makes the only successful escape recorded in the work. He leaves his native scene for his education abroad. He recaptures the strange trysts of his boyhood days from the vantage point of reminiscence. The stories are a clear identity of the past left behind and overcome. Miguel Street is the gathering place of different people who are chosen by the place of living rather than the people choosing it themselves. It depicts the instability of the West Indian society in which impelled by eccentricity, ambition or sheer romanticism, the individuals are always trying to get away. The instability comes from the very stability of the different subcultures that constitute the strange soup—mix recipe of this society. Everyone is forced to rebel against his closed society by aligning himself to other subcultures. Frequent disappearances are counter-pointed by the same strange reappearances. The physical lay out of the Miguel Street establishes it as a perfect ecological metaphor of the human situation.

Naipaul, as the neighbourhood boy, describes the stories recapturing his childhood days of the colonial society. The seventeen sketches of *Miguel Street* are named after the inhabitants of the street. Each character is interrelated with the remaining characters. As Francis Wyndham says: "Unity of theme, mood, manners and background binds the stories in V.S. Naipaul's Miguel *Street* so tightly together that the collection is almost a novel. The street is in Port of Spain, and Mr. Naipaul takes us from house to house connecting on a character here, a situation there, before moving on to

the next: a major figure in one episode may fill a subsidiary role in another."[2]

Living in the street each resident projects his own image which he has chosen as an eccentric individual, a mask and fantasy, to assert himself. What is required of an individual is his integrated personality approved by a "code of conduct" of his society. But *Miguel Street* has no such 'code' to follow. As Patrick Swidene says, "In fact almost all the inhabitants of Miguel Street are hopeless failures. But most of them fail with style and in their terms that is to succeed."[3] Miguel Street becomes traditionless and valueless in which imitation becomes the order of the society and individuals give themselves to fantasies of other places, cultures, and colours which are shown in films and advertisements.

The book speaks of a society, which has never assumed any particular noble aspect, and of a society without any glorious past or remarkable future. Its people are gullible—in strikingly innocent ways. It is a society based upon "the degrading fact of the colonial society; it never required efficiency, it never required quality, and these things, because unrequired, become undesirable. This is the world without scientists, engineers, explorers, soldiers or poets, without tradition or standard which shapes the people of Miguel Street."[4] Landeg White attributes this apparent lack of standards to lack of real concern on the part of the inhabitants:

> Miguel Street is not a community without standards but the standards are not the sort that can promote achievement by giving shape to ambition, and in the end they amount to little more than a good natured tolerance of eccentricity and failure. The lack of sanctimoniousness is superficially attractive, but even this is basically no more than lack of real concern.[5]

The people of Miguel Street are neither model nor ideal; mere fantasists, they know very well of their own helplessness in the society. The narrator feels: "I used to wonder whether they knew how much worry they caused, and how uncertain their own position was."[6] They try to substitute what is missing in that place, which, however, always remains only in their dreams. They are without any social or moral background. They have neither rich inheritance to dream about nor remarkable history to boast of. As Walsh says: "This is the life without natural graces, heroes, saints, without a national

identity of a social purpose, inherited by the people of Miguel Street."[7]

Bogart and his living surround mystery. He pretends to be making a living by tailoring, but he never stitches any thing. He is like Popo, the carpenter who lives next door. The residents of the Miguel Street are neither clever nor foolish. Uncertainty haunts every character, and every one pretends to be working on something and producing the result, but never succeeds in doing so. It is ironical that no one starves there even though they earn no money for their living. Miguel Street looks like a slum area for strangers, but to its inhabitants it is a world by itself. There are many important men in the street, even though each is different from the other. "Man-man was mad; George was stupid; Big Foot was a bully; Hat was an adventurer; Popo was a philosopher; and Morgan was our comedian" (61).

The residents of the Miguel Street are neither ideal nor idle. It is a wonder how they got money and it is an equal wonder as to how they make friends, for they were the most popular figures in the street. As Landeg White says:

> Bogart models himself on the star of the film 'Casablanca' and when he explains his long absence in terms of smuggling and brothel keeping in British Guiana, he becomes the 'most feared man in the street.' Eventually, he is jailed for bigamy and it turns out, his absences have no more melodramatic an explanation than that he has been trying to produce a child. But the men of the street do not laugh; they understand his desire to be a man, among we men. (47)

Popo, the carpenter, pretends to be making a thing without name but never completes making even a stick of furniture: "And yet Popo was never idle. He was always busy hammering and sawing and planning" (8). The street despises Popo, and his wife too ignores his poetic sensibility, as sensibility has no place in Miguel Street. When Popo drinks heavily, beats his wife's lover and goes to the Court of law for trial, only then is he accepted as the inhabitant of Miguel Street. A prison sentence for robbery gets him the necessary recognition as a man and the views of the inhabitants of Miguel Street also change gradually. Notoriety—recognition for the wrong reasons—brought popularity to people in Miguel Street.

Man-man contests in every election and every time he gets only three votes, one of the votes being that of his own. "He never

worked, but he was never idle. He was hypnotized by the word; particularly the written word and he would spend a whole day writing a single word" (34). With the Bible in his hand, he goes to the extent of announcing that he is the new Messiah, which puts him in calamities. Madness is tolerated by the street, but not fanaticism or pretentious self-righteousness, for that tempts the evil eye. He tries to crucify himself on the cross and compels the people to stone him. "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they doing." Then he screamed out, 'stone me brethren!' (39) People really begin to fling stones at Man-man, aiming his face and chest. Man-man shouts loudly to stop the stupidness. "what the hell is this? What the hell you people think you doing? Look, get me down from this quick, let me down quick and I go settle the son of bitch who pelt a stone at me" (140).

George is an alcoholic, he is rude and always creates nuisance in the street with his rude behaviour. He beats his wife, son, and daughter badly. He kills his own wife and marries again. He never tries to become friendly with people. He allows stray women in his Pink house. His son Elias and daughter Dolly just ignore him even when he dies. The residents of the street collect money to bury him after his death.

B. Wordsworth claims to be the greatest poet in the world, but he never completes a poem. The narrator asks him to recite a poem, but B. Wordsworth has never written a poem. So, he escapes from the scene without uttering a single line. "But he never told me any other line. He merely said, 'oh, it comes, you know. It comes'" (47). Big Foot is a terror in the colony, but he is afraid of even a dog, he works as a postman, driver, carpenter, and mason, but proves to be good for nothing. He acts as a boxer, but when the R.A.F. man cruelly defeats him, he becomes a big joke in the street. Finally, he settles down as a labourer: "Big Foot left Miguel Street, and the last I heard of him was that he was a labourer in a quarry in Laventille" (59). Morgan is a pyrotechnicist, but he never succeeded in his profession. He is a comedian in the street. He always quarrelled with Mr. and Mrs. Bhakcu and he beat his children very badly. He too leaves the street for some time. Rumours float that he has gone to Venezuela or he might have become a jockey in Columbia. Everyone seems to have indeed outgrown the necessity for belonging by mastering the route of evanescence. Mr. Bhakcu treats himself as a mechanical genius but he never repairs even his own car. He buys a

car, a Bedford lorry, and two taxies, but he fails to earn money. At the end he settles as a Pundit.

The character of Laura is quite in line with the culture. She lives next door to the narrator. While Bogart was the most boring person in the street, Laura was the most vivacious. Laura was not beautiful but she had seven husbands. Changing husbands was common in the Miguel Street. The narrator observes certain regular happenings such as her belly raising for months and then becoming quite flat again in a few months. Men usually cycled around Laura's house in the evening, whistling for Laura. She fought everyday with Nathaniel and her children screamed all over the place: "She knocked him about a lot, and did so quite openly now. Sometimes she locked him out, and then we would hear Nathaniel crying and coaxing from the pavement" (89).

Eddoes is one of the aristocrats of the street. He works only in the morning, maneuvering his scavenging-cart. He is the 'sweet-man,' a man of leisure, well-dressed, and keen on women. Every year Eddoes wins the city council's award for the cleanest scavenging-cart.

Bolo, 'Missing Ball,' is a tall man, not thin, with a face that is a caricature of sadness, the eyebrows curving downwards, the eyes big and empty of expression. He has no commitment in his business. He sells flour or sugar keeping the box on two wheels and he pushes it himself for six days and he becomes a barber on Sundays. He boasts: "I. I teach Samuel, He couldn't even shave himself when he start barbering. He came crying and begging, '"Mr. Bolo, Mr., Bolo, teach me how to cut people hair, I be you'" (135).

'Finding the missing ball' is Bolo's passion. He purchases twenty copies of the *Trinidad Guardian* for finding the missing ball in the 'missing ball' contest. All that Bolo has to do to win a lot of money is to mark the position of the ball with an 'X,' but he never wins a penny. Sometimes he becomes angry for not finding the missing ball and for not earning money the easy way. He buys hundred and fifty *Guardians* every week to fulfill his ambition but in vain. No wonder, Bolo is called as the 'missing ball' in the Miguel Street. "People began calling Bolo 'Missing ball.' Hat used to say, 'Look the man with the missing ball'" (137).

Hat is a well-known figure of the Miguel Street. The narrator gives him much importance. Hat is much respected by the residents of the street. Each and every character is linked with the character of

Hat. Boyee and Errol are Hat's nephews. Hat always gets involved in trouble with the police. He resembles Rex Harrison with his dark-brown complexion, medium height. He had a slightly bow-legged walk and flat feet. Being kind-hearted, he responds to every problem in the street and is at the same time a little bit ironical. When George dies, he collects money to bury him. Hat brings Dolly home as his wife and later kills her for which he is imprisoned for four years. The narrator betrays deep love towards Hat in his account of Hat: "When Hat went to jail, part of me had died" (172).

Bogart never succeeds in tailoring, Popo never succeeds in making the thing without name, George fails to succeed as a good father and husband, and subsequently loses his wife, Elias, the son of George fails in his examination, and he appears in the Cambridge Senior School Certificate exam many times. "So I think I was a little glad when Elias sat the examination for the third time, and failed" (30). Elias works as a teacher in Titu Hoyt School and again works as a Sanitary Inspector. He leaves British Guiana to succeed in the sanitary Inspector's examination but fails the exam. Later, he tries at Barbados but in vain.

The people of the street treat Big Foot as a terrifying personality, but in actuality he is a coward. He is afraid even of a dog. He frequently changes his designation from one to another, as a postman, a driver, a carpenter, a mason, a boxer, a labourer in the quarry. At first he is treated as terror, in the end he is treated as a joker. "Trinidad thought it was Big Foot, the comedian, doing something funny again" (59). Mr. Morgan fails in his fireworks. Laura begets eight children by seven men. Laura's daughter Lorna also follows the same path and begets a child without getting married.

Eddoes is one of the aristocrats in the street. Due to his extra-marital affairs, he begets a child "Pleasure" which brings to light the fact that even the aristocrats of the street had extra-marital affairs with the common people. Under the influence of these low-class people, the aristocrats also tended to behave like the commoners in the street. Edward kills his wife and he is jailed. Tony and Mrs. Hereina never lived like a perfect couple. Though Mrs. Christiani elopes with Tony and settles down as Mrs. Hereina, there was always a quarrel between Tony and Mrs. Hereina. Finally, she rejects Tony as her husband.

Mr. Bhakcu boasts of himself as a mechanical genius but he never repairs any vehicle. Whenever his vehicle needs repairs, a

mechanic has to come to repair the vehicle. We always find him under the tally of a Tractor pretending to be repairing the engine of the Tractor just to avoid the moneylenders. "Bhakcu remaining under the lorry all the time, refusing to reply. The moneylenders grew angry, and some of the women among them began to cry" (127). He fails as a mechanic as well as a good husband.

In the last story, "How I Left Miguel Street," reveals the narrator's failure. Due to the failure tasted by him, he rejects Miguel Street and escapes to London through a scholarship sponsored by Mr. Ganesh Ramsumair. He is addicted to the habit of drinking rum, smoking cigarettes, getting involved in extra-marital affairs. The mother of the narrator compels him to leave the Miguel Street for his own sake. This reminds one of V.S. Naipaul's own escape from the Trinidadian society, which, to him was something of a nightmare. Naipaul sustains irony through the fallible narrator, a related device. Abrams writes, "for sustaining ironic qualification, in which, the narrator of the story is himself a participant in it but, although he may be neither foolish nor demented, nevertheless manifests a failure of insight, viewing and appraising his own motives and actions of other characters through the distorting perspective of his prejudices and private interests."[7] The characters in *Miguel Street,* as Naipaul feels, form the 'rubbish heap' of the West Indian society. There is a contrast set in all the stories between the superior western cultures taken as a standard culture and the set of values represented by the Miguel Street. Naipaul seems to have denounced the West Indian culture, habits, and values by labelling them as primitive and barbarous, in a satiric tone in all the stories.

One can describe the situation as an inverted civil condition. "Civil men," as Cudjoe observes, "in contradiction to savages, lived an ordered and disciplined life characterized by political authority, a system of law and the presence of religious morality."[8] All colonized people were classified as primitives, i.e. savages, without political, legal, and social system and communal life, and religion, spiritually speaking, unlike Europe. The colonizer tries to ennoble the savages and civilize them for better living. Cudjoe adds: "As the savage is perceived always as having no history or culture, when he does, it is always perceived to be meaningless. Because he lacks letters, the savage cannot enjoy intellectual life, and thinking leads invariably to unhappiness. The savage state required no system of

law, no social organizations, and no political order and people lived without the benefit of kings." (122)

In Miguel Street, there are few social conventions. There are no laws of the land, no moral, ethical standards to order the lives of the people. Precisely, in Miguel Street, the conventions are imposed from outside in the form of law. Mere anarchy ruled the street. Living in the street means no other man to be himself. There is no culture to bind them, no political authority, no ambitions or goals to achieve, and no facilities to set up. All the people in Miguel Street are outcastes, prostitutes, and knaves. They never hesitate to lie or steal, for in their proneness to fantasy everything passes for propriety. "These Trinidad people does only lie, lie. Lie is all they know" (143). They allow themselves to drift along with the current and prepare to face only the unavoidable or the inevitable. All the people begin and end up as failures. Symbolically the narrator escapes from a life which was nightmarish. As Keith Garebian observes: "Young Nathaniel, the person of Miguel Street (1959), matures and discovers that life on the street is a microcosm of dispiriting failure, so he leaves it all in a mood of exultant relief."[9]

Though the characters are different in their own way, they are interconnected and unified by the sense of place. Each character is connected to the lives of other characters. They appear in regular intervals. They appear only to disappear. In all, the people of Miguel Street were all romancers, wanderers, and more appropriately, Picaros. Desertion and departure from Miguel Street is taken for granted as a way of life. As Walsh says: "They appear and disappear like fish or bird. Suddenly they are here, suddenly gone. People come and go, they are dramatically present, but there are long intervals of silence and absence." (66)

Miguel Street's lay-out looked like a slum for the fresher, but to the residents of the street it was a world in itself. It is really remarkable that the people there developed a style of life, which assured the means for existence for all. Everyone was brilliantly accommodated in the street. There was no feeling of claustrophobia whatsoever. Edward, one of the residents of the street, says: "Look at Miguel Street. In America you think they have streets so narrow? In America this street could pass for a sidewalk" (150). On another occasion the narrator expresses his view; "A stranger could drive through Miguel Street and just say 'Slum!' because he could see no

more. But we, who lived there, saw our street as a world, where everybody was quite different from everybody else" (61).

"The inhabitants of the street have neither respect nor grace for decent living," says the narrator, implying that in their roles as happy hypocrites they had brought life under their jurisdiction. As Walsh says: "In Miguel Street it is the place, public graceless, huddled with human oddity which is both the ground and the background of the people." (66) This street is an essentially neutral, amoral society. Bogart is a smuggler and leads an illegal and immoral life. When he leaves the house, licentious people who entertain "stray women" occupy his house, drink and smoke. Bogart runs a brothel house in George Town. Extra-marital affairs were common. Eddoes who is well known as the aristocrat of the street is also found with stray women in the house of Bogart. Popo's wife elopes with a gardener. The "Pink house" is full of noisy, stray women, whenever the American soldiers arrived there. The narrator says, "And whenever I passed the Pink house, these women shouted abusive remarks at me: and some of them did things with their mouths, inviting me to 'come to mooma'" (21). Popo, like Mr. Morgan, quarrelled with his wife suspecting the paternity of his ten children. When Edward asks, "'How you sure is your children?' Morgan laughed, and said, 'I have my doubts'" (64). Mrs. Hereina or Mrs. Christiani elopes with Toni. She leaves her first husband and then the second also. Edward's wife elopes with an American soldier. Hat's wife also elopes with another man. "Dolly had run away from Hat, taking all his gifts of course. Hat had chased her and found her with another man" (169). Treachery marked all marital relationships in the Miguel Street reflecting the lack of values among its residents. Laura holds a "world record" in the street: "Laura had eight children. There is nothing surprising in that. These eight children had seven fathers" (84). The narrator himself is not an exception. At the age of 18, he picks up affairs with stray women. The narrator says about himself in the last story, "How I Left Miguel Street," "We made wild parties and took rum and women to Maracas Bay for all-night sessions" (174). Husbands beating wives and wives beating husbands was a common as well as tolerable feature among the inhabitants of the street without any cutting-edge of sensation. As William Walsh observes: "If it is, even brutality, even the beating of wives and children, is tolerable." (11) It has long ceased to have the exhilaration of scandal. George beats his children and wife.

Morgan beats his children mercilessly. When Mrs. Morgan holds Mr. Morgan by his waist, all Miguel Street laughs at him. It seemed that Nathaniel often beat his wife, Laura. When questioned, he said that he is just "beating some sense into that woman" (87). But it was not Nathaniel who beat Laura, but Laura who beat Nathaniel. The narrator says, "All the time he had the story, he hated his wife, and he beats her regularly with the cricket bat. But she was beating him too, with her tongue" (128). Tony beats his wife, Mrs. Hereina and threatens to kill her. Mr. Morgan and Mrs. Bhakcu quarrel even for the smallest cause. Perhaps they are too conscious of man's helplessness in the face of life. His attitude is best summed up in what Hat says at the time of Laura's death: "You can see trouble coming and you can't do a damn thing to prevent it coming. You just go to sit and watch and wait" (91-92).

In Miguel Street, "Even God seems to have been comfortably domesticated."[10] Man-man says that he has seen God. There is no need to wonder, because seeing God has become quite common in Port of Spain with the mystic, Ganesh Pundit, setting the trend.

One of the peculiarities of the Miguel Street was that the dogs resembled their masters. Men and animals lived in harmony. "George has a mean mongrel. Toni's dog is a terrible savage. Hat's dog is an Alsatian with a sense of humour" (163). Hat and George's Alsatian dogs resembled their masters. George abused anybody and in the same way his two dogs were ready to bark at anytime. Man-man also had a dog, which behaved, like his master:

> The dog was like Man-man in a way, too, it was a curious dog. It never barked, never looked at you, and if you looked at it, it looked away. It never made friends with any other dog, and if some dog tried either to get friendly or aggressive, Man-man's dog gave it a brief look of disdain and ambled away, without looking back. (35-36)

Naipaul presents an ironical view of life in Miguel Street. The street is an amalgamation of different religions and races, which is the fundamental basis of the West Indian life. Mystery haunts the life of everyone in the street. Every particularity in life is accommodated and everyone is free to have his own style of being or doing. The inhabitants are governed by certain inexplicable moods and impulses matched by the unpredictable turn things take in life. So they get the best of their having to live with them. Nor do they seriously try to overcome their own shortcomings by growing out of their in-

nocence. They allow themselves to drift along with the current and prepare themselves to face the unavoidable or the inevitable. Their melancholy attitude proceeds from a ritualized acceptance of reality. As William Walsh observes: "There is a kind of sadness folded into the quick lines of sketches in *Miguel Street*. It is unemphatic and never despairing because neither author nor character take up any indignant stance about what happens to them. They accept it. And they do so because of a conviction, or if that is too explicit and articulate, because of profound attitude or a posture in the bones and nerves, that one part of being human is simply hopelessness and another part is practising a ritual to make that tolerable." (67)

Miguel Street emerges, in the final analysis, as a symbol of the tragicomic situation of men in the new world environment. The drives and aspirations of the inhabitants of the slum like landscape mingle with their own desires and fantasies and denominate a world that is different from other possible worlds only in degree and not quality. For the narrator, it furnishes the story that unifies all these stories. Not only does it provide a frame of reality but also a point of self-reference. The hyphenated memories of his boyhood experiences are woven around the lusts and greeds, the eccentricities and idiosyncrasies. Miguel Street is the home every young boy must escape from, and return to in the wake of his achieved education and maturity. It stands for the recognition in one's own experience as memory flashes back to the past clarifying the traumatic moments when the quest for identity and self-differentiation had begun. The narrator in recording the concluding incident and the impression it makes on him dramatizes the contradictory but transforming power of Miguel Street as a spatial myth.

In a transplanted colonial society sentimentality is considered comic and ridiculous, if not altogether offensive and vulgar. The artist overcomes the difficulty by entering into the gap in manners and offers a moral gesture in which the formal civility is joined to a sense of human concern. The reciprocity of feeling establishes a sense of human solidarity too and the scene fixes for all time an aspect of experience, which must ever remain fresh in the boy's mind. The narrator, who leaves as a green boy, returns as an adult who can imaginatively repossess the experience as well as articulate the meaning of his Miguel Street past. The creative process with its strict demands of objectivity and empathy entails nothing less than a dwarfing of the individual personality. As Madhusudan Rao com-

ments: "To master life by art, one must acquire the virtue of negative capacity, the capacity to achieve self-diminution so as to extend the margins of human awareness." (32) The young man as an artist certainly learns the worth of this when he sees himself as "a dancing dwarf on the tarmac" (179). In spite of narrow range and limited local perspective, *Miguel Street* has a quality of suppressed mellowness; a precious moral refinement held in abeyance, *Miguel Street* is Naipaul's first serious work, the book in which he discovered the trick of writing with care and objectivity.

NOTES

1. An interview with David Bates, *Sunday Times Magazine*, 26 May 1963.
2. Francis Wyndham, *The London Magazine*, VI, 9 (September, 1959), pp. 78-79.
3. Patrick Swidene. "V.S. Naipaul" *The English Novel of History and Society*, ed: Patrick Swidene (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 214.
4. William Walsh. *A Manifold Voice* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 65.
5. Landeg White, *V.S. Naipaul; A Critical Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 48-49.
6. V.S. Naipaul. *Miguel Street* (London: Picador, Pan Macmillan 2002), p.129.
7. M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1978), p. 80.
8. Selwyn R. Cudjoe, *V.S. Naipaul: A Materialistic Reading* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), p. 30.
9. Keith Garebian, *V.S. Naipaul's Negative Sense of Place. The Journal of Commonwealth Literature,* X (August, 1975), p. 25.
10. K.I. Madhusudhan Rao, *Contrary Awareness* (Guntur: Sarathi, 1982) p. 29.

The Evolutionary Views of George Bernard Shaw

MANJU CHATURVEDI

The term Evolution has been always interpreted and explained by different scientists and philosophers in different ways. It is interesting to mark the significance and originality of Shaw's contribution to the philosophy of Evaluation. In Preface to *Back to Methuselah*, Shaw says: "Conflict between religion and science" has not been a new one. Shaw mentions Empedocles, who says that all phases of life are transformations of four elements such as "Fire, Air, Earth and Water." (507) Shaw had to choose between Evolution and Genesis. Actually Evolutionists were not in favour of those who believed in the separate creation of all phases of life as described in the book of Genesis. All of us know it well that the theory of Evolution has been widely popularized by Darwin. The term Evolution generally connotes the findings and views of Darwin on Evolution, but Shaw declares that the idea of Evolution is not originality with Darwin. Now it is universally accepted that it is a theory to explain the nature and history of the vast array of plant and animal species that inhabit our planet. It accounts for the present diversity of organism with reference to past events of organic development. Its central doctrine is one of the changes with descent, and in opposition to belief in the fixity of species. It asserts that there have been profound modifications in the forms of life as generation has followed generation over the millions of years.

The Greek philosopher Anaximander saw vaguely the "idea of transformation of aquatic species into terrestrials, even driving men from aquatic fish like men, the mythical mermen. The emergence from aquatic life to terrestrial life meant undergoing changes in ways of life and in climate and environment."[1] The necessary changes and adaptations of Anaximander anticipate the evolutionary pronouncements of the modern Evolutionists like Lamarck and Darwin. According to Heraclitus, life is a harmony made up of conflicting notes. All things sublunary are perpetually changing. Every-

thing changes into new shapes. There is unceasing process of flux. In the words of Heraclitus, "you cannot step twice into the same river."[2] We are not what we were before. Change is the law of nature. Heraclitus says, "The sun is new everyday."[3] The ideas of flux and strife of Heraclitus have gone a long way in influencing generations of philosophers. Heraclitus's ideas have been forerunners of Bergsonian Flux and Change and Darwinian Theory of struggle. Later on we see that the idea of strife, conflict and opposites of Heraclitus have turned Germans to Spencerian ideas of 'Evolution' based upon disintegration and integration. Adam Sehaff observes, "Change is a unity and conflict of Contraries."[4] This law of changeability became the basis of Bergson's philosophy. Shaw bases his philosophy of evolution on the theory that there is a basic unity amidst the apparent diversities.

To Shaw, the proper study and understanding of Evolution was the proper and useful method of appreciating the laws of development and progress of civilization. The proper study of Evolution was the proper study of man, his aspirations and of possibilities associated with life. Shaw feels that science and religion are not incompatible. He says: "Evolution is a scientific religion." (Preface, *Back to Methuselah*, 507) It is a religion of the 20th century arisen from the ashes of pseudo-Christianity of the Mechanists and neo-Darwinians. Shaw follows Lamarck and Bergson to a great extent. He accepts that man is a product of Lamarckian Evolution, we may say Functional Adaptation, and now Creative Evolution. To Lamarck, the production of a new organ in the organism results from the supervention of a new want, and a new movement which this want gives rise to. He says that the needs have imperfectly given birth to new parts of the organism by the efforts of the inner feelings of the animal. The evolutionary process of Lamarck is: "You are alive, and you want to be more alive. You want an extension of consciousness and of power. You want, consequently, additional organs or additional uses of your existing organs."[5] But Shaw has added something to it. He does not lay more stress upon need alone. He lays emphasis upon Consciousness. The need to move the limbs is not the cause of the formation of brain; it is the need to know what one does. Don Juan says that the brain was made not of the "need to move my limbs, for a rat with half my brains moves as well as I." (*Man and Superman*, 375) Action and use come from a need but the

need itself is determined or felt through awareness or Consciousness.

The environmental impacts have much to do with the organism, and its development and change. In preface to *Major Barbara*, Shaw declares: "What a man is depends upon his character, but what he does, depends upon his circumstances. The activities are highly influenced by circumstances, situations and the environment in which the activities are performed. Regularity in performance of a particular action conditions and influences the life of man. To Shaw, "Man is creature of habit." (Preface, *Plays Pleasant*. 728) He says, "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends upon the unreasonable man" (Preface, *Man and Superman*, 193) Here we mark that this paradoxical statement reveals the importance and creative value of things which exist but are beyond the reach of our senses and which can be grasped intuitively.

We see that Shaw differs from Darwin on many points. Darwin opines that in nature, there is war of all against all, and ruthless struggle and resistance and hostilities are the laws of existence. According to Shaw, Life-Force adopts the line of least resistance. Life struggles in the course of evolution, no doubt, but it does so only because it has not acquired sufficient consciousness. "Blind struggle and conflict are foreign to the nature of Life" (*Man and Superman*, 387). Shaw says, "If wicked flourish and the fittest survive, nature must be the God of rascals," (*Maxims for Revolutionists*, 194). Darwin's Natural Selection is according to Shaw, "Un-natural Selection." (Preface, *Back to Methuselah*, 527)

Shaw thinks that laws of nature are to be followed and not resented. In his play *Caesar and Cleopatra*, he says that he does not resent the wind when it chills him or the night when it makes him stumble in the darkness. (287) He says: "National Selection must have played an enormous part in adapting life to our planet, but it is Creative Evolution that adapts the planet to our continual aspiration to greater knowledge and greater power."[6] Shaw's ideas are more convincing than that of Darwin, because Darwin's struggle is blind and erratic and inevitably chaotic in nature. There are many situations in life which demand compromise and do not need resistance or struggle. In nine out of ten cases, disputes are settled through mu-

tual understanding and compromise. Now we are holding the ideas of equal distribution of wealth and equal opportunities to all. Now-a-days there is no utility of Darwin's theories. The impact of environment upon a creature prompts it to act in some peculiar ways for self-preservation. Lamarck says that Function comes first and creates a necessary organ. To Darwin organ comes first and makes the function possible. Lamarck holds that need, use and habit are the agents which have been behind Evolution. The theories of Lamarck are more convincing than that of Darwin. Shaw thinks that Lamarck's proposition lays stress on want, use and disuse and not on the reactions of extended causes of life and habit such as changes of climate, food supply and geological upheavals.

To Shaw, Evolution is development and progress. In *Man and Superman*, Tanner says that changes, variations and modifications in the existing forms of organisms are wrought through the agency of Nature, woman. It is the woman, who in the evolutionary process, invented man, differentiated him, created him in order to produce something better. (373) Conrad in *Back to Methuselah* declares that lack of knowledge, consciousness and correct lines of action are the causes of retardation in Evolution. Shaw thinks that man is not a product of Darwinian blind, accidental and meaningless forces. Evolutionary changes are changes for improvement and progress. Trials and errors, curiosity and a desire to know more and more are the ingredients of a creative process associated with Evolution. New knowledge always contradicts the old. The incessant experiments and trials and errors teach how to avoid destruction by not losing or misusing the power acquired. Evolution is change, alteration, and transformation and is in no way suggestive of loss or decay or death. In *Back to Methuselah*, Marcellus says that body always ends by being a bore, and nothing remains beautiful and interesting except thought. "Thought is life." (959)Thought is synonymous with life; and as life advances and flows on, thought will gain added significance and scope. The index of progress is determined by the qualities of ideas. In all the ages, it is the ideas which have moved the world. Future holds out a promise and there is a point in time when no consideration other than ideological will be there to rule and judge the world.

In all ages, Evolution has been interpreted in different ways at different hands. To Spencer, Evolution is a movement upwards to-

wards a perfection. To Shaw, the way of Life-Force has conceived of an evolution from Chaos to Cosmos, from heterogeneity to homogeneity. Bergson feels that matter and mind can be bridged. Between matter and mind he inserts Life. Matter is vitalized through consciousness. Life is nothing but an association of consciousness with matter, and the ever-widening consciousness marks the ascending stages of Evolution.

To Shaw life is a force that goes on experimenting and is a result of trials and errors in the process of evolution. Man is not a divine fiat, rather he is the result of purposeful attempts of the Life-Force. The theories of Darwin have been put to discomfiture at the hands of Shaw when he inserted the gradually increasing consciousness in the framework of life. In due course, matter will outlive its functions and utility. Life is identified with thought. Life is not an emanation from matter; it is an independent force which enters into associations with matter. Spirit for its manifestations associates itself with matter. Spirit goes on evolving. It is not only Being but also Becoming. Being and Becoming, both have been considered by Shaw. Future holds out glittering spiritual promises when all the whirlpool will become all life and no matter.

The dominance of thought will have more importance to human life. It will create a new humanity. It will bring about a change in mind itself and inevitable widening of consciousness in man. The mind will discover itself; it will know itself, and thus the point of self-realization will be reached. Later on mind will be superseded by spirit. The metaphysical concept of Shaw is a spiritual realization. Shaw's evolution is a spiritual exploration which will lead to creating a kingdom of Heaven on the earth.

NOTES

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2. Fr. 41, p. 61
3. Thales to Pluto, ed. T.V. Smith (Chicago), Fr. 52, 1956
4. *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LVII, 1960, p. 250.
5. ibid, p.510.
6. Bentley, *Bernard Shaw* (New Direction, N.Y.).

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Mahasweta Devi's Women as Victims under Patriarchy

M. UMAR

Women in our society are always looked down upon and are considered as inferior human beings. Since ages, they have been crushed by the male dominated society and are denied a status. In everyday news, we witness one or two cases of women, victimized to some sort of horror. Woman is experiencing a continuous trauma under male subjugation, though a lot of awareness is brought forth. Ram Ahuja comments: "In spite of the legislative measures adopted in favour of women in our society after independence, the spread of education and women's gradual economic independence, countless women still continue to be victims of violence. They are beaten, kidnapped, raped, burnt and murdered."[1] Woman is not as free and secure as man. She has been a victim to both psychological and physical affliction. She is considered frail and fragile. Since ancient times, man has acquired and occupied a superior status to a woman in the society.

Mahasweta Devi focuses on different phases of suffering the women undergo in the society. She does not write as a feminist, but, as a human being who opens up the realities of human trauma. In an interview she says: "I am a woman, and I am writing. But, I am not writing of women alone. What I am writing, most of my books, it is about class exploitation, the underclass is exploited, men, women together. Of course, women get worst part of it, but not always. Definitely, I am interested in women's positions, women's thought. But I am more interested in active work."[2] She explicates the problems of women and the misery; they undergo in a male-dominated society and presents them in her works. Her works *Mother of 1084, Bayen* and *Titumir* reflect such affliction under patriarchy.

According to Catherine Thankamma: "Patriarchy is the system that traces family descent and economic inheritance down the male line. In a joint family the senior most male is the head, the patriarch, while in the nuclear families of today it is the father."[3]

In *Mother of 1084* and *Bayen*, we find various instances of woman suppression under patriarchal system and male-dominated society. We find that patriarchy is founded on the prejudice and male superiority, which guarantees superior status to males and inferior status to females. Its values for males are aggression, force and efficacy while in females it is passivity and docility. In *Mother of 1084*, Dibyanath, Sujatha's husband, is a dominant character. He is a complacent and insensitive man. He never cares for the feelings of his wife. He feels superior and likes always his wishes and wants to be implemented in his house. He is self-loving and self-caring and does not give importance to others' emotions. His superiority and efficacy has a lot of impact on his children. They are influenced and nurtured by their father's qualities. They also grow obstinate in their self-love. They lose morality on way. All this, brings mental agony to Sujatha. As she is a sensitive wife and mother, she develops an aversion to her husband and children's attitude. Sujatha cannot influence her children and cannot change their way of living. Dibyanath's superiority in the house dominates her. Besides this, Dibyanath's mother who is alive, suppresses Sujatha and her individuality and always likes her son to dominate over her. She feels that everything must be done by his approval and consent and nothing should go without his notice. "Dibyanath and his mother constituted the centre of attraction in the home. Sujatha had a shadowy existence. She was subservient, silent, faithful and without an existence of her own."[4]

Sujatha has had mere existence in the family, as ruled by the two autocratic people, Dibyanath and his mother. Sujatha does not even say a word in protest to all this oppression. Even, the job she takes up in a bank is not due to the generosity and freedom given to her by her husband. The family has supported and encouraged her because, Dibyanath, at that time has been facing some problems at his office and family had some financial problems. For this, Sujatha's mother-in-law says, "You should have begun earlier. It was Dibu's generosity that he did not send you to work earlier." (5) Though, Sujatha comes from an affluent and aristocratic family, is a graduate from Loreto College and gets a job in a bank on her own, she undergoes suppression and searches for freedom and identity. Because of the Indian institute of family and its ideology, she is bound to be submissive.

Dibyanath is a womanizer. He has an extra-marital relationship

with a typist in his office. Sujatha, a victim of the male-dominated society and patriarchal system, has never questioned and never spoken ill of her husband because she is in a society which has suppressed woman and her feelings for ages. Along with this, she is also frustrated with her own kith and kin. Tuli, her youngest daughter who is much influenced by her father, always supports him in all his deeds. She does not mind his extra marital relationship. Instead, she feels proud of him. Dipankar, her elder son, follows his father's order and never has any individuality or ideas of his own. Neepa, her elder daughter carries a relationship with her husband's cousin. Sujatha always finds herself at odds with her household. She is frustrated by all this and suffers mental torture. "That's why she tries to escape all the constraints by taking up a job in the bank rather than protesting."[5] Her job itself is a form of protest and self-assertion against the authority of her husband. Though she resents the immoral acts of her husband and children, she, being a sensitive and responsible wife and mother, does not ignore her familial responsibilities. She is trapped in the conflict within herself between a sympathetic mother and a silent protester against the immoral life which her household stands for. She suffers within herself, the torture the husband and family give her. Thus, she bears everything in pain and sorrow with all patience.

Unlike *Mother of 1084*, in *Bayen*, the set up is different. It has rural background. Chandi, the protagonist, is a gravedigger by profession. She buries the dead children and guards their graves. She marries Malindar, an employee at Morgue. In *Bayen*, we are given an opportunity to see how in a rural society, the male domination suppresses and subjugates the life of a woman. In the beginning of the play, Malindar has much love towards his wife and never forces her to implement his wishes. As time passes, things change. When she begets a child, she gets aversion to her job. She grows reluctant as she finds an image of her suckling child in the dead children she buries. She feels disturbed. She tells her husband about this and pleads to him to free her from the obligation. She asks him to take her and her son to a distant place where they can live peacefully. Malindar is an insensitive man. He does not heed to what Chandi requests and pleads. He does not like her to leave her profession. He does not care for her sensitive feelings at all. Instead of asking to leave her job, he asks her to continue it. Chandi gets frustrated by her husband's attitude and his carelessness towards her emotions.

She suffers and continues her job. Mahasweta Devi, through Chandi seems to lash at men. She says, "Men in general are so insensitive."[6] When Chandi tries to beseech him again, he shouts at her in anger: "Now stop whining. I can't stand it all the time. If you don't feel like carrying on, why don't you just throw it up?" (82)

She is confused by her husband's disposition, whether to continue her job or to leave it. She continues it as an obligation. Besides this, people suspect her to have an evil eye and feel that she is the cause of their children's death. It hurts her. Yet, she continues to work for the sake of the common good.

The cause for the rumours is that the people grow envious of her, for she is beautiful, her husband has a government job, has a new hut and has two bighas of land for share cropping. All these privileges make her cynosure of the village and people become jealous of her. They think of harming her.

Gourdas, a hypocrite and counterpart of urban exploitative class, waits for an opportunity and plots against Chandi. One night, when Chandi hears the jackals cry, she leaves her suckling child and rushes to the graves to guard. While guarding graves, she remembers her child and her breasts ooze milk. During this time, finding an opportunity, Gourdas sets Malindar and other men on her and brands her a Bayen (a witch). He says: "See for yourself Malindar, you bastard. It's your wife, the Bayen, that's been killing our children. Why don't you ask her yourself?" (86)

Malindar asks her, why her sari is dripping milk, who is she suckling and for whom is her lullaby? When she tries to explain, no one listens to her. Malindar becomes one with them and supports them. He becomes a heartless human being and declares that his wife has turned into a Bayen. He says (Shouting at the top of his voice, crying heart-rendingly at the same time): "I . . . Malindar Gangaputta . . . strike my drum (beats the drum frantically) . . . to declare that my wife has turned into a Bayen, a Bayen!" (86)

Being insensitive and rude towards his own wife whom he has loved and married, he abandons her forever, trusting the men who have exploited the situation. Thus, she becomes a victim at the hands of patriarchy and male-dominated society. Though she cries out with agony, her words are ineffective. Here, we are reminded of Patricia Waugh's words: "If women speak outside the symbolic order they will either not be heard or be heard insane."[8] In a male-dominated society, woman is generally considered inferior to man.

Thus, she becomes a victim of male dominated society and patriarchy.

In *Titu Mir* also, we find a few instances which show the position of a woman in patriarchy. Titu Mir's wife, Maimuna, is a neglected wife. Titu Mir is always busy with his revolutionary activities and never thinks of his wife or her welfare. He leaves her with his parents and moves to different places without intimating her. She has least importance in his life. A wife, who is said to be the better half, is not even looked at as a part of his life. He is like a picaro, moving from place to place, neglecting his wife and parents. Though his ambitions in the novel are to work for the welfare of society, he does not justify his marital life. After having spent three years in jail for his riot, the news of his arrival come to Rokeya, his mother. Then, we get notice of Maimuna.

As the day of Titu's return approached, "Rokeya's eyes fell one day on her elder daughter-in-law. The sight brought tears to her eyes; she said, 'You are my Titu's wife, Ma! What an evil woman I am for not noticing earlier: Your hair has tangles in it, and your lips are unstained by paan. Your face looks wan and lifeless."[9]

That's how, Maimuna is neglected. She does not even have bangles to wear. Who would take care of her if not the husband? By Titu's negligence, she is almost lifeless. Though, she experiences the trauma, she never protests against her husband. She endures everything with patience. When Titu is said to be leaving for Mecca to meet a Muslim leader, he points out that his wife has not said anything about his departure. She politely replies, "Have I ever said no to anything you've wanted to do? Have I ever stood in your way?" (53) She tries to explain to him the grief and worry she experienced when he had gone far away from her. She says: "You went to Calcutta, and I thought, how far away that is. You went to work for the Zamindar, and I thought, how far. Then you went to jail, which I cannot even visualize. How I worried myself to death." (54)

Though she expresses her sorrow for their separation for a long time, he does not listen to her with all care and interest. Instead, he diverts her attention by asking her about the bangles she wears. That is how, he does not take seriously about her feelings for him. Till the end of the novel, Titu Mir is very earnest about reaching his destination, and not at all thoughtful about Maimuna, his wife, with whom he has pledged to be with, throughout his life. Maimuna thus lives an isolated life throughout the novel.

Mahasweta Devi opens up the hidden problems of women, which have been afflicting them continuously and causing a great damage to their lives and womanhood. Since ancient times, a woman has been restricted to a kind of life and has been undergoing different ordeals of life. She has been curtailed of the freedom and has been suppressed. Man has taken an upper hand over her and her status is reduced. His dominance and bestiality are unquestioned. She has been and is undergoing both psychological and physical harassment in his hands. She has been a victim of patriarchy, widowhood, prostitution, sexual abuse and harassment. Mahasweta Devi succeeds in bringing all these elements to focus and in enlightening the people. She protests against the atrocities of men over women, who are deprived of freedom and a status. She deals with the quandaries of both the women in a rich urban society and a poor rural society. Her vision over these problems of women reveals the accuracy of their plight in the society.

NOTES

1. Ram Ahuja, "Violence against Women." *Social Problems in India* (Jaipur: Rawat, 1997), p. 243.
2. Sue Dickman, "In Conversation: Sue Dickman with Indian women writers," *The Book Review*, vol.19, No. 4, April 1995, p. 33.
3. Catherine Thankamma, "The Women Patriarchy Created," *Theatre India*, November 2000, p. 42.
4. Mahasweta Devi, *Mother of 1084* (Novel), trans. Samik Bandyopadhyay (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1998), p. 9.
5. E. Satyanarayana, "Mothers and Rebels," *The Plays of Mahasweta Devi* (New Delhi: Prestige, 2000) p. 35.
6. Mahasweta Devi, *Five Plays*, trans. Samik Bandyopadhyay (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1999), p. 81.
7. Patricia Waugh, Qtd. Valerie Sutherland, "Postmodernist Strategies in Janet Frame's Scented Gardens for the Blind," *The Commonwealth Review*, Vol. III, No.1, 1991-92, p. 124.
8. Mahasweta Devi, *Titu Mir*, trans. Rimi B. Chatterjee (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2000), p. 46.

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Religious Awakening in Tagore's *Malini*

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Rabindranath Tagore, fondly known as Gurudev, is an emblem of Indian composition for awakening religious and Patriotic feelings among readers. He was born in 1861 and died in 1941, the period during which Indian society passed through national social and religious upheavals. He writes on varying subject matters like religion and love very philosophically in the colloquial Bengali instead of the archaic literary idiom, believed to be a suitable means for verse and drama. In his writings including *Malini*, *Gora*, *The Religion of Man*, he proves himself not only a writer but also a philosopher and visionary. Rejecting the epic tradition, he develops himself into one of the greatest lyric poets of India, introducing simplicity, sensuousness and passion in poetry and drama. He has got an extraordinary success in combining elemental subjects like God, nature, love, the child life, death, etc. with lyricism, the quality of his lyrics is to be found in contents and form abundantly with exquisite blending of the harmony of thoughts, feelings and melody of words. He mixes up human feeling, emotion, physical and spiritual love, beauty with sublimity and divinity of human spirit.

This poetic play *Malini* is a story of love and hatred. Love in its absolute and pure from is all radiance, all-pervading, and all-compassionate. But often in the world, petty selfishness assumes the name of love and rules the world with hatred.

Using his romantic imagination, he looks into man, nature and human life through spontaneous simple and mystical style without being detracted from melody and sweetness. Tagore in his play *Malini* deals with themes of love, humanism, religion God, scripture, nature, childhood, friendship, patriotism, doctrines, and dogmas embedding flavour of Indian lyricism and humanism. He finds out basic traits of religion suitable not only for monks but common people also after making arguments against Hindu worn-out practices in

the present social and political set-ups. *Malini* is an exploration of cosmopolitan feelings for true reiigion and womanly power to relieve pain, suffering and anarchy from society. The drama is youth, growth, fruition of consciousness, disillusionment and above all establishment of civil religion on pure love and sublimity of human soul. Love and hatred have been kept side by side to bring out the fact that love is radiant in its pure and absolute form based on compassion, removing selfishness and jealousy born by hatred.

The first Act opens in the balcony of the palace which faces the streets where hoards of Brahmins demand banishment of Malini, the princess of Varanasi. She has taken off ornaments and attire after sensing imminent tumult in the state owing to her new creed, which goes against all our holy books. She is against creeds and dogmas, which teach that woman is a slave to her husband, tied to his wish for any domestic, social or religious activity. Any change in the existing religious system rakes up hatred, mockery and fright. The playwright here poses his view to fling away musty old books and worm-eaten creeds. He makes character of Kemankar, the Brahmin leader, who demands Malini to go out from the state, while another character Supriya, the child friend of Kemankar, being impressed of Malini's love-based principle of religion, stands by her, leading them to verbal argument on several aspects of religion. Remaining Brahmins are united against her in the beginning but take her side at last. Brahmins think that "Hinduism is the ancestral and ancient tree bearing eternal fruit." Supriya is opposed to that kind of religion, which claims banishment of an innocent girl and determines truth by the force of number. It is very shameful to make creed depend on force for its existence because truth can not be found in numbers. True religion is one, which is free from the blind certitude of stupidity and above all personal gain or loss. Through Kemankar's dialogue, the playwright gives a piece of genuine reflection of religion, "Religion is one in its essence, but different in its forms, the water is one, yet by its different banks, it is bound and preserved for different people."

When Malini knows the demand of Brahmins, she herself appears before the agitated mob, not as a princess, but a beggar leaving princely attire as an exile from her palace. There is no limit of surprise of Brahmins when they know that the princess has decided

to become a daughter of common people. Malini says: "I am exiled from my house, so that I may make your home my own. Yet tell me truly, have you need for me? When I lived in seclusion, a lonely girl, did you call to me from the outer world? Was it no dream of mine?" It is enough to change hearts of Brahmins, bring tears to their eyes and appear divine. Supriya talks of vain exercise of people to wander in the wilderness of doctrines, which do not answer any question raised about this worldly affair and give peace. He informs Malini that Kemankar is firm and strong to seek military support from foreign land for rooting out simplicity of Malini's religion. Through two characters carved out by the playwright, he tries to show two shades of religious activities, one envisaging two extreme edges of religious tactical military intervention to belittle sects minor in significance or of minority and simple doctrine of "love for all life," that is, the epitome of all kinds of religion waiting from the old time to be made real. The playwright never agrees with a religious faith based on blood because it raises doubt and treason in commonality and society, that is a malevolent factor to break society and divide people. The sacred books are dumb to answer several questions relating to make worldly life easy and cosy. Most of the things have been told about after-life, which may be of least concern if this worn-out life is not enjoyable. Tagore clicks to the world of man where true faith and love be set for social and individual harmony. To explain ideal nature of man, he takes up the instance of countless stars in the sky, which are, though, different, not fighting among themselves for the mastery over one another. Faiths of different men should hold their separate lights in peace without intersecting one another. Commonly speaking, no two persons are alike in this world in their trusts and beliefs, but it does not mean that they should fight to prove their excellence in their trusts. So the essence of religion is to spread philosophy of love and brotherhood among people discarding jealousy and hatred.

The Religion of Man by Gurudev describes man's nature in terms of mysterious spirit being manifested in the ultimate truth likely to be achieved by conscious effort. The divine character presented in religion and symbolized in deities reflects on the spirit of unity. God is one, universal and supreme spirit" or "supreme man" that is got not through creation of mind but imagination. Name and

nature of religious need is of different kind, but the final target of human truth bases on sense of unity among individuals. Religion is like a repeated supply of water almost every half-hour by a poor man out of the sense of his duty in summer when water gets scanty in the village. Watering the plant by the farmer is his Dharma if not based on his business on law of demand and supply but lone feeling, compassion and purgatory of self-consciousness. Dharma keeps up harmony of character and that of inner self, not that of self-laying priority to personal needs losing connection with beauty and generosity. It opens door to the eternal reality in human mind and increases our eternal life within the limit of life's unity as the mountain pine grows tall and great under the rhythm of an inner balance and the grace of self-control.

The topic of politicalization of religion has emerged as a crying bottleneck not only in Indian politics but that of world also, needing great concern and serious thinking for check-up. The naked dancing of bloodshed due to imposed religious overtone of politician has diminished faith and credibility of individuals in society, which shakes foundation of the oldest institution of religion. Terrorists sell spiritual dreams, politicians do human flesh coloured in religion, priests do intoxicated and outdated dogmas and interpreters do impossible imaginative fantasia among which ignorant mass gets bewildered what to peruse? Discarding all the religious propositions, Tagore has made religion accessible to their brain because for peace with simplicity, love is the inborn necessity of human beings. We are on the brink of religious explosion, acculturation for dwindling belief in the original and identity crisis for blind adherence to non-ethical base of life. *Malini* is a remedy for cultural and religious virus spread by professionalization of religion, illicitly killing human element from our spirit and rolling human society back to the savage age. Religion has been confused with number and power of followers, needing defeat by love, credulity, fearlessness and truth of Malini for coherent and cohesive society.

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Communication Kills versus Communication Skill

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Talk slowly but think quickly is the main secret behind the art of communication, apart from the adequate knowledge of the vocabulary items and the structure that help us achieve and maintain the fluency in communication. Moreover, we need adequate control over the vocabulary items and the structures so that we can orally manipulate them. Next important feature is the ability to orally pre-edit and post-edit what we are saying, at the same time as we are saying it. The pre-editing and post-editing help us to present our ideas, thoughts and feelings in the fittest manner. Basically, we need to deal with on-the-spot speech composition and speech processing difficulties. The native speakers pick up naturally the on-the-spot speech production strategies where as we, the second language learners, need to master them.

Why is the internalization of the language system important? In one sense it characterizes the goal of all language learning activities, since they all contribute towards the learners' gradual internalization of the foreign-language system so that it can be deployed for purposes of communication. In other sense, it describes a component of the methodology for achieving this goal; some activities focus specifically on the system of the language and aim to help the learners master it. If learners are unable to discriminate sounds, if they grope for words, or if they confuse tenses while speaking, some part of their learning time should be devoted to mastering the relevant aspects of the language system.

How a learner copes with the differences between communication inside the classroom and communication outside the classroom. The following list based on Pattison (1987:7-8) will throw the proper light on the above matter.

List 1 ESL (English as a Second Language) (oral)	List 2ESL (English as a Second Language) (oral)

Practice in the classroom	communication outside the classroom
WHAT: *Content of communication.*	
The content is predictable since the textbooks are prescribed by the Board or, university, other task based activities are decided by the teacher;	The exact content of the speaker's message is un predictable because the speaker has to make on-the-spot decisions while speaking, depending on the context & situation
WHY: *Reason for communication.*	
Learners speak during class-discussion or while working on a task set by the teacher. They *practise* speaking.	They feel an urge to establish and maintain social relationships. They may seek information on a particular issue, or clarify doubts
WHY: Result of communication.	
The learners have extrinsic motivation as the teacher either accepts or corrects their speech,	The learners have intrinsic motivation, as they achieve their aims; an information gap is filled or a problem is solved.
WHO: *Participants in communication*	
In the classroom, there is a large group of students who may not pay attention to all the speakers if they are working in different groups. Only the teacher pays attention to them.	Two persons face each other, while they talk, constantly paying attention and providing feedback. Even if they talk in groups they pay attention to what is said rather than how it is said.
HOW: *Means of communication*	
The teachers speak in such a manner that the learners are able to understand them. Learners are often corrected if they make mistakes.	As the participants talk, they deal with a negotiation of meaning, and sort out problems through gestures, examples, rewording, paraphrasing, and using other simplification strategies.

Some of the inputs for authentic communication are given below, which with little imagination, can form the basis of communicative tasks of one form or the other:

* telegrams
* letters (formal/ Informal)
* newspaper extracts
* pictures
* reservation forms
* magazines
* curriculum vitae
* TV programmes
* weather forecast reports
* railway time-table
* notice-board items
* star signs
* advertisements
* family tree

* memo notes
* photographs
* drawings
* brochures
* shopping lists
* postcards
* street maps
* cassettes etc.

In a multilingual community, speakers have more than one language. From the communication point of view, it is meaningful to talk of their language repertoire rather than his or her mother tongue. They may have learnt more than one language simultaneously from the beginning. Mother tongue, as a label of social identification is just one of the languages in their repertoire.

When speakers have repertoire of languages, they have a choice in the use of language. Language is used for giving and getting information, for sharing emotions, for getting action done, for acquiring knowledge etc. But these acts of communication are not the only use of language. Language is also used for acknowledging and establishing social relation. A communication act of the language is intertwined with a social act.

There are fundamentally two social relations—the relation of solidarity or intimacy between people and the relation of power or distance between people. The first is the relation of inclusion and second is the relation of exclusion. The choice of language, as the choice of particular words, grammatical forms and syntactic structures, derives from the social relation that is acknowledged or to be established. When it is the acknowledgement of an existing social relation, there are socially accepted rules of language use. Language choice follows these rules. When it is establishment of a new social relation, the speaker chooses the languages use rule that serves the purpose. These rules themselves are socially conditioned.

The above description is a brief introduction to how languages acquire their functions at different levels. Language use is the choice of the appropriate language for a given function. It is not always the case that the choice between the languages is mutually exclusive in a particular speech event. The choice may involve mixing of two languages or switching between two languages. This choice is also for carrying out intended functions as the choice of single language is. The mixing and switching of languages does not indicate lack of linguistic competence on the part of the speaker. Nor is it indicative of laziness to maintain language boundaries. Boundary-

crossing is a communication strategy and it has a communicative function.

Language is organized systematically not at the levels of sounds, words and sentences, but also at the level of conversations. Conversations are structured in the sense that they have a beginning, and middle and an end. They are also structured in the sense that not anything can follow anything in a conversation. There are syntagmatic constraints on the possible sequences of utterances. The following examples would make the point clear:

Example 1: A telephone conversation:

Caller: Is that two nine one six four three six?

Called: Which number have you dialled?

Example 2: Conversational exchange between a customer and a salesman at a readymade garments shop:

Customer: Do you have a plain white shirt of my size?

Shopkeeper: Welcome sir, can I help you?

What makes these exchanges amusing is that the two utterances are occurring in the wrong structural positions. The very fact that we find the above exchanges funny proves that some conversational sequences are acceptable whereas others are not.

A conversation requires a coordinated effort of two or more individuals. Just producing sentences does not constitute conversation. Grice (1975:45) writes: "Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, of cooperative efforts, and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes or at least a mutually accepted direction."

According to Grice, all the speakers are expected to make their conversational contribution such as required by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which one is engaged. He has termed this as "cooperative principle" and proposed four maxims or rules of conversation. These maxims are:

1. Maxim of quantity: Give the right amount of information when you talk: Make your contribution as informative as required by the current purposes of the conversation. Do not make your contribution more informative than required. For example, if someone asks you casually as to where you stay, a cooperative answer would be something like 'Karol Bagh' or 'Defence Col-

ony.' A reply such as 'on the earth' would not be informative enough, and something like 'house no. 760, street no. 5, Joshi Road, Karol Bagh' would be over-informative.

2. Maxim of quality: Try to make your contribution that is true. Do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. For example, if someone asks you your name and your name is Pooja, then reply truthfully and don't say something like: 'Akanksha or Medha.'
3. Maxim of relevance: Be relevant. For example, if someone asks you: "Is that your son?" give a reply such as yes or no and not something like I wish he was! Or thank God he isn't!
4. Maxim of manner: Be perspicuous. Avoid obscurity of expression. Avoid ambiguity. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). Be orderly. For example, describe things in the order in which they occur: 'we went to Sukriti's place, had lunch with her and then went to Anupam theatre for the 3 to 6 show' rather than talking about the show first and then about the lunch.

The development of language learning or teaching from form-based to a meaning-based approach: the move towards an eclectic approach from a rigid method: the shift from teacher-fronted to learner-centred classes: are all subsumed under the broad term 'communicative approach.'

Characteristic features of the communicative approach are:

1. All communicative syllabuses aim to make the learner attain communicative competence, that is, use language accurately and appropriately.
2. The prime focus is on the learner. The teacher is just a facilitator—a person who 'manages' the environment and the materials which will help the students become autonomous learners.
3. Communicative syllabuses rely on 'authentic' materials'
4. The tasks set are purposeful and meaningful. This, in turn, means that a communicative task can be judged immediately for its 'success' by the learner herself/ himself.
5. Communicative syllabuses emphasize the functions of language rather the rules.
6. Communicative tasks aim to make learners fluent (especially during the early stages) as well as accurate in their use of the target language.

Given below is a sample task showing the features of communicational approach:

The following is written on the black board:

Mr. George
9.15 a.m.: leaves home
9.45 a.m.: arrives at his office
10.45 a.m.: goes to the court
3.30 p.m.: returns to his office
5.30 p.m.: leaves the office
6.00 p.m.: arrives home

Mrs. George
9.45 a.m.: leaves home
10.00 a.m.: arrives at the college
12.30 p.m.: leaves the college
12.45 p.m.: arrives home
1.45 p.m.: leaves home
2.00 p.m.: arrives at the college
4.30 p.m.: leaves the college
4.45 p.m.: arrives home

Pre-task: Questions which are deliberately varied in form are as follows:

a. Where is Mr. George at 10:00 a.m.?
b. Who leaves home first in the morning?
c. When does Mrs. George arrive at the college, in the afternoon?
d. How long does Mrs. George take to go from her house to the college?
e. Who is at home at 1:00 p.m.?
f. How much time does Mr. George spend at his office, in the morning?

Task:

1. Who comes last, in the evening?
2. Where is Mrs. George at 1.30 p.m.?
3. How much time does Mrs. George spend at the college, in the morning?
4. When does Mrs. George leave the college in the afternoon?
5. Who is at home at 9.30 p.m.?
6. Where is Mr. George at 4.30 p.m.?

7. How long does Mr. George spend at his office in the afternoon?
8. Who does not come home for lunch?

It is a common impression that one cannot communicate fluently because of poor vocabulary. But it is a myth. It is not that how many words and phrases we know but how well we know them is what matters. English is the richest language with the largest vocabulary on earth—over one million words. Yet the average adult vocabulary is around five thousand, that too if one is proficient in English. Out of these five thousand, majority of the words are passive, which means we know the words but don't use them frequently. There is nothing to be disheartened, a list of two thousand words, if mastered with spelling, meaning and pronunciation and usage, would make one comfortable. The list is available in *A New Approach to Spoken English* (79-91).

It is also necessary for the learners to understand the basic nature of English sound system. Hence, knowledge of English phonemes, stress, rhythm and intonation is essential. A systemic competence is a part of communicative competence. In this context, *English Conversational Practice* by Grant Taylor is a useful text book for oral practice in English either in the classroom or in the language laboratory.

Many of the techniques of phonetics are easily adaptable to teaching speech pathology simply by varying the content somewhat. In Phonetics, for example, sounds of disordered speech, such as labio-dental stops or cleft palate speech could be added to those of the normal speaker. Programmes could be organized so as to give students practice in particular interview schedules, guiding them in entering, sorting and interpreting data from interviews. Exercises aimed at learning to recognize disorders could be devised, for example, sound recordings could be available along with acoustic and psychological data. Computer simulations could be used to introduce students to various laboratory instruments.

To talk naturally, is not as easy as it sounds but we need to crash through our shell or self-consciousness. We all admire speakers who can put up showmanship into their speaking, who are not afraid to express themselves, not afraid to use the unique individual, imaginative way of saying what they have to say to the audience. Therefore, we should not try to imitate others, be ourselves. Any job, for that matter, done half-heartedly has a risk of failure, so is

the case with communication too. We need to put our heart into our speaking. The challenges of effective speaking can be met by: Making the voice strong and flexible. Preparing thoroughly what we have to say. Being enthusiastic and sincere. Filling the talk with illustration and examples. Talking in terms of your listeners' interests. Identifying with your audience. Arranging your ideas in sequence. Using visual aids.

Sonya Hamlin, while discussing the basics of communication skill stresses on the negative qualities, which kill the communication. These are: Formal and stuffy styles; Closed and synthetic style; Pompous behaviour; Monotonous tellers; Unenergised tellers; Vague or complex explainers; Irrelevant messages.

8. Unsure or nervous behaviour; Hyper intense starting.

Communication is not a science, it is something we have to get out there and do. There are some natural communicators but not many. Most good communicators have learnt new skills along the way. To communicate better and get ahead, we may need real back to basics learning such as core aspects of writing (including grammar, punctuation, and spelling). Such a skill course could also include preparation of documents, making presentations, speaking to small and large groups, plus negotiation skills. Better relationships and career prospects come from team communication, conflict resolution; inter-cultural communication and interviewing skills.

A number of surveys show that computer professionals climbed the corporate ladder more slowly than people from marketing, finance and even from production. The reason, as a group, the computer professionals are often seen as unresponsive, expressionless and extremely self-controlled. Their employers do not want to put them in a position where relating to people really matters.

One of the most important components of good communication is the body language. Let us watch out our body language. For example, use your hands for emphasis and make the gestures bold. Do not put your hands in your pockets or on your hips and don't fold your arms. Do not fidget with pens, glasses or anything else. Mannerisms are things you may not be aware of, but should be avoided. They include rocking on your feet and running your hands through hair. These only distract the audience from what you are saying. Finally make each person in the room feel they are being personally addressed by making eye contact. Start each point with one person,

and then scan the room as you continue. If you look out the window, gaze at the floor or scan the wall, you risk upsetting the audience. The beauty about learning good communication is that you win in two days, you will be more likely to get ahead and you will be happier.

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Book Reviews

Annie George and Sandhya S.N., *Roots and Wings: An Anthology of Indian Women's Writing in English*. Thiruvananthapuram, 361 pp.

Annie George and Sandhya S.N. could not have chosen a more befitting title for their anthology. *Roots and Wings* encapsulates and unfolds for us through a kaleidoscope of poems revolving around diverse themes of gender, environment, love, the dilemma of Indian women constrained by the deep-rooted social and cultural conventions and also expresses their desires as they wish to soar high in the sky. A collection of over 350 poems, it provides wings to 42 living Indian women poets from all walks of life. To review such a phenomenal collection is a daunting task for each poet maps new terrain, each poem is an individual expression, and to do justice to each one is next to impossible.

The book is a monumental achievement. The poets have wrenched out their souls to give us a collection that is evocative, melancholy and humane. Holding in its ambit the 82-year-old Nugehalli Pankaja on one hand and the very young 23-year-old Roshanara Mehrin Begum on the other, it brings us an enthralling poetic expression of the feminine mind. Each poet has tried to speak in a distinctly personal voice, yet they form a chorus voicing their discontent against the institutional subjection of women. In her poem "One More Time" Roshanara, like several other poets in the collection, explores the collective consciousness and shared experiences of women as she poses the question that must reverberate through the corridors of so many minds,

> How many more
> Masked dances
> Before I find me?

And then the cautious wings to free herself from shackles in "The Snake Dance", so reminiscent of Gilbert and Gubar's *Mad Woman in the Attic*,

dance the love dance
But to your own tune.
But never shed the skin,
Where someone can see,
Lest they tag you
And send you in exile.

The seniormost poet Nuggehalli Pankaja in her poem "To Victim of Acid" poses a pertinent question in the face of female foeticide as the foetus bemoans

Tell me,
Tell me what my fault
To throw me so
Out of your womb—
My rightful place
As Yours was
In Your Mother's?

The poem is a kind of a sociological read of the entire situation, the whole gamut of the victim, the perpetrator and motherhood, giving us three perspectives within one poem, of the agony of the female foetus, the psyche of the perpetrator—invariably a man, but who can become remorseful and how one rash act can affect his mind and re-defining motherhood by not giving us the traditional stereotypical mother who approves of every act of her son.

In the new trends and techniques discernible in the poems, one finds a movement connecting the domestic with the public spheres of work. The metropolitan culture, the urbanized influence of pop, disco and instant coffee and instant Maggi on the present generation demanding 'Instant Karma and instant salvation' is brought alive to us through Brati Biswas's poem "Awakening". Her language chiselled, pithy and effortless, skilfully using the symbolic and the metaphoric, she takes it to a different level as

Awakened
The Coiled Kundalini
Slowly rises...

Shakespeare, it is said "unlocked his heart" through his sonnets. The same can be said about these poets. Through an intersection of avenues, which contain a variety and multiplicity of emotions a woman is capable of—the mother advising her daughter "not forget your identity" in "O Daughter Mine" by Neeru Tandon, a severe indictment of patriarchy in "Voices" by Neeru Tandon, the sisterly bonding in "Between Sisters" by Annie George, the multi tasking woman planning her day in "Boiling Milk," the new 'angel in the house', redefining love discovering the 'gossamer' like cocoon of patriarchal web too suffocating in "Web" by Brati Biswas—we move from voice to voice that makes the corpus too myriad to pigeonhole.

With a striking cover, the book feels good to hold in the hand and is a delight to read.

Dyal Singh (E) College, Univ. of Delhi **MADHURI CHAWLA**

Vijay Kumar Roy, ed. *Indian Poetry in English: A Comprehensive Study*. New Delhi: Adhyayan, 2011, 171+ xii pp.

Indian Poetry in English: A Comprehensive Study edited by Vijay Kumar Roy is an addition to the genre of poetic criticism. It comprises multiple research papers on various aspects of Indian poetry in English and offers an in-depth study of the works of Indian poets like H.L.V. Derozio, Sri Aurobindo, Toru Dutt, R.N. Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, A.K. Ramanujan, Keki N. Daruwalla, Shiv K. Kumar, Jayanta Mahapatra, Niranjan Mohanty, Kamala Das, M.N. Sharma and I.K. Sharma.

The first paper explicates the patriotic feeling of H.L.V. Derozio as presented in his poetic works with special reference to 'The Harp of India.' The sonnet paints Derozio as a patriotic poet and is descriptive of the poet's love for divine music and respect for the glory of India. Derozio is aggrieved at the gone glory of India with the change of time. Indian sensibility and ethos in the poetry of Toru Dutt has been explored in the second paper. It focuses on Indianness in the poems like 'A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields' and 'Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan.' Toru Dutt is delineated to be adept in adopting mythological characters. In the third paper, the au-

thor presents an interpretation of the mysticism in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. It deals with the major poems of Aurobindo which are said to be infused with mysticism. The fourth paper analyzes the poetry of Tagore. Spiritual consciousness in *Gitanjali* has been analysed well. The author of the paper has dwelt upon Tagore's philosophy of God and journey of life. The fifth paper deftly deals with the human feelings and emotions in the poetry of Tagore. In sixth paper the author seeks to examine the use of imagery and symbols in the poetry of Sarojini Naidu. The seventh chapter concentrates on the quest for secular imagination in the poetry of Ramanujan. It analyses some of the major poems of Ramanujan. The eighth paper deals with the discourse in the poetry of Keki N. Daruwalla. It is indeed a nice interpretation of Daruwalla's 'Caries' on the model propounded by Halliday. An analysis of eroticism in the poetry of Shiv K. Kumar forms the ninth chapter of the book. It highlights the vivid erotic scenes depicted in various poems written by Kumar. It also presents allusions to the ancient Indian erotic texts.

The theme of sorrow in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra has been expounded in the tenth paper. It also examines the pitiable conditions of women, their sufferings and sacrifices. The condition of female characters in Indian myths and females in the contemporary society has gained a prominent place in the poetry of Mahapatra. The eleventh paper seeks to present a detailed analysis of Mohanty's journey to the soul of India, and saguna stream of poetry have been treated well in it. The twelfth paper presents the gender criticism. It seeks to vindicate gender sensitivity in the poetry by the Indian women.

The thirteenth paper deals with how 'humour' can be effectively and efficiently used in the creation of poetry. It presents a comparative study of the poetic tools used by M.N. Sharma and I.K. Sharma. How creative artists can use 'sarcasm' as a poetic tool has been explained in the last paper of the book. It also presents a comparative study of M.N. Sharma and I.K. Sharma in using sarcasm in their poetry. Roy's craftsmanship makes the book a good read in the area of Indian literary criticism in English. It offers insights into the nature and features of the writings of Indian poets writing in English.

SRM University, Ghaziabad **UPENDRA GAMI**

Basavaraj Naikar. *The Frolic Play of the Lord.* New Delhi: Authors Press, 180+x pp.

I have just read *The Frolic Play of the Lord*, an English translation of Chamarasa's (A.D. 1450) Kannada classic *Prabhulinga Lile* by Basavaraj Naikar in two sittings and felt so deeply influenced that I literally waded through each chapter of the book in a quick succession. The visuals of the known and the unknown, the phenomena and the Noumena, the mundane and the spirituality, certainty and doubt, attachment and detachment, gross and the subtle and illusicn and reality presented here as woof and weft of all the characters are both general and particular. The character of the mighty Allama who literally sculpted and blew life into the great ones like Basava and others sweeps across the work as an unparallelled colossus.

In this work of twenty-five *Gatis* or Books, Chamarasa's Allama is the quintessence of the spiritual glory as conceived by the best minds in Virasaiva epistemology. And those who are familiar with Chamarasa's original have enough reason to go on record that this excellent translation by Naikar in the form of exquisite prosebits reflects the original in all its myriad spiritual colours and hues. In this realistically and imaginatively trans-created work, the virtuoso of the translator lies in his perception of the possibility of modern readings and interpretations of this medieval Kannada classic, that too an overtly religious one of which the chief protagonist is Allama.

The second priority of the translator seems to have arisen from his desire to explore the possibility of presenting Allama to our time with all the facets of his multi-dimensional effulgence and yet simplistic spiritual persona. From this point of view *The Frolic Play of the Lord* is as much a reader's delight as it is of the translator.

Retaining much of the subtleties of the old world aura of Virasaiva religion, philosophy, theology and spirituality, the work as such is a graphic narrative that in the hands of the translator has achieved a rare synthesis in terms of a reflective scripture that in its unhurried pace make a distinctive spiritual sense of the characters portrayed here. The story of *The Frolic Play of the Lord* as told in the Kannada is in itself an innovative one and conceived imagina-

tively by Chamarasa. He differs considerably from the similar narratives by Harihara, Harishwara, Parvatesha, Marirachavattisha and others. The newness or the novelty that is conspicuous in Chamarasa's work seems to be the result of the shift occurred over the centuries in regard to Allama, who until then was understood to be one who has transformed himself from that of a worldling to the highest level of spiritual eminence. But Chamarasa in tune with the general mood existing in the 15th century was inclined to view Allama as the incarnation of the incorruptible divine entity that could never be caught in the snares of the worldly entanglements even if it were to be the love of a beautiful princess. And this is where Chamarasa offers a strong contrast with other poets who for historical reasons associate Allama's early life with a woman. Consequently Chamarasa's work is a sort of magical narrative glorifying the *lilas* or the sports of the divine entity in action. The translator in his beautifully minted proso-poetic bits has wrapped up all in a style that has trans-created those magical moments charged with powerful spiritual overtones unveiling the work's philosophical and spiritual grandeur.

For instance those *Gatis* or Books that deal with the exchanges between Allama and Princess Maya, Allama and Muktayi, Allama and Marulusankaradeva, Allama and Siddharama, Allama and Goggayya and Allama and Basava in this translation are not only vivid and sophisticated but as presented in their surreal settings steal the reader's attention. Especially the encounters between Allama and Maya and Allama and Muktayi will unfailingly help recall the famous talks that Gargi, Maitreyi, Vachaknavi, Apala and others in ancient India had with their mentors. The moves of Maya, the temptress, whose bids to adhere and seduce Allama, seem to make one thing very clear that the worldly charms are but ephemeral and transient and clinging to them inexorably would only spell doom. The persona of Allama that emerges here is both radiant and luminous suggesting there is everything in rising and not in falling. In this context each episode is a lesson in spirituality trans-created by Naikar investing his own experimental readings into the Virasaiva lore. In this process he has transformed each *Gati* into a scintillating narrative capable of arousing a higher sense of consciousness in the reader.

By the time we come to the end of our reading of the work, we invariably feel that we had heard at length an enlightening socio-spiritual sermon sitting at the feet of a great master. The mighty Allama has unfolded a sure path to self-realization and the work in the process being turned into a celebration of the Allamystique by the author subjects us into introspection about our own multilayered individual identities. In the *Gati* 13, where we read about the epistemological clash between Allama and Siddharama it was the latter who with his self-aggrandized demonic fury tried to reduce the former to ashes, who triumphs in the ultimate was Allama, the effulgent symbol of knowledge. Siddharama concedes his defeat with these words: "I bow down to your feet. Kindly, therefore, show me the path of liberation and teach me the way of conquering death and attaining the Reality. I do not want to argue any more" (*Gati* 13, 57).

In the recent decades, modern scholarship has demonstrated that the *vachana*-centric Virasaiva or Lingayat literature produced in the last eight or nine centuries is no longer studied as purely a religious one or in isolation of its social relevance. Its genuine secular and spirito-people-centric credentials have been widely recognized. In this context the episodes depicted in *The Frolic Play of the Lord* can offer refreshing readings into human psyche and its complex interiors. These stunningly portrayed instances in their trans-creation stand comparison to the best of their kind in world literature, thus placing the *vachana*-centric literature on a platform for view by one and all. For this the characters of Princess Maya and Muktayi, Siddharama and Goggayya stand testimony. These distraught men and women troubled by their own desires, worries or angst finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. For Princess Maya, who sought to be one with Allama amorously but failed, Allama was revealed thus: "Allama, the divine dissembler, who teases the humankind by his tricks, pretended to be in the company of Princess Maya, but yet not allowing her to indulge in the amorous sport. Nobody could ever understand the mystery of his nature" (*Gati* 5, 48). These words seem to reaffirm the incorruptibility of the divine entity that was inseparably lodged in Allama and that was what Chamarasa desired

most to glorify in his work, which in *The Frolic Play of the Lord* is astoundingly recreated.

Allama's approach to human predicament is humane and rational. Being a tangible ford to cross over the ocean of doubt and dilemma, Allama tells Muktayi: "Although a baby is used to mother's breast-milk, it is weaned from it by being fed gradually on other items of food. Similarly you should learn to forget the external world and try to dwell in your inner being" (*Gati* 12, 16).

Readers of Kannada *Prabhulinga Lile* usually carry the impression that the spiritual elements that go into the making of Allama are not borrowed; rather they are conceived and developed by Chamarasa's genius only to alter and influence the notions about Allama held sacrosanct till then. In this context all the encounters depicted in this work are justifiably enough defining moments in Allama's life as much as they are in the lives of others. Therefore each *Gati* or Book is crafted with a great spiritualist's romance and a practitioner's appetite. In the process Chamarasa's Allama is turned into an abiding metaphor for the highest kind of spiritualism. And Basavaraj Naikar's trans-creation of all this is intense, lyrical, excellently communicative and never at once missing the magic artistry of a seasoned trans-creator promising a delectable reading throughout.

What emerge finally in this work are the mighty Allama's concern, generosity and sympathy in a spiritual crisis. This is the echo that the readers of this translation hear reverberating in their ears. Allama resembles the Sun and all other characters revolve around in his light doubting, prodding, questioning, sometimes in their submissive tender voices and sometimes exhibiting combative spirit in their quest for reorientation of their already chosen spiritual path. In this context *The Frolic Play of the Lord* is bound to move and affect the readers to a better understanding of their own spiritual self in contrast to their worldly existence. The lived experiences of Virasaivism, though regional, seem to have accomplished a status of universal appeal in this work fully qualified to be termed as an excellent contribution to Oriental literature. Basavaraj Naikar's is a daring attempt at retrieving an invaluable Kannada classic in English. His prudence, erudition and distinguished background have en-

abled him to delve deep into the subject and the result being the recreation of a seamless work of literary art that blends the real and the surreal magnificently.

J.S.S. College of Arts & Sc. **CHANDRASHEKHARAIAH**
Mysore

Jaydeep Sarangi, ed. *Writing as Resistance: Literature of Emancipation*. GNOSIS: New Delhi.

The 'Dalit' has travelled from the margins to the centre of academic discussions. This book, the latest addition to the corpus of writing on the Dalit gives us perspectives on Dalit writing from different parts of the country. Dalit literature is truly a pan-Indian phenomenon and this volume represents this fact. The book looks into areas that need critical attention, for instance, theorizing Dalit literature, documenting the views of the writers through interviews, critical analysis of the literary output of specific writers or general study of the prevalent trends within the area of Dalit studies.

The paper of S. Robert Gnanamony titled 'Giving Voices to Subaltern Stilled Voices through Deconstruction' analyses the protest poems of the Tamil Dalit writer N.D. Rajkumar. M.B. Gaijan's three articles focus on Gujarati Dalit literature. The first gives us an overview of the Gujarati Dalit novel in the context of modern India, the second is a detailed study of the Gujarati novel *Shosh* from a feminist perspective and the third studies the environmental concerns of Gujarati Dalit poems. Bajrang Korde does a brief survey of Marathi Dalit literature and its position within Indian literature. T. Gangadharan focuses on the discourse of vendetta in Bama's *Vanmam*. Rajeshwar Mittapalli's concern is Subaltern subjectivity and resistance and the representation of Dalit social history in postcolonial Indian fiction in English. Rajiv Kumar Sharma and D. Ashish Gupta give us readings of Mulk Raj Anand's *The Untouchable*. Nina Caldeira theorizes about the politics and poetics of Dalit literature. Debashree Basu tries to search for a Dalit female consciousness through the religio-folk idiom of Meerabai and the national

womanhood of Sita. This is a complexly argued and thought-provoking article.

Apart from these studies, the interviews of the Dalit writers give us their personal views on the subject of being a Dalit writer in contemporary India. The problem of Dalit subjectivity and agency are some of the issues that are addressed in these interviews. They give us the author sans the filter of their creative work. Though Dalit literature is based on lived experience, the artistic expression of that experience entails a great amount of editing on the part of the Dalit writer. The interviews of the Bengali Dalit writers Manohar Mouli Biswas and Kalyani Thakur Charal by Jaydeep Sarangi and Anjana Dutta are well done and give voice and representation to hitherto less documented area of Bangla Dalit writing. Nilanshu Kumar Agarwal's interview of Hindi Dalit writer Jai Prakash Kardam presents the reality of the writer from the Hindi belt.

This book offers important inputs on Dalit's representation of their self and representation of the Dalit self by others. I congratulate the editor for bringing together these writers. This book is a must read for anyone interested in Dalit studies.

Dyal Singh (E) College, Univ. of Delhi **BRATI BISWAS**

Vijay Kumar Roy, ed. *Women's Voice in Indian Fiction in English*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers, 2011, 192+ xii pp.

The literary cul-de-sac, *Women's Voice in Indian Fiction in English* is a delectable volume on feminism comprising a collection of fifteen critical papers written on some of the popular and prominent Indian English women novelists. Vijay Kumar Roy deserves kudos for such publication of "steadily growing critical interest." The novelists who have been taken up for discussion include Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Anita Nair, and Kiran Desai. The anthology is an outcome of rising inquisitiveness in the field of Indian women's writing in the realm of fiction. Women's writing has always been a strong part of Indian literary scene from the dawn

of literature. Influenced by the Seventies' feminist movement, the feminist writers from India have challenged the stereotypical roles envisaged for women. The papers take a look at the emergence of 'New Women' and show the applicability of the term to Indian women writers. All articles encompass the feministic issues and give the present book a unity in diversity. These feminist writers have not merely shown their own problems but also their works reflect strong feminine assertion.

"Introduction" by Vijay Kumar Roy is an extensive article which traces the evolution of Women's Movement and its impact upon Indian literary scene. Following the tradition of well-organised anthology, he underscores chronological study of Indian English feminists emphasising the fact that the theme of confrontation between tradition and modernity and women's struggle for emancipation is the main thrust of their works.

Ashok Kumar in his article gives a critical summary of pre-independence and post-Independence Indian English novels focusing the role of women. He comes to the conclusion that the treatment of women in Indian English literature has undergone changes in keeping with the changing social image of women in India. The article by Narendra T. Mane on Kamala Markandaya culminates the cultural clashes in various dimensions. It deals with the East-west encounter, racial differences which are the major concerns of her works. Nirmal Sharma, in her paper, examines the present status of women in the novels of Anita Desai. Through the major novels of Desai, she depicts the plight of women who are helpless and alone. They face mental agony; suffer privations and humiliations, neglect and silence, aloofness and alienation. However they show constant struggle to make both ends meet. They struggle but in the end succumb to the innumerable harms done to them.

Kalpana Purohit collaborates with Sunidhi Bissa and makes textual diagnosis of Anita Desai's well known novel *Fire on the Mountain*, a Sahitya Akademi winner. They come to the conclusion that the different non-verbal communications like imagery and symbols are woven skillfully in Desai's novel to explore and express the inner self of the characters.

In a comparatively long article Dalvir Singh Gahlawat makes a chronological survey of the major novels of Shashi Deshpande. He outlines that in almost all her novels one finds gradual empowerment of women. A new woman is inching towards freedom asserting her right and fighting for it. The 'subordination of men' which Simone De Beauvoir has mentioned is challenged by the emergence of the 'new women' in society as well as in fiction. However, they are aware that their life is a succession of traps created my mothers, lovers, and finally themselves. In the paper "Shashi Deshpande: A Unique Indian Novelist," Arvind Kumar Sharma and Suman Lata attempt to establish the fact that Indian cultures and ethos are at the core of Deshpande's heart. That is why, every aspect including manner, trend, style used in her works are couched with Indianness.

Writing on Nayantara Sahgal's women-centered novels, Laxman Yadav observes that in India women's vulnerability and exploitation isn't just because of the prejudices by males but also because of static women themselves. To give a right direction to them she has placed her women characters mostly with good educational background, in conflict with a parochial society and depicts their struggle pop out of their shell.

The paper by Indu Swami views the identity crisis of women in detail with special reference to *Difficult Daughters*. Indian women are struggling for their identity not only in society but also in their home. There is a world in contemporary India torn between tradition and modernity, colonial upbringing and the disquieting presence of freedom movements, and these women try their fate amidst the backdrop of chaos and confusion.

In the next essay, Sudista Prasad Singh effectively delineates the predicament of women in Kapur's third novel *Home*. The author has highlighted the issue of gender discrimination. He has criticised the double standard role of the society, which although emphasises participation of women in the public life, at its heart it prefers to preserve the structures of female subordination. Even at her home she is not allowed to avail the same freedom as her male counterpart does.

The editor is fully aware of the fact that any anthology on Indian Feministic Discourse will be incomplete without the presence

of Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, and Kiran Desai. With this view he has given space to some scholarly papers on them. In a joint paper, Shakshi Tyagi and Sandip Kumar have brilliantly drawn the plight of women through a dalit woman in *The God of Small Things* in the family and society under the garb of gender discrimination and patriarchy. According to the authors, the novelist projects chauvinistic and severe oppression. The image of discrimination turns to the image of violence. Oppression and exploitation intensify when caste and class structures are involved.

Shobha De's fiction, in the light of Feminism, has found proper critical acclaim in the paper of Pankaj Kumar 'Niraj.' He sets out the fact that De is a social propagandist who attributes to very serious themes such as gender discrimination, the impact of gender bias, female oppression, isolated childhood, child sexual abuse, and marital incompatibility.

The two papers on Kiran Desai embellish the anthology by adding meaning to it. M.S. Wankhede and Arun Kumar Mukhopadhyay judge *The Inheritance of Loss* on the critical canon. On one hand, Wankhede estimates *The Inheritance of Loss* as a novel of multiple themes. Mukhopadhyay, on the other hand, discusses the issue of East-West conflict and identity crisis.

Kumkum Bhardwaj in her article makes critical analysis of female protagonists in Anita Nair's *Ladies' Coupe*. Through the paper she tries to establish how women in the society are pining for simple things that they should be considered and treated as human beings first and foremost and not as sexual commodities. The contributor emphasises that a woman can survive and get her identity not by keeping herself isolated from male-dominated society, but by cooperating with them.

All the papers are pregnant with rich content. The editor must be congratulated for including all the major post-Independence Indian women novelists in this ambitious project.

SRM University, Ghaziabad **TRIBHUWAN KUMAR**

O.P. Mathur, *Post-1947 Indian English Novel: Major Concerns*, New Delhi: Sarup, 2010, 181+viii pp.

The anthology contains thirteen critical articles by O.P. Mathur written on different occasions, but expanded and gathered together here under a common rubric of political fiction of the postcolonial India. He makes some important generalizations about the major concerns of these novelists, which intensify our awareness of the Indian English Political Fiction as a separate sub-genre of fiction.

In the first chapter entitled, "A Bird's Eye View: The Post-1947 Indian English Political Novel," Mathur offers a panoramic picture of the postcolonial political fiction of India right from K.S. Venkataramani, A.S.P. Ayyar, K. Nagarajan, through Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, K.A. Abbas, Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, H.S. Gill, Raj Gill, Attia Hossain, Gurucharan Das, Nina Sibal, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, O.V. Vijayan and several others in-between. He has diligently but briefly sketched the major political problems of Indian society like the Nehruvian idealism, Gandhian rural uplift, minority-ism, communal reservation, assertion of regional identities, never-ending hunt for wealth, corruption of Indian bureaucracy, constabulary atrocities, trauma of Partition, power-politics and fundamentalist nationalism etc. The bird's eye-view happens to be of enormous help to the young researchers in the field to expand these insights into broader perspectives and in greater depth.

Mathur highlights the theme of depression and loss of identity, especially of the Punjabiyat of Kanshi Ram, an ordinary grain merchant of Sialkot and the Hindu-Muslim enmity depicted in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. He rightly opines that the novel attains epic dimensions. Interestingly contrasting it with Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, he describes it as a 'Train to India.'

Analyzing Manohar Malgonkar's *The Princes* Mathur highlights the political theme of the merger of the Begwad Princely State into the Indian Government and the contrastive approach to this political inevitability by Maharaja Hiroji and his son, Prince Abhayraj. He shows how Maharaja Hiroji is rigid in his belief in feudalism,

whereas his son is quite flexible in his acceptance of democracy and compromise with the historical situation.

In his discussion of Raja Rao's *Comrade Kirillov*, Mathur draws our attention to the contradictions between the Western and the Eastern ideologies seen in the life of the protagonist, a South Indian Brahmin called Padmanabha Iyer, who changed his name to Kirillov. Initially an orthodox Brahmin, a nationalist and a devotee of Mahatma Gandhi, he discards the creed of his forefathers and becomes a Communist and a bitter critic of Gandhian philosophy. But finally he is disillusioned with Communism also. Then he returns to India in search of his true identity but is lost in existential despair.

Mathur offers a thematic analysis of Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh* by showing how the Gandhian rural-oriented approach embodied in Gandhigram and the Nehruvian modernist rapid industrialization embodied in Steeltown are harmonized. He shows how Satyajit and Suruchi study at Tagore's Santiniketan and, deeply influenced by Tagore's philosophy, they realize the need for harmonizing asceticism and aestheticism and experiment it in the life of their daughter, Sumitra by allowing her to marry Bhaskar Roy and leading a normal life. Mathur rightly concludes, "The novel, thus, appears to be more a human than an ideological document" (70).

He discusses Nayantara Sahgal's *A Situation in Delhi* as an important political novel, which depicts a pessimistic picture of Post-Nehruvian India characterized by political vacuum, violence, authoritarianism, censorship, hypocritical concern for 'social justice,' Naxalite Movement and student agitation etc. He rightly remarks that the political situation presented in the novel foreshadows the period of Emergency clamped by Mrs. Indira Gandhi during 1975-77.

In "Darkness at Noon: The Trauma of the Emergency and the Novel," Mathur briefly sketches the theme of the evils of Emergency declared by the Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi like mass sterilization, city beautification executed heartlessly through blind bulldozers, dance of bureaucratic and constabulary tyranny and censorship of the press etc, as depicted in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us*, Rohinton

Mistry's *A Fine Balance* and *Such a Long Journey*, Malgonkar's *Garland Keepers*, Raj Gill's *The Torch Bearer* and so on. Mathur makes an insightful observation when he remarks that most of these Indian English novels, unlike the depressing dystopias of the West, are political novels, which in spite of being realistic, achieve either symbolic, mythological or allegoric dimensions, thereby harmonizing politics with religion.

Mathur illustrates how *Midnight's Children* emphasizes the multiplicity, pluralism and hybridity of the Indian society. He rightly says that the novel is based "on a serious-cum-comic, symbolic-cum-allegorical, multifaceted presentation of his exposition of the search for meaning in the Indian history of about a century" (97). He shows further how the old philosophy of India is expressed in the modern life.

Mathur shows in Rushdie's *Shame* the admixture of fantasy and realism and how fantasy conceals the satirical element in it. He highlights the themes of the gory horror of slaughters, rapes, arson and sin. He rightly says, "Rushdie satirically exposes the reality of his 'Pakistan' through a dual strategy of mockery and horror.

Commenting on Rushdie's *Shalimar, the Clown* Mathur says that it is a multi-stranded novel dealing with the global phenomenon of terrorism, especially in Kashmir, through the psyche of the clown-like Shalimar, who is a representative of a number of other terrorists. Along with the theme of terrorism, the feminist theme and that of revenge tragedy are also depicted as they seem to be interconnected. Mathur considers it as the greatest work of Salman Rushdie after *Midnight's Children* as it holds mirror to the burning problem of terrorism in the contemporary world.

He analyzes the theme of transcendence of politics and the division of humanity between 'here' and 'elsewhere' as depicted in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. He aptly describes it as the 'highly evocative novel' which intends to extinguish politics of all kinds and to place man in direct contact with the world in thought, imagination and action.

Commenting on Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Mathur contrasts the two Indias—of Darkness and of Light depicted by the novelist. He shows how Balram Halwai murders his master Ashok

India of My Dreams

We talk of united India
And advocate self-styled norms.
Is it correct to harp on
Prejudiced projection of right and wrong?

Our views are lop-sided,
Based on parochial thoughts.
How can we comprehend the universe
When in the quagmire we are lost.

Great leaders got us freedom
Without caring for their lives.
They aimed at freedom from foreign yoke
So that we may sustain our pride.

Are we trying to repay their thoughtfulness
With thoughtless ingratitude?
Why don't we wake up
And carry with us the multitude?

We are lost in faction-fighting
And refuse to come to terms
With the stark reality
That needs to be discerned.

I never thought such callousness
Would our actions captivate.
We care two hoots for the nation
Only self and self-indulgence dominate.

We must learn the lesson of brotherhood
And learn to act with grace,
And help the needy, desolate;
Self is not what we should crave.

Let us take pride in being Indians
And rise above the distinctions of caste and creed.
We must conquer petty-mindedness
And learn to act before we preach.

SUDERSHAN SHARMA
Gurgaon

Moods in Hues

Melbourne! You are lovely
Lovelier indeed is your weather.
So weird, so quizzical. A riddle—a Sudoku
To solve, is indeed
Impossible for an ilk.

Moody indeed Unpredictable like a 'Man' I believe
Teasing and mocking at every plan.

Twenty four seven, enjoy to live
All the four seasons if you can
Their bliss and beatitude
And their swinging blues
Harmony and disharmony in clues of hues.

The biting cold and eerie white
Makes you shiver and whine
All clad in coats and hats
As a detective of a famous five.
The night so scary, so tumultuous.
Forces to struggle in our man's arms.
Creaky windows and slamming doors
Sends shiver in basking woes.

Ghastly, ghostly,
Whizzy northern wind
Reverberates
'fair is foul and foul is fair'
The witches sing which reminds one of Macbeth's share.

Nonetheless,
Trees swaying
Flowers dancing
Kissing the ground in all gaiety.
Cats mewing, waiting for their love
Dogs in the lap, groomed and gratified,
Logs in the fireplace,
Shares the warmth with the housemates,
So comfy, so poised.
And then in a fraction of winks

On the half-peeping face
You can feel the drops and flakes
Mild shower. euphoric
Young hearts sighing
In lover's arms.

Ah! It keeps on wetting for hours along
So romantic, so deodorizing is the drizzle,
All frolic and fun and rounded lips whistle.
Soprano singing, the church bell ringing
Lot more people in haste,
Lot less have time to taste.
Fiercely competing in the rat race.

The Sophists cannot but forget
Their raincoat at a stretch.
Nonetheless gaudy umbrellas over every head
People of East and West walking abreast.

In sequel
Then like Midas touch
You see the drop disappear,
Mysteriously
Collect in the heats' pouch
So penetrating, so excruciating to bear.
All around so dull and drab
Lonely look the villas wear.
Forces the 'Whites' on the street unaware
Throngs in shorts and singlets with thongs.

Crazy heads
Drive to Riviera or
Sop in pools and beaches.
For a respite
With shandies in hand
Wrapped in sarong
Enjoying the tanning, fanning
Fighting the heat all day long.

HEMLATA SINGH
Patna

What is Life?

Life's like a flute with many holes,
We must tend them with care:
If tun'd well, courtesy these holes,
Sweet melodies we share.

Life's like an ice-cream, soft and sweet,
E'en if not us'd, it melts:
Let's not waste it, let's taste it, eat
And see on tongue it melts.

Life should be great, need not be long,
Let's make it colourful:
A butterfly has two-week long
Life, yet so eventful.

Nothing is permanent in life,
Not even wife's nagging:
Let's have faith both in God and wife
Despite wagging, ragging.

Let us refrain from stress and strain;
This won't give life more years,
But our dull years shall more life gain
With fun, frolic sans fears.

We must have a sense of humour
To be fit and cheerful:
Sans suspension like brain tumour
Car jolts, makes life rueful.

If we heed, maintain correct speed
Cars give better mileage;
If joy we need, we have to feed
Our life with more smileage.

KEDAR NATH SHARMA
Gurgaon

The Dark Song

Why do you want a love poem from me
You may surely get them in thousands
Written by the crazy young in blood flowing
On frozen beds of muffled solitude
Read by the world like cutlery ads!

The moon like the crying wolf out there
Ready to pounce on all fantasies
Does it rise for a lover anymore
And feel the saddest pulse of the dark!

Oh! In these so kill song times
Why do you stay awake
For a love poem from me?
Oh, no, it's not so my pretty dear
Love is so many things more
Than sweet stupidity!

ASHWINI KUMAR VISHNU
Akola

Do You Want Rain?

Samraj Nagar District in the Karnataka
Tamilnadu border—there used to be good
Rain in the month of April-May every
Year. But alas! Disappointed this year it has
Their farm work, the farmers, unable to resume
Uthamavalli villagers much distressed
What to do? Some suggested, "celebrate frog's
Marriage." It took place in the temple of
Malai Matheswara between a male frog
And a female frog! They were bathed,
Besmeared with turmeric powder & kumkum
Rose water too sprinkled and at last mangal
Sutra tied amidst the band music! The pair
Taken in a procession! Feast too they had!
All these to appease the Varuna Bhagawan

For a torrential downpour in the summer
Season? What a miracle! The day next
Day time. Yet torrential rain for hours two
Continuously filling all the lakes there.
Do you want rain in your area?

Where Shall I Go This Summer?

Is not May the month of vacation
And leisure to students and their teachers?
Those who learnt a lot for months ten
And had their delivery in the answer papers
Of various subjects in the exam hall.
Those who taught a lot for months
Ten and had their teaching in the class
Rooms, in various seminars and conferences
Is it not now a long rest for them both
Physically, mentally and psychologically?
Where do you go during this summer
Holidays? Rush unimaginable and crowd
In all the summer resorts—even the
Buses, trains are overflowing and
'No vacancy' board in the lodges too.
How can I move out of my home
If it were so . . . but to undertake an
Inward journey . . . turning to the past
Both bitter and sweet to weigh the present
In a balanced manner to carve out a true
Bright future for me and those around me.

K. BALACHANDRAN
Annamalai University

Chance

Leaving behind the remains
of morbid dreams
through sable memory lanes
Hunting for a route in the mist
through instinctive trails
Clenched to the heart
some desires breathing still
She drags herself to free
from the hard fetters of faith

Her devouring past buried forever
amidst the depths of her past
But still that smile on that face she can see
but then the darkness engulfs
With a shudder of pain
the memory surges
of what she once nearly had… and lost

The ultimate she had aspired for
in a world of limitations
Deluded by life that took away
all her high expectations
She felt like a soaring wave
craving for the feel of land
but pulled backed into the consuming sea
by callous hands of chance

MANU VERMA
Bangalore

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