

English Literature of the Twentieth Century: Trends, Challenges and Achievements

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As I stand before this learned audience of the English-teaching fraternity, I must remember with reverence my distinguished predecessors who have over the decades addressed similar audiences from all over the country: V.K. Gokak, M.K. Naik, S.K. Desai, C.D. Narasimhaiah and several others. I feel humble. I feel painfully conscious of my own inadequacies in sharp contrast with their eminence and memorable and enduring contribution to the English language and literary studies from which we have all immensely gained.

I am grateful to the Executive Committee of the AESI for inviting me to preside over this annual event. I hope that in the deliberations of these three days I will not say or do anything that will make them question the trust they have reposed in me. The subject of my presentation is "English Literature of the Twentieth Century: Trends, Challenges and Achievements." I will consider significant literary trends, accomplishments across poetry, drama and the novel in their separate milieu. Traversing beyond literature, I will look at history, political events and ideologies, financial crises (like the one between 1929-1934) and wars and other disasters, which have shaped modern times. It will be a formidable undertaking; I will try.

The twentieth century has witnessed numerous phenomenal changes. Two World Wars and many smaller

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ones, yet devastating in themselves, an economic crisis with implications far and wide, the rise and fall of an ideological empire, the end of European colonial empires and the consequent ushering in of freedom in vast areas of Africa and Asia, the nuclear threshold, the problems of a post-industrial society, the arrival of political and religious extremism and fanaticism (witness the unbridled nationalism and racism leading to the Nazi era in Germany), Ayatollahs everywhere, the so-called Moral Majority (what an absurdity!) in the United States and, not to be ignored, are our own over-zealous, sectarian, dogmatic, communalized pockets, unprecedented developments in science and technology, the rise of the Mass Man and the general existential angst and ennui felt in the face of intractable problems on this planet turned wretched by utter human mendacity. The twentieth century, too, is the site of equally profound changes whose effect is felt in the literatures in other languages often divided by culture, the long shadows of history, ethnic roots and nationality.

Let me turn to the social, cultural, political and even the economic background, although it might appear at first that I am stepping into alien lands unconnected with the literary field. On closer scrutiny, however, it should become clear that the literary and other concerns are not so unrelated. With similar thoughts on their minds, the English critic Vivian de Sola Pinto and the historian, C. F. G. Masterman, have spoken about a writer's "two voyages" in those troubled times and the divided loyalties of the twentieth century. While there have been revolutionary changes since the 1880s removing forever the certainties of the bygone age, the crux of what Masterman has pleaded is creative writers combine the inner with the outer, writer's inner being, the smithy of his imaginative, intellectual, moral and spiritual being with the realities of life around. Without belabouring this point I wish to emphasize that a writer often steps out of his ivory tower (if one ever existed) making forays into the market place where chaos is the order. Even the Lady of Shalott could not remain in her tower for too long.

When did the Twentieth Century English Literature begin? 1) With Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) in which Tess's powerful portrait haunts the reader. In it Hardy defies Victorian values and mores holding up Tess as "A Pure Woman;" 2) with Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891); 3) with the death in 1892 of Tennyson (an iconic presence in his age); 4) with the outbreak of the First World War (1914); 5) with the emergence of the Trench Poets. (As the First World War ended, the seeds of the Second World War were effectively sown at the infamous Treaty at Versailles.)

If the First World War deeply affected writers on both sides of the Atlantic (e.g., T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley and Ernest Hemingway), the Second World War had an even deeper impact on writers as diverse as W. H. Auden, William Golding, Graham Greene, George Orwell, John Osborne, C. P. Snow, Stephen Spender, John Wain, Evelyn Waugh and Arnold Wesker. None has expressed a sense of shock and dismay more powerfully than Auden in his poem "September 1, 1939."

The first few decades of the twentieth century were also bedevilled by fiscal dilemmas along with the political. At a time when India was reeling under England's colonial economic policies, West European and North American economies felt the harshness of it owing to the Great Depression and the worldwide slump, spiralling prices and rising unemployment. While this was a largely man-made tragedy, a phenomenon from the spheres of stock markets, trade and commerce, nature too had a hand in adding to human misery: see the American Nobel laureate John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). England's economic woes were endemic as her war losses were severe, and her political instability did not help matters. Germany's economic adversity turned most acute by her horrendous inflation as to make her currency useless. Such unprecedented fate, England and Germany bearing the brunt, came to an end only with the post-World War Two reconstruction also on an unprecedented scale.

Marx, Engels and Lenin, Hegel, Freud and Jung were the new gods or at least the new prophets. They found inspiration from the Western milieu of the day. Despite revisionism and the inherent unresolved contradictions, the thoughts of these six became an enduring legacy for the century, and beyond. The intellectual content of these six appealed, for decades at least, to writers and thinkers as diverse as Auden, Spender, Louis MacNeice, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone and Andre Gide. Their disillusionment with the Marxist-inspired Communism that their god—even an ersatz god—had failed, which Richard Crossman has chronicled in his *The God That Failed*, (1949). In the intellectual tide of the time, Fabianism, played a part displaying its idealism, eclecticism, egalitarianism and, above all, moderation at a time when there was a cacophony of extremism. For its basic decency and compassion, history will always remember Fabians, even if only in a footnote.

Above all, there was in the air a miasma that post-First World War Europe had become a graveyard of not only countless European youths, but also of every myth, faith, idealism and dreams which had sustained the continent for so long. In his novel *Antic Hay* (1923), Huxley has one of the characters say enquiringly, derisively: "Dreams in nineteen Twenty-two[?]" to which another adds sarcastically that if society has swallowed the First World War and even the Russian famine, then dreams and idealism were passé. Did dreams end with the nineteenth-century French novelist Edmond Rostand's era? Adding to this symposium another character wonders if the English society of the time had come to think, "No dream, no religion, no morality."

That was decadence. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) portrayed a civilization devastated. With such decay and degeneration all around, it is amazing that there was not even a hint of hope or regeneration. A much earlier poet, Matthew Arnold, had prophesied (in his "The Grand Chartreuse," 1855):

But as on some far northern strand,
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek

In pity and mournful awe might stand
Before some fallen Runic stone—
For both were faiths, and both are gone.
Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born...

What Eliot and Auden were faced with was a dilemma caused by a combination of political, economic, ideological and philosophic crises resulting in the modern man unsure and unsteady of where he stood and where he might go. It is glib these days to talk about man's loss of faith: but men and women, as the Second World War crept to its apocalyptic end, were indeed rudderless. No metaphor or set of philosophic principles could really explain their situation; they seemed unable to wade through the troubled waters of their days. Modern science, another new god, new orthodoxy, could not help either. Renaissance optimism was met with cynicism, nihilism and as mere sophistry.

While the achievements of science are formidable then as now, tools made possible by science were already being misused. In as early as 1932 Huxley had warned with words from "St. Mark," "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for Sabbath" with the obvious inference that science is for man, and not man for science. Huxley's timely and wise words were ignored then as now. Not he alone: Lawrence, Bertrand Russell and C. P. Snow have also dared to question science.

Between Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and Virginia Woolf's *The Common Reader* (1925 and 1932) the world became unrecognizably different to writers and readers alike. By 1918, thanks to the Suffragette movement, women had won the right to vote. Women's liberation movement vehemently opposed to the ways of patriarchal societies ushered in "Women's lib." With strong roots in Europe and the United States which was politicized by the radical elements in the movement so different from the sedate and decorous tenor of Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem to the militant Kate Millet and the founders of the mercifully stillborn "Society for the Cutting Up of

Men" ("SCUM" for short!)

However, the application of feminist ideas, theories and approaches to literary study and criticism are by now an accepted practice. Feminist critics (which includes men too) have mined this new trend. Whether it is reinterpretation of classic, canonical women writers like Austen, the Brontes, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf or Sylvia Plath or an attempt at establishing the status of a forgotten or neglected writer like Mary Shelley, there is an abundance of critical studies. Literary archives and ancient estates are being ransacked and scrutinized and new literary talents are being introduced with zeal and commitment. This enterprise gained momentum since the 1960s in the world of Anglo-American universities. Feminism (literary, cultural, social or political) has spread from the West to become a world-wide phenomenon. Scholars from India who have had a stay at an English or American university are well informed of the latest literary, philosophic and ideological currents which have surfaced since the first appearance in 1966 on the campus of John Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA, of the French savant, Jacques Derrida. Often enough, it will be no exaggeration to add that they (the scholars from India) are so thoroughly imbibed with the newest trends, i.e., with whatever has flown down the Hudson or the Mississippi, the Thames or the Cam, that they seem to wish to transform our own Departments of English into Departments of Culture or Sociology or Anthropology and thus initiate ideological battlefields. That, however, is another story which must be told separately. As far as feminism is concerned, apart from a few excesses its pursuits and attitudes must find a worthy place alongside of other pursuits and attitudes which claim a pedigree of, say, three thousand years or more.

As we look at the poetry of the twentieth century, Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) is a transitional figure. Unlike in his novels, Hardy as a poet is not pessimistic. Life is hard, indeed; but men and women have the moral strength and grit to bear their misfortunes, and to go on. There is a celebration of life. There is even humour. Always humane

with a deep compassion for those who suffered, he saw the changes coming over England, and he did not like them. Would the President of the Immortals care about a little, insignificant village in England called "Tooting"? Hardy did. He cared for nature too. In contrast, Yeats was always a poet, even in his plays. His prophetic voice, his dark forebodings resonating with the proverbial "black" Irish streaks have made a short poem like "The Second Coming" at once symptomatic and revelatory of the poet and his age:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world....
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity....
A shape with lion body and the head of a man...
Is moving its slow thighs....
...what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Like all great poetry, this one too admits numerous, varying interpretations. But like all great poetry, it survives its time, its immediate milieu and speaks to all across every barrier. Yeats could achieve this in many poems like "No Second Troy," "Sailing to Byzantium," "Byzantium," "Leda and the Swan," "Lapis Lazuli" and "Long-Legged Fly." To these one must add the poems addressed to his early love, Maud Gonne.

The poetry of the First World War is the work of mainly Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), the only war poet to survive the war, Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) and Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918). Sassoon expressed his anger directed against the pointless war and against the men above who did not know what could have been avoided. He resented the patriotism of those safely back home who did not know what it was like to be in the trenches. His stark and uninhibited manner left little space for sentiment. A romantic and a patriot, Brooke saw the death of a soldier as a willing sacrifice for his country. There has been revisionist scaling down of his reputation, discredited even by his fellow-poets. It is hard to deny that what Brooke has expressed is

felt emotion. The most successful war poet Owen combined realism with satire. He, like Sassoon, wanted folks back home to know the horror of it all. Romanticism did not appeal to him: war was not about heroes; it was about killing and being killed. Rosenberg came from a working class, with little education. His poetry is energetic and rugged, harsh and filled with a sense of desperation. Here, again, is no idealism, sentiment, reverence for one's country one is supposed to be fighting for; none of it. Here is only choking and screaming, maiming and death, the waste and the inhumanity of it all. Only Sassoon, Brooke, Owen and Rosenberg matter, in their different ways, in the poetry of the First World War.

Poetry of the inter-war era and its continuance up until the 1960s is all of a piece. Eliot, Auden, Robert Graves, Lawrence, Cecil Day-Lewis, MacNeice, Spender and Yeats are the dominant ones. *The Waste Land* is still as complex, elusive and obscure but inspiring and influential as it has always been. Its structure, its mix of characters is as varied as a contemporary typist seen next to a mythical blind priest. Hoary superstitions are ranged along side of the seasons of nature. There is life and there is death. Christian faith and the contrasting non-Christian notions exist side by side. The spectre of unhappiness, which is the unhappiness of the modern world, seems to occupy everyone on the scene which is unlike the times "when wits were fresh and clear, And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames." Nobody seems able to harmonize the cultural with the religious, the carnal with the spiritual.

If Eliot distanced himself from the age, Auden expresses his concerns as in "September 1, 1939." Human torment and human folly go along with tragedy and perversity:

Uncertain and afraid
 As the clever hopes expire
 Of a low dishonest decade:
 Waves of anger and fear
 Circulate over the bright
 And darkened lands of the earth,
 Obsessing our private lives;

The unmentionable odour of death
Offends the September night.

If Auden was not exactly a successor to Eliot, Spender was even less so. At first a romantic, he came under Auden's influence, inheriting his "political" poetry, as did Cecil Day-Lewis and MacNeice. In Spender's view a poet must remain detached from his personal self, a kind of scientist as evidenced in his poems like "The Express" and "The Pylons." MacNeice, another member of this clique, was inclined to more scathing criticism than was Auden, Spender or Day-Lewis. So, it may be said that within a relatively short span the inter-war years produced poetry which has variety, style, substance, philosophic and political commitment.

Has theatre in England ever again reached the heights of the Renaissance? A merely rhetorical question is often asked in the West, "Who is the second best playwright in the English language?" The Bard of Avon will never be dislodged from the dizzy heights he reached. Once Renaissance became a spent force, England steadily lost the pre-eminence gained under Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe and John Webster. Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Sheridan in the eighteenth century, the English Romantics and their Victorian successors in the nineteenth century failed to resurrect the English theatre. From the 1650s to the 1850s England produced gifted actors and actresses, but no great playwrights. With George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) and Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), England witnessed a revival to keep the national theatre going. Apart from their fillip which is immeasurable, in the twentieth century it is J.M. Barrie (1860-1937), John Galsworthy (1867-1933), W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1865), J.B. Priestley (1894-1984) who produced a respectable corpus of plays. They were mainly traditionalists. Barrie, however, showed in *The Admirable Crichton* (1902) that he could combine comedy and sentiment with realism and social satire. Despite his limited dramaturgy he comes off as sincere if obsessed, touching if escapist, but never is he frivolous or trivial. A remark like "Circumstances alter cases" is enough to show that he stood on firm grounds. Galsworthy, as in his

novels, shows a brand of naturalism and a sense of social commitment in his plays too. *The Silver Box* and *Strife* (1909) and *Escape* (1926) show his awareness of social and judicial inequities at the time. Maugham blends comedy with satire and irony. He is adept at depicting social manners and mores. But as in his fiction he is light and breezy, that is all. But these knew their craft. A measure of a playwright's success is whether he continues to be on the stage. These four are: The Irish Theatre Movement which comprises notables like Yeats himself, J. M. Synge (1871-1909), Sean O'Casey (1880-1964) and Samuel Beckett (1906-1989). It revived Ireland's literature with a nationalistic fervour. But Synge stood tall among the rest. While dealing with the Irish peasants and their unrelenting tragic lives, naturalism was not enough for him. His *Riders to the Sea* (1905) is a stark tragedy of Aeschylean heights in which life is drowned, i. e., here is the inevitability of human defeat at the hands of fate. Abject surrender is symbolized by the aged Maurya's words and by her silence as well. Ireland's share of English literature is a fine saga comprising Sheridan, Shaw, Wilde, James Joyce, among others, who have by choice become part of the literary heritage of the English language. In passing, a word about Eliot's verse drama which he regarded as a better vehicle for the eternal and the universal and went on to put it to test in *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), etc. In the first he turns to a historical experience, namely, the death of Thomas Becket, but more for its religious significance.

In the second, with more room for realism and its quotidian subject-matter, Eliot displays a rare degree of fusion of form with matter. The protagonist Harry is allowed to use his own speech, i. e., without deferring to conventions of the stage or any classical tradition. The "Problem Play" also known as "Discussion Drama," "Thesis Play" or "Propaganda Play" analogous to the "Novel of Ideas," which at first in the hands of Shaw and much later as practised by John Osborne and Arnold Wesker became a means for social and political protest and a voice crying out for justice for those

it was denied for long. The Problem Play, in general, denotes serious drama or one in which ideas are dominant. An element of didacticism is de rigueur. Examples are: Shaw's *Widower's Houses* (1892), *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893) and *Major Barbara* (1905), Galsworthy's *Justice* (1910) and Wesker's *Chicken Soup with Barley*, *Roots* and *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* (1960).

As expected, such plays incorporate more talk and debate, without necessarily offering any resolution. They regarded the stage as a school, a preacher's or reformer's platform. They produced plays to expound on the problems of the age. It may be prostitution, the woman's lot in general, the rich vs. the poor or unequal justice, the problem play is characterized by moral concerns. Free-flowing talk or heated discussion becomes as exciting and stirring as the fate of a hero hanging by a thread.

The disillusionment that followed the Second World War had a shattering effect on England's morale. The sun finally began to set on the British Empire. As John Mander has put it, Great Britain had become Little England. Jimmy Porter (*Look Back in Anger*, 1956) howls in rage and blows his cantankerous trumpet and expresses his anguish, "I suppose people of [my] generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer.... There aren't any good, brave causes left." His angry feelings speak of a frustration shared by millions in the 1950s. As if with Jimmy in mind Kenneth Allsop coined the term "The Angry Decade," with its shock waves which are dramatized also by Harold Pinter and John Arden. Together they ushered in a new "angry" stage. Their counterparts in fiction, Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Braine and Alan Sillitoe did likewise herald a new anti-hero (who is intelligent, tough, sore and disenchanting), a new social realism and a new anti-class, anti-society, anti-smugness, anti-conformist and anti-establishment outlook. The new protagonists in plays and novels express a conviction that all is phoney, suffering and anguish are inescapable facts of human existence, there is no soothing balm or palatable anodyne, no system of ethics or religion could provide

consolation, no personal salvation. What is not in themselves, for Osborne or Amis' heroes, is bad, wrong, hateful, to be eschewed without a thought.

The twentieth-century English novel has something for every kind of reader: the novel of manners and morals (i. e., the tradition from Henry Fielding to Graham Greene), the stream-of-consciousness novel, the utopian novel, along with the Bildungsroman (dealing with the protagonist's coming of age or moral growth) and the Künstlerroman (a similar account of an artist-protagonist, his moral growth) and not to be forgotten is the ubiquitous variety, i. e., the popular novel according to some, pulp fiction or pop fiction according to others.

Among those who have used the potential of the stream-of-consciousness novel are James Joyce (1882-1941) in his *Ulysses* (1922), Dorothy Richardson (1872-1957) in her thirteen-volume *Pilgrimage* (1938), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) in her *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), to cite only the characteristic works.

The term "stream-of-consciousness" (also known as "interior monologue") denotes the flow of inner experiences. As a literary technique it seeks to portray the multitudinous thoughts and feelings that pass through the mind. But of all the typical as well as outstanding representations of the stream-of-consciousness novels is *Ulysses*.

It is an account of the experiences lasting no more than twenty hours. Is it disjointed? Illogical? Is the author's manner uncooperative, unconcerned with his reader? Consider the novel's syntax, its sentence structure, spelling, its switching back and forth from educated to uneducated usage of English. The switching back and forth in the subject-matter at hand? Absence of antecedents and precedents? How many complete sentences are there, in any case? However, the narrative and its linguistic departures are indeed stunning. (In passing, one wonders why this adventurous experiment did not become part of the mainstream.)

Utopian novels, after Thomas Moore's *Utopia* (1516) aim at an imaginary or perfect world and by implication unattainably ideal state. The term dystopia refers to the reverse, i. e., a nightmare that must be avoided, and unpleasant worlds in which ominous tendencies of our present social, political and technological order are so projected as to culminate disastrously. *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift, *The Coming Race* (1871) by Bulwer Lytton, *Erewhon* (1872) by Samuel Butler, *A Dream of John Bull* (1888) and *News from Nowhere* (1890) by William Morris, *Looking Backward* (1887) by Edward Bellamy, *A Modern Utopia* (1905) and *Men Like Gods* (1923) by H. G. Wells, *Brave New World* (1932) by Huxley and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) by Orwell illustrate this category. Thus, utopias are inspired by hope, however unrealistic, about possibilities of perfection, whereas authors are driven to write dystopias either out of fear of what the future might hold for mankind or because of stern warning stressing what must not be done.

The theme for this address has been, "English Literature of the Twentieth Century: Trends, Challenges and Achievements." I am sure you have already recognized that these three literary and conceptual aspects are not mutually exclusive. They overlap. Even across literary forms there has been unavoidable straying. So, now let me look back. Among important trends, the multidisciplinary approach has spread exponentially in recent decades. For example, those committed to American Studies (like Robert Spiller, Willard Thorp, T. H. Johnson and others) have turned to using history, political science and other branches of humanities and human experiences like wars and financial crises, the end of empires and the dawn of freedom, the new nuclear phenomenon, extremism in many spheres, use as well as misuse of science and technology, and so on have supplied new fodder to numerous creative writers. The twentieth century has not lacked its share of challenges. With increased freedom new realities have surfaced: Women's Lib., idealism's unsteady demarche, absence of dreams (or their implausibility), poets became prophets or messiahs, etc. This

catalogue could be easily extended. Indeed, the twentieth century has stood for challenge from first decade to the last. Nevertheless, this era, despite its ignoble and discredited moments, has much to make the English proud. Hardy's novels and poems (and not *The Dynasts* alone), Auden's humanism (see his "September 1, 1939"), Yeats' mysticism and profound symbolism (see his "The Second Coming"), feminism's creative and constructive role, the emergence of the Irish Theatre and so on. Without a Shakespeare, the theatre has redeemed itself as stage for "anger" and stage as a pulpit, with the playwright as teacher and preacher.

More than the theatre, the novel has moved in multifarious directions giving the reader the kind of fiction he or she wants or likes. In Orwell you have satire, allegory, propaganda and political education. In Maugham you find an earthy escapist, an easy even silly romantic; there is social comedy too in him. Wells explored science fiction and utopianism. Lawrence explored the self, the human psyche. Greene concerned himself with spiritual emptiness and alienation. In Conrad you will find the theme of man alone facing his destiny. Forster portrays human beings from different strata of society, disjointed, disparate, isolated—so, "connect" them. Huxley pursued utopianism, looked for sanity, order, proportion and the fate of humanity. Waugh finds men and women penitent. To Woolf, humans are wispy and airy; they are as insubstantial as a passing mood. In Amis, Wain, Braine, Spark and Sillitoe there is anger at the society and the establishment. Thus, from stream of consciousness, symbolism and surrealism to naturalism, satire, cynicism, social realism. "Here," then, as Dryden once put it "God's plenty."

I have dwelt on the novel at length, not without reason. From 1740s the novel has grown and evolved. In the last one hundred years even more so as it has suited the democratic, populist temper and when the Mass Man has prevailed. Every era from the Renaissance to the twentieth century has contributed hugely to English Literature. From the late nineteenth century to our own doorstep, distinguished

poets, playwrights and novelists have contributed as creative writers while individually carving a niche for themselves. Even though it is too early to augur what is in store for the twenty-first century, neither exuberant celebration nor morbid pessimism is called for. As Oscar Wilde has memorably written, "Who can foretell what joys the day shall bring, or why before the dawn the linnets sing?" (*Ravenna*, 1878)

Creativity and Criticism

**Rajnath*

My presidential address on "Literary Criticism in India" delivered at Andhra University in December, 2013 and published in the pages of this Journal was generally appreciated; but a couple of readers expressed reservation about my relative estimate of creativity and criticism, especially my placing of criticism above creation. I had expected it, although I had formulated my opinion after sufficient cogitation. I had advanced two-fold evidence, that there were far fewer critics than creative writers and that the critic required rigorous preparation that the creative writer could dispense with.

While I still stand by most of what I have said about the critic in my address, in this note I wish to admit that I had deliberately taken an extreme position in order to set the reader's mind thinking, although my intention was only to question the putative superiority of creation over criticism in order to establish the equal status of the two. If, on the one hand, we have great creative writers from Homer to T.S. Eliot, on the other we have great critics from Aristotle to Roland Barthes. Several periods of literary history are named after creative writers but there is also "The Age of Johnson" which covers the second half of the 18th century, and the second half of the 20th century may be designated "The Age of Derrida" even though I do not reckon him as important as he is taken to be.

In my address I have distinguished between creative imagination and critical acumen, which gives the impression that they are exclusive, when, in fact, they are different but

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not exclusive. T.S. Eliot speaks of "criticism in creation" and I can supplement this by saying that there is creative imagination in criticism. Creative imagination runs amuck in the absence of critical faculty and criticism becomes dull, uninteresting and unperceptive for lack of creative imagination. Let me add that it is erroneous to think that creative writing is devoid of logic which is the crux of critical faculty.

As we are living under the shadow of Derrida, I must state unequivocally that Derrida's view of literature as well as criticism is ill-founded, as it is premised on a flawed view of language¹ and that his dissolution of all distinctions between literature and other disciplines is highly untenable². Any distinction between creative and critical writings flies in the face of Derrida's deconstruction but this is a distinction which we have always made and will continue to do so.

When the critic is face to face with a literary text, he is in a situation identical to that of the creative writer when he confronts an external phenomenon. The writer goes behind and beyond the circumambient reality to apprehend the deeper meaning that it hides. All literary texts have a deeper meaning which is not visible on the surface and it is the critic's job to unearth it and place it before the reader. The critic is a critic because he is gifted with a faculty that ordinary persons do not possess. Wordsworth's "spots of time" and Joyce's "epiphany" which inform literary texts are a sudden revelation of something extraordinary embodied in an ordinary person or thing. And, like the creative writer, the critic also gets the deeper meaning of a text in a flash.

By criticism I do not mean the Impressionistic criticism practised by critics like Walter Pater and A.C. Swinburne nor do I mean the subjective criticism of David Bleich, a reader- response critic. Apropos of criticism Pater writes that, "the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's impression as it really is." (Cited. in Abrams, 50-51)⁴ and of Swinburne's criticism T.S. Eliot opines that "Swinburne was writing not to establish a critical reputation, not to instruct a docile public, but as a poet." (17) David Bleich,

the most subjective of reader-response critics, believes that "the shape and content of both my response and my interpretation are subjective" (111). This extreme emphasis on subjectivity is not in the true nature of criticism. The subjective impression has a place in creation as well as criticism but there is a difference. In creation, the writer goes beyond his impression to the objective form for its suitable expression, while in criticism he goes beyond his impression to the critical faculty in order to analyse it. The critical procedure is as difficult as the creative, the difference between the two being that the former's starting point is an external phenomenon, while the latter starts with the text.

The common area between creativity and criticism is the blend of subjectivity and objectivity. When either of the two becomes altogether subjective or objective, it degenerates into a bad specimen of its genre. Some of the Confessional poems of Robert Lowell, "Commander Lowell," for example, are as bad as the subjective criticism of the Impressionistic critics such as Pater and Swinburne and the reader- responsism of David Bleich. At the other end of the spectrum, complete objectivity of poetry, or any genre of literature for that matter, is a flaw, as in Hugh Macdiarmid's "The Belly Grip" which is a literal transcript of Marxist ideology. Similarly, complete objectivity in criticism also becomes a flaw as in Northrop Frye's criticism which tries to complete with science. Evaluation which in an important function of criticism is kept outside its purview by Frye as it is the product of subjectivity³. But this defeats the very purpose of criticism which is expected to tell us the relative importance of writers and texts, why Shakespeare is head and shoulders above other writers and why his *Hamlet* or *King Lear* is superior to his other plays.

It is often said that creation is primary and criticism secondary. It is creative writing which comes first and then criticism emerges in response to it. In the West, Homer came before Aristotle and in the East, Valmiki, the author of the epic *Ramayana* preceded Bharat by several centuries. In a sense this is true but could Homer have written his *Odyssey* or Valmiki has epic without the use of critical faculty? The

choice of the characters, the narrative technique, the imagery, etc. must have called for the exercise of critical faculty. The truth of the matter is that creation and criticism emerge simultaneously, although the principles at work in creative writings are formulated later in the domain of criticism.

A significant contribution that criticism makes towards creative writing has not been sufficiently realized. It is the critic who tells us the real importance of a creative writer or his work. Imagine Shakespeare without the contribution of critics like Samuel Johnson, S.T. Coleridge and a host of critics in the 20th century, notably A.C. Bradley, G. Wilson Knight, Kenneth Muir, R.B. Heilman, etc., which has helped us understand the range and depth of his vision as well as the excellence of his form, particularly language. The real importance of Shakespeare was discovered by these critics and conveyed to the reader who would have otherwise missed a great deal in Shakespeare's plays. What is true of Shakespeare holds for other writers as well. T.S. Eliot demonstrated the true nature of Donne's poetry and F.R. Leavis the creative achievement of D.H. Lawrence. I am not detracting from the creative writer but only highlighting the role of the critic in literary understanding and evaluation without which literature will lose much of its greatness.

NOTES

1. For further details see my "Saussure, Language and Literature." *The Critical Endeavour* VIII (January, 2012), pp. 20-42.
2. This is the theme of my forthcoming book *The Identity of Literature: A Reply to Jacques Derrida* (Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications).
3. Frye says categorically that his criticism is not 'concerned with value judgements' as "Value-Judgements are subjective." *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 20.

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Polar Intensity of the Creative Process

**Charu Sheel Singh*

Swedenborg and Jacob Boehme held the view that without contraries there is no progression. Krishna also says in the *Gita* that every man carries an angelic and a devilish nature. Most of the creative writers in any language all over the world try to create an opposite that counterfires the poetic imagination from the level of the instinct to the level of the spirit. Thus, when the East India Company was established in Calcutta, many learned scholars came to India under its service. The names of Charles Wilkins, William Jones, N.B. Halhad, J.Z. Holwell, and A.J. Arberry are important. These scholars translated the mainstream texts of the Indian Scriptural Tradition, thus, evolving a creative binary in the Western Tradition. Much of the available scholarship acknowledges the influence of Greek mythology upon English Romantic Poets; it, however, is silent over the influence of the Indian Tradition on the West.

Polar-Intensity is generated when a creative writer tries to assimilate the foreign space into his native consciousness. This foreign space appears to a creative writer as an *other*, which pursues a writer's dream of the realization of the cosmos within the body of his writing. The intensity is the part of the effort that a writer puts into to achieve the goal of his creative fulfilment. It is often seen that many native traditions opposed this polarity which they deem as a danger to their self-identity.

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However, native traditions such as those in India have always been open to the foreign influences, the other space—so to say. Many a time history has given India little or no choice as the Greeks and the Muslims were not invited; they came as invaders. The British came for commerce and trade but they colonized India. This was a negative imperative India could hardly have chosen but the country imbibed and nativized foreign influences still maintaining its own sense of self-identity. The truth is that the polar intensity in the creative process is a form of syncretism and not a form of opposition as it might seem for the creative writer of a lesser degree. The writer is one continent and the world he is trying to assimilate through his images and symbols is another. Creation often implies an awakening, the search for a nomenclature and a language that equates the authorial intention with the writerly design. Thus, most of us would have it believe for ourselves that Romanticism began in England, or, at best it came from Europe or Greek and Latin sources. Such polar opposites do not tell the full story. William Jones had translated the story of Shakuntala from the *Mahabharata*. Jones had also translated Hymns from the *Rigveda*. Such translations influenced the European imagination and gave birth to the Romantic Movement. Shlegel and Schiller brothers were great Sanskritists and they imbibed the Indian influences in a large measure. Goethe, too, had inklings of this influence. So, from India to Germany, to England, to America is the route of the Romantic Movement. For this reason Arthur O Lovejoy in his book *The Great Chain of Being* calls Romanticism as Romanticisms because the polar opposites for each writer's creative propensity form a different set of significant design with its own virtuosity and value. Thus, Chatterton, Southey, Thomas Gray, William Collins, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Keats practice different kinds of the forms of Romanticism. Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost constitute the American chapter of that difference that we still call Romanticism. Intensities differ as do temperaments and sensibility. No man is an island including the creative writer. However, the appropriations can be small or large

depending upon the part of the cosmos we can carry within ourselves. William Blake (1757-1827) is deliberately omitted from the above list because he is an institution in himself. He did not have any pretension to academic education like Shakespeare, Kabir, Mira and most of the medieval poets of the Devotional School of Poetry in India. This supports the theory that the formalization of education kills the romantic instinct to creation and inspiration. The American philosopher George Santayana wrote an essay titled *Poetry and Barbarism* in which he held that primitive societies were more poetic than the modern. This is because the influx of science has come to us as an intruder. The organization of human sensibility is continental in a less educated person. It becomes departmental in an educated person. T.S. Eliot was highly educated—— a man of the city in all senses of the term. He called himself a cosmopolitan in religion yet he wavered many times between Catholicism and Protestant Christianity.

Further, Eliot had studied Sanskrit under Charles Lenman and James Hotten Woods at Harvard. They were editing the Harvard Oriental Series in those days and creating an important polarity for the American and European imagination in terms of the creative process. Eliot had read the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and *The Bhagavad-Gita* in the original Sanskrit. However, his cosmopolitan pretensions blew down to pieces when he said that now he must stop reading Hindu Scriptures else he might become a Hindu. This is what happens to an educated sensibility. Blake, therefore, talked of the most ancient religion of the world which prevailed in the ancient culture of the world. Distinctions of any kind were not born here, only appropriations. When the ancient religion got a nomenclature, it became formalized into Christianity, Islam, Judaism, among the rest.

Madame Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* is a comparative study of the most ancient religions of the world. Northrop Frye called *The Secret Doctrine* as the grammar of poetic mythology. Blavatsky talks of a hieroglyphic language which transacted in terms of imagistic and symbolical entities in their most serious mode of operation. Fenolosa wrote an essay

on the Chinese written character where the image destroys the redundant time in order to appropriate the object in question. Ezra Pound was influenced by this essay to a very large extent. We have lost touch with such a symbolical language and imagism and the French Symbolist Movement is the appropriations of the same instinct. Formalised education, therefore, and creative writers who belong to this school, must practice de-formalisation. This is a necessary reductive practice that Phenomenology practices as did Adi Shankaracharya who preached *neti-neti* (not this - not this) in order to appropriate Brahma. Absolute negation leads to the absolute affirmation as Carlyle said. This is polar intensity of the highest kind. The Buddhist version of this negation is *Shunya*, emptiness whose opposite is silence and not any linguistic construct. In Yoga this is known as *Kaivalya*, loneliness, aloofness and even nothing. Indian Upanishadic Tradition also celebrates the same polar intensity. For this reason some *Upanishads* are theistic, others mono-theistic, and still others are polytheistic and some even atheistic. Polar intensity cannot get better than this- and this is the creative process at its highest. Northrop Frye in his seminal study of William Blake, *Fearful Symmetry*, called Blake as the first of the European Idealists able to link his own tradition of thought with that of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It is important to note that Charles Wilkins had translated *Bhagavad-Gita* into English. He called it *The Dialogues of Krishna and Arjuna*. This translation was published from The India House Library in London in the year 1785. This inaugurated an era of polar intensity for the creative writers of the time.

There was nothing like *Bhagavad-Gita* for the European imagination. Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of India, wrote in his Foreword to the book that *Bhagavad-Gita* shall long last in the European and English imagination after the British dominion in India is over. Blake had painted Charles Wilkins in the act of translating the *Gita*. The painting was placed for exhibition in 1809 under the caption: *A Descriptive Catalogue*. The painting, however, has been lost from the British Museum. Blake criticized Shakespeare and Milton for not creating their own tradition. Milton

borrowed it from *the Bible* while Shakespeare's sources were Holingshed and Plutarch. Blake claimed that he is going to create something that is entirely new to the inhabitants of the earth. He often used to say that he must create a-system or be enslaved by another man's. Shakespeare and Milton, therefore, lacked in the creation of polar opposites from a non-native tradition. Even though Blake claimed his poetic mythology as original, my own work on Blake, *The Chariot of Fire* has decoded Blake's sources in Hindu religion and mythology. T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, William Blake and Ted Hughes do not belong to the epistemological paradigms of the Western Tradition. W.B. Yeats studied *Bhagavad-Gita* from Purohit Swami and his association with Rabindranath Tagore led him to a study of the Indian mysticism. Yeats produced a highly complicated theory of poetry in his book entitled *A Vision*. This book contains polar intensities among various subjects- literature, philosophy, mythology, religion, history, astronomy, astrophysics and more. Similarly, Ted Hughes' *Crow* is a poem that critiques Biblical myth of creation. His *Gaudete* is a deconstruction of the myth of the superman as it evolves in Schopenhauer and in some other religions. This is an example of approximating opposites in a negative manner. William Blake had written two small tracts: *There is no natural religion* and *All religions are one*. Blake was revolting against the mechanical conception of the Deists of his own day; his revolt was also against the empiricism of Locke, Hobbs, Barkeley and Hume. Blake also disliked the infernal trinity of Bacon - Newton- Locke whom he called the Satanic Selfhood. Against the theory of the mind which Locke regarded as an empty slate, Blake enacted the theory of imagination based upon innate ideas. Blake said that the mind perceives more than the senses do. The mind is not a passive recipient in Blake who said that man is a garden ready planted and sown. Blake and Whitman believed in the endless cyclicity of human life. In his major poems also- *The four Zoas*, *Milton* and *Zerusalem* Blake has created polar opposites of various kinds. In *The Four Zoas*, Lubah , the faculty of the mind transgresses into the territory of tharmas the Zoa of the water below the abdominal region. This begins

the trouble and Albion, the ancestor of human race is fallen asleep. Similarly, the Zoa of the intellect, Urizen, dominates over Lubah and trouble is multiplied. Finally, Los as the temporal form of Urthona appears and directs all the Zoas to go to their respective places. Albion is restored to his original glory again. The categories are apparently taken from the *Gita*. *Krishna* says that higher than the senses are the mind; higher than the mind is the soul (intellect); what is higher than the soul is *Atman*. Blake also wrote a poem in which he said: "now I a onefold vision see/ now I a twofold vision see/ now I a threefold vision see/ now I a fourfold vision see".

This implies that one can create a poem for the sensory pleasure, a poem for the mental pleasure, a poem for the intellectual pleasure, and, finally, a poem that subsumes all these details into the reality of the permanent self. This could also be understood as temporal, trans-temporal, transcendental and spiritual kinds of poetic forms. This would further correspond to the literal, metaphorical, the symbolical and the archetypal phases of the human consciousness. At each level there is oppositional polar intensity containing creative burdens. In *Milton*, Blake creates a polar opposite between himself and Milton the poet. He says that Milton was not regenerated during his life time. Blake makes Milton shoot like a star and come on to his boot. Blake shoots it into the air and Milton is regenerated.

In order to carry out this task of the redemption, Blake again has recourse to the *Sattva- Rajas- Tamas gunas* of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. These *gunas* or qualities are translated as goodness- passion- Darkness. Rintrah, Palamabron and Satan are the three characters in *Milton*. Blake says that Rintrah roars and shakes the sky with his thunderbolt. This is clearly *Indra* in action with a change in the linguistic form of words. S. Foster Damon says that the names in Blake sound highly oriental. One character ploughs the land of the other and the trouble ensues. Here, Milton substitutes for Albion and the character who sets the trouble right is again loss.

Northrop Frye says that he is a Blakean critic. If he had not studied Blake, he would not have become a critic. His

Anatomy of Criticism (1947) is a testimony to his study of Blake. Frye takes the image from the literal to the metaphorical, from the metaphorical to the symbolical, from symbolical to the archetypal, from archetypal to the analogical, and, finally, anagogic phases of literature viewed in the creative process as an the evolution of human consciousness. Frye has applied and enlarged upon such theoretical views in another of his major work that is called *Bible and Literature*. Contrapuntal symbolism abounds in Blake and Frye. This is the point counterpoint logic of Aldous Huxley as well. In *Vigraha-Vaivartini* Nagarjuna says that in language one word, one image, one symbol are always trying to annul the effect of the other.

This is a theory of mutual exclusion and extermination. This theory is fully developed by Nagarjuna, a 4th century A.D. Buddhist monk, in his seminal book *Mulmadhymik-karika*. Nagarjuna positions the polar opposites in terms of the four *Mahavakyas*- great sentences. They are: "This – is", "This-is-not", "Both this – is and this-is-not", "Neither this- is nor this – is - not". A fifth condition of understanding and creation does not exist as per Nagarjuna. This theory leads to the exposition of *Shunya*, emptiness, as the greatest of all meanings. Derrida has borrowed from these sources but cleverly enough his acknowledgement is not clear. In my *Concentric Imagination* (1993), I have extensively shown how Buddhist method works in Derrida while he reads the history of Western Philosophy from Plato down to Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Heidegger, among others. Derrida creates the polar opposites of the destruction of the history of the text and thereafter its recreation from the rudiments that remain.

Creative process is basically the growth and development of the human consciousness in terms of the outside object world. T.S. Eliot had charged Shakespeare that the latter has not been able to create the kind of *Hamlet* he wanted to create. This led Eliot to develop his theory of the objective-correlative. Eliot says, and perhaps rightly shows, that for each idea, emotion, and sentiment, there must be a

corresponding image. There ought to be a relationship among the idea, image, character, situation, dialogue, forming a sequential chain.

However, one might commit subjective and intentional fallacies. How does Eliot, for example, know what kind of polar opposite Shakespeare had framed in his mind while creating the character of *Hamlet*? Eliot says Shakespeare has not created anything like Hamlet in his whole dramatic career. *Hamlet*, says Eliot, is unlike any of Shakespeare's play. How does Eliot know what kind of Hamlet Shakespeare wanted to create? It is a clear cut case of reading personal subjectivity into Hamlet. The truth is Prufrock is Eliot himself whatever contrary claims Eliot might make. Prufrock and Hamlet meet in their powers of indecision. Similarly, Eliot criticizes Milton for having destroyed English language. He said that Milton does not have any sense of punctuation; the language has no correspondence to the common language of the people. The same Eliot reverts his view in *Milton II* where he says that Milton has created a new language for English poetry the like of which had not been seen. Eliot also appreciates the high quality of music that Milton evolves. In *Milton I*, Eliot had said that Milton has influenced the succeeding generation of writers in such a manner that a dissociation of sensibility has taken place. Milton praises Donne and Keats in whom polar opposites unite because of the creative intensity. However, Eliot criticizes Shelley for being abstract and Wordsworth for carrying his egotistical sublime a bit too far. Frye has said the days of such criticism are over. This is so because Eliot places Blake outside of all traditions. Frye says that Eliot does not know how to read a poet like William Blake.

Allen Tate visualized polar opposites in terms of extension and intension. The middle point presented the high climax of the creative process. Some New Critics ousted history from their binary supposition. They considered the poem itself as an auto telic whole in which the images and symbols cross-referred themselves within the fabric of the poem without any contact with the outside world. The Structuralist

Movement bounced back with an opportunity and related the work of art to the social fabric and the community out of which it had arisen. When, over a period of time, this became a stereotyped practice, Deconstruction abolished this practice in favour of the death of the given and the available. They evolved reading strategies much on the line of Buddhism where one term exterminates another in an endless process. Derrida seems to outplay history rejecting the signifier-signified relationship. He brings instead the concept of the floating signifier where one mental construct opposes other in a play that never ends. The meaning continues to come and go because it is a surplus and can never be fully discovered. A viable alternative to the creation of literary form can begin with the human body itself. In Yoga Philosophy of India, there are seven plexuses. These plexuses are centres of energy (knots) in the body that have to be awakened by a process of inbreathing and outbreathing. At each of these levels, the centre in question creates its own *Mandala* or circle. The region below the anus is where the story of creation begins from. Here, the *Mandala* is constituted of the gross body. When the energy is driven upwards, we reach the *muladhar* or the base *mandala* where from the journey takes the creative writer to the heart plexuses. In such an exercise the *mandalas* mingle into, cross referred, itertextualised, subsume, and conceptualise each other in an attempt to create a superior form. The grossness of the first *mandala* is shared; it becomes thinner and subtler and subtler still. It is something like the gearbox of a car where the smaller circle leads to the bigger in a journey from the seed to the syllable. The laryngeal plexuses and the plexuses in between the two eyebrows chisel the form to a degree of refinement where the *telic* proportion of a creative being merges into the Being of God. When the female and the male triangles intersect at a point (*bindu*), the Diamond body of Buddha is created as a poem of eternal refulgence. When the *bindu* as the circle in the seed tries to seek its own fulfilment, it reaches the *parabindu*, the Center of centers. This also is depicted as the bloomy of the thousand- petalled lotus. This is the Supreme form imaginable by a creative writer. Here, there

are no mutual exclusions, oppositional polarity. The polar intensity has arisen to a point where the body has become a spiral or a cone with base having a large diameter and the top being a *bindu*. At each level there are circles and circles. One can begin at both ends. The literary text is open from all sides.

The *Mandala* theory presumes that a writer would create a circle of his destiny somehow or the other. It all depends upon where the artist locates himself in the endless journey to the imperial theme. The *bindu* is not visible from all distances and all mandalas. The latitudes and the longitudes differ as well as the artist's consciousness. The genetic modal is decidedly given by nature but the capacity to transcend is always there. Moreover, the *mandalas* are enclosed within a square. There are four entry points— East, South, West, and North beginning in a clock wise direction. The entry from the East results in the birth of the sonnets and lyrics because the East represents the sun rise and a state of passion. When the sun moves to the South, the heat reaches its climax upon the earth. The poems become longer but there are symptoms of mutual exclusivity. The dialectic is just waiting to be born. When sun moves westward, it is just about to set. The poems here become dialectical with a division in the self that shows no symptoms of cure. The sun finally disappears in the North where the epic poem finally comes into existence. The North represents a full grown *mandala* where imagination reaches its climaxical best. Eliot said of the *Bhagavad-Gita* that it is the greatest poem of the world for the simple reason that it includes every minute detail of the world of time. The *Gita* is, therefore, a cosmic poem occupying the North in our scheme of things.

Every creative writer moves upwards in an endless journey that tries to locate the origin of creation. The movement downwards is all formlessness. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* there is a tree called the *Ashwattha tree* whose branches are below and roots above. That is the perfect end of the teleology of the literary form. Metonymy and synecdoche supplement and complement each other and *Derridean play*

is *Gita's lila*. A literary work of art should generate the belief that God has come in the formal construct of image & symbol and that the syntax is the breathing space where eternity lives.

Dystopia, Waste and the Decadent Sublime in Contemporary Culture

**Pramod K Nayar*

Dystopia, one could argue, is the landscape of waste, wasted homes, cities, bodies and culture. In such texts dystopia is inevitable because its origins are ontological rather than metaphysical (Zaki 1990). It cannot, writes Stephen King in his apocalyptic *The Stand*, be otherwise or attributed to metaphysical causes: 'That wasn't any act of God. That was an act of pure human fuckery'. That is, the dystopia is the result of clear *human* civilizational processes, material culture and behaviour (mostly) or environmental factors. Dystopia narratives rely on extrapolation, speculating on how present trends in human society, if continued, could result in the breakdown of that society, destruction and chaos.

This essay theorizes an aesthetic visible in dystopian texts, one that I term, following Jenifer Presto (2011), the decadent sublime.

The decadent sublime does not elevate, unlike the traditional sublime. Rather, it 'brings modern individuals, who are intent on divorcing themselves from their earthly origins, back to earth in a downward vector that is decadent in the primary sense of the word, which is derived from the Latin *de-* and *cadere* meaning "to fall down" (Presto 2011). This sublime is one of global catastrophic collapse, of boundariless pollution and infection, of incomprehensible destruction and degeneration. Jenifer Presto writes of the decadent sublime that unlike the traditional sublime, this does not elevate but rather 'brings modern individuals, who are intent on divorcing themselves from their earthly origins,

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back to earth' (578). Presto continues:

modern individuals are able to employ the advancements of science and technology to elevate themselves above the earth, this mechanical elevation is, unlike the mental uplift discussed by Kant, powerless to counteract the contagious effects the earth has on people; it only serves to provide them with a celestial vantage point from which to look down upon the earthly destruction. (578)

The dystopian cultural imaginary, the essay proposes, works through an aesthetics of the decadent sublime in three principal domains, all centred around the theme of waste, wasting and degeneration.

Waste, writes Susan Signe Morrison, 'has meant desolation, pointlessness, and uselessness, but also excess and surplus' (2015: 8). It is 'is always material (first) and figurative and metaphoric (second)' (8). Waste is historically and culturally specific, and is matter produced through certain processes. Dystopian texts, more than any other, are built around the theme of waste.

First, the landscape is rendered a wasteland with extensive warfare, climate change, pollution and infection, all caused by the human hand. Second, there is the global degeneration of the human form – through disease and various kinds of contamination. Decaying bodies that have lost their essential coherence and key human features populate this decadent sublime. Third, there is clear cultural decay when the humaneness of global humanity disappears with the erosion of altruism, compassion and rational thinking.

I treat waste in and wasting away into polluted lands, zombies and cultural decay in texts like *The Book of Eli*, *World War Z*, *28 Days Later*, *Invasion*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *I Am Legend* (films), Stephen King (popular fiction), Octavia Butler (literary fiction), Edward Burtyns' photographs of toxic waste and industrial areas, as instantiating a decadent sublime because these texts highlight the erosion of landscapes, the human body and culture itself. Like the traditional sublime,

the decadent sublime too 'is a condition in which nature not only evokes terror but also awakens the body to instincts of self-preservation' (Boetzkes 2010: 24).

Dystopian films spend considerable diegetic space and camera pans showing wasted lands. Overturned cars, empty streets and highways, abandoned homes, barren country-sides: waste is primarily emptiness, and the stoppage of function of machinery, human and animal activity (mostly), in the dystopian films. The horror of the sublime in these representations is of course to do with the limitlessness. Long shots, zoom shots and close-ups serve to focus our attention on the vast wastes of cities, the country and human civilization itself.

I propose, following the work of Gay Hawkins and Steven Muecke, that 'waste is a product of time, since it is literally an end product and the end of all living things. But it is a temporalizing effect, since the inevitability of waste is a repetitive and qualifying event ... waste itself has become a historical force; it becomes monuments to catastrophic loss' (xiv). The sublime waste is a marker, coming at the end of a teleological sequence of the modern. That is, the vast landscapes spotted with craters, empty houses and deserted cities come at the temporal end, or climax, of the 'progress' of humankind itself.

Waste has a teleology. Patricia Yaeger speaks of waste and debris: 'as vision, as violence, and as an alternate site of reading history' (106). Thus, the wasted landscapes are spaces where we can 'read' the signifiers of a particular human history. The ravaged landscape speaks the history of modernity itself in these texts.

Note the supermarkets and petrol stations in *I Am Legend*. From the supermarket with its overflowing shelves of assorted goods, signifiers of the hyperconsumptive modern, the film shows us rotting food, empty shelves and no consumers. The empty and rotting shelves come to signify the end of shopping, and shoppers: a cycle of consumption has come to an end. In *The Book of Eli* we come across this statement: 'What was it (the early 21st

century) like? People had more than they needed. We had no idea what was precious; what wasn't. We threw away things people kill each other for, now'. The quote forces us to reflect on waste: waste and wasting are about the corrosion of value. The quote suggests that human civilization had always accumulated and consumed more than it needed: thereby generating both surplus and waste. What could not be consumed, or had been consumed to the point of boredom, was thrown away. Waste is the effect of sublime, that is limitless production and consumption.

This sublime wasteland is produced, the quote from *The Book of Eli* suggests, by the regimes of financial economy and cultural economy of modern times. First, accumulation, consumption and unregulated production as a way of maximizing profits, minimizing costs and undercutting competition generates surplus, lay-offs and waste. This is the financial economy of the modern age. Second, the belief systems—the cultural economy – around production and consumption did not think in terms of regulation, ethical consumerism and conservation. The corrosion of value that leads to waste is located at the concurrence of these two economies, as the dystopian films suggest in the symbolic representations of empty stores and starving human remnants.

The decadent sublime in these cultural texts dealing with the collapse of cities is an aesthetic of collapsing values. Vast cities lie unclaimed because they are uninhabitable. Zombies and robber gangs roam the streets. The former, as in *World War Z*, *28 Days Later* and *I Am Legend*, are consumers too, in one sense: they seek sustenance and nourishment. What they consume is humanity itself in an ironic twist on the human-as-consumer. The decadent sublime suggests a virus or situation out of control, exactly like the consumerism of the modern age.

Consumption of the kind modernity grew into and practised results in the abject. The Kristevan abject – for instance, excessive food or medicine – is constitutive of the body but must be expelled in order to retain the safety of the

body and its coherence. This dystopia's decadent sublime suggests waste as an inevitable by-product of the very processes that keep humanity alive – food production, building, clothing, leisure – but a by-product that then threatens to overrun the process itself. The proliferation of the virus in the laboratory designed to contain viruses and produce medicines and antidotes to help mankind is an excellent instance of the biomedical sublime expanding into catastrophe.

Such sublime spectacles of destruction, emptiness and trash build-up in Burtynsky's photographs, argues Amanda Boetzkes, are in the tradition of landscape representation, with one crucial difference:

In replacing wild natural phenomena with plastic trash, the artist composes the landscape out of a manufactured and potentially toxic double. This waste is a far more insidious danger than nature, for it is positioned as the elemental basis of the scene and thus contaminates the very foundation of the landscape. (26)

In the place of swirling winds and the endless horizons of the ocean that make up the traditional sublime, we see in *The Book of Eli* or *I Am Legend*, swirling paper, detritus and automobiles. Nature has been replaced by the debris from and detritus of human life, industrial modernity and the so-called civilizational processes.

Patricia Yaeger proposes that we can think of 'rubbish as archive or catalogue of trauma' (105). Zygmunt Bauman in *Wasted Lives* (2004) argued that the wasting of humans and the production of waste are both integral to the processes of modernity itself. Thus the decadent sublime of wasted landscape is an aesthetic of mass *corporeal* disintegration and wasting away, of a landscape inhabited by broken or strange bodies. Ruined bodies such as Imperator Furiosa's in the post-nuclear Holocaust film *Mad Max: Fury Road* are emblematic of the wasted landscape. This wasting could be due to the rapid spread of a virulent illness as in Stephen King's *The Stand* or through the centrifugal expansion of a disease outward from infected persons. Characteristic the decadent

sublime's material degeneration is the loss of all those features that enable a human to be a person.

Degenerative tissue and bodily coherence through decay is a commonplace condition in dystopian scenarios. These are accompanied by deteriorating behaviour – such as cannibalism in zombie films – that mark the collapse of human relations and the social order. Armies of zombies in *I Am Legend*, *World War Z* represent the dehumanization of mankind. In addition to the loss of bodily coherence there is a loss of mental and intellectual autonomy as well.

Dehumanization in these cases does not have an identifiable perpetrator. Rather dehumanization is the result of a series of processes. That is, the decadent sublime whether in the form of environmental disaster or disease, serves as an indictment of a process or situation rather than a single human origin.

Ruined bodies in a ruined landscape multiply, just as waste multiplies and inundates the land. That is, the zombies or freaky monsters (*Mad Max: Fury Road*) overrunning the city in dystopian texts are emblematic of waste that overruns the useful, survival or remaining civilizational spaces of humanity. It is less waste than the *proliferation* of waste that constitutes the decadent sublime and hence the infectious disease theme in dystopian texts becomes the easiest mode of speaking of the collapse of the entire race as the humans infect one another.

The decadent sublime moves beyond eroded landscapes and corroded human bodies, for it speaks of cultural decay itself.

Waste, writes Yaeger, is 'an emblem of selves socially and economically shattered' (108). The shortage of fuel, water (Immortan Joe says in *Mad Max: Fury Road*: 'Do not become addicted to water, it will take hold of you and you will resent its absence'), medicines, food – materials of sustenance and survival – is on par in the decadent sublime with the absence of trust, faith and companionship. The collapse of the body is accompanied by the collapse of governance (or resulting in

its antinomy, totalitarianism), social relations, institutions such as religions (and maniacal cults merge in their place), families and education. Thus, the human person is rendered helpless not only because of a collapsing corporeal body but because of the erosion of the sustaining environment essential for life to go on.

Altruism, compassion, generosity collapse as humans battle for survival in increasingly unliveable settings. Yaeger speaks of 'rubbish [that] can emerge as entropy or formlessness' (109). This entropy is the erosion of the cultural values, normative codes that have determined human conduct and interrelations. The mountains of piled up junk, accumulated bodies, cars or homes are a material manifestation of the cultural entropy characterizing the decadent sublime in dystopian texts.

This cultural entropy in dystopian texts emerges most forcefully in the representations of gangs, cults and totalitarianism in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *The Book of Eli*, *Waterworld* and others. Women are selected for breeding in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and in Octavia Butler's *Parables* (*The Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *The Parable of the Talents* (1998)) series, among others. Returning the world to a pre-modern state, reversing the gains from feminism and political reform, the women are seen exclusively as reproductive devices that would serve the purpose of human rehabilitation.

Anomy spreads through society and the elements that held the order together – goodwill, sense of belonging – are now replaced in the decadent sublime by fear, loathing, selfishness and ruthlessness. Stephen King declares in *The Stand*: 'Love didn't grow very well in a place where there was only fear'.

The community in the dystopian text is marked, most often, by tyrannical gang leaders and the pervasive sense of fear under which the survivors lead their lives. In the decadent sublime of wasted landscapes communities are forged out of survival needs. However, the brutality *within*

communities in these texts manifests in regular violence. Octavia Butler's fiction, particularly the *Parables*, is a good example. Peter Stillman writing about Butler's fiction argues:

walled communities remain defensive alliances of independent families each with its own private property, each distrustful of others who are different, each making ends meet with whatever job can be found, and all held together by fear of outsiders such as thieves, gangs, and corrupt police ... These communities were born of dreams of stability, security, property, and family; but they end up as small dystopias, collections of individuals and families increasingly endangered by the outside world. (2003: 19)

In every dystopian text we see the above phenomenon: communities building walls and security systems as a way of surviving in a world given to pillage, rape and violence. Mad Max's words summarise this decadent sublime of a dystopian future world:

My name is Max. My world is fire. And blood. Once, I was a cop; a road warrior searching for a righteous cause. As the world fell, each of us in our own way was broken. It was hard to know who was more crazy. Me... or everyone else. Here they come again. Worming their way into the black matter of my brain. I told myself... they cannot touch me. They are all dead. I am the one who runs from both the living and the dead. Hunted by scavengers. Haunted by those I could not protect. So I exist in this Wasteland. A man reduced to a single instinct: survive. (*Mad Max: Fury Road*)

Conclusion

The sublime, as we know, is marked by epistemological uncertainty, and the dystopian cultural texts spend considerable diegetic space pondering over causes, sequence of events and possible solutions. The decadent sublime then,

as Neil Hertz (1985) argued about the sublime in general, is an obstacle to be overcome. The decadent sublime becomes, then, the context to speculate on humanity's resources to survive and the resilience of the race as a whole.

The ruin is the space from which regeneration and redemption are possible. This could take the form of a blade of grass, soil, medical antidote or the resurgence of faith in the form of messianic heroes (Eli in *The Book of Eli*). The return (very often) to pre-modern faiths, rebuilding the civilization from scratch is meant to indicate not just a triumph over the sublime (indeed it is arguable if there is such a triumph at all) but over the conditions that produced the decadent sublime: capitalism (seen most clearly in texts by Octavia Butler), loss of faith, amoral cultures, hyperconsumption, excessive individualism among others. That is, the decadent sublime becomes the starting point for the redemption of the human race from within the ruins.

If the decadent sublime is an aesthetic of collapsed and collapsing civilization and the concomitant accumulation of waste, it is also an alternate history of the modern age, as noted above. Extending this argument I conclude with a reading of the decadent sublime as linked not to topos alone (dystopia, as an inverted utopia, is about a place, about topos, dys-topia), but to time as well.

The decadent sublime by extrapolating conspicuous consumption into the future sets up not simply a *place* where values have collapsed but a *time* when the present modes of valuation generate waste and proliferating waste. If utopia is a *not-place* (etymologically utopia comes from eu-topia, or not-place), and dystopia a *bad place*, then we might think of a *not-when* or uchronia (Sargent 1994) as well. The uchronia represents a fictional time in *our* world. That is, uchronia is our present-day world given to conspicuous consumption, violence and exploitation in a fictional time-period. The decadent sublime doesn't always change the place – earth, the city, suburbia – into dystopia but suggests that this same place might look different in a different time, a no-time rather than a no-place.

Waste is matter turning to excess over *time* in the decadent sublime's representation of the earth's future in most of the texts considered in the course of the essay. By expanding the temporal frame to include the future and by suggesting that the patterns of behaviour of today might generate the violence and deprivation of tomorrow, uchronian texts situate a state of affairs that are the culmination of present-day actions in an uncertain tomorrow. Thus, the dystopia is not a set of new processes or events or even behaviour: the dystopia is today's behaviour in a world that has changed, sometime in the future, precisely due to these same human actions and behaviour. This is the teleological progression of an alternate kind as envisaged by Patricia Yaeger in her work on waste discourses: waste and wasting are uchronian in dystopian works. Waste does not raise a question of *where* (as in wastes will accumulate where?) but when, as in wastes will accumulate *when*.

If sci-fi, especially the hard-core variety (and often close to dystopian fiction), works within the realm of scientific plausibility, then uchronian works with social plausibility. This includes the madness of nuclearization, climate change due to human actions, pollution due to man-made industrialization, hyperconsumption, all of which are plausible socially, given the social order today. In other words the texts discussed here are not simply dystopian but uchronian in that they see the world of today achieving and attaining the decadent sublime state *one day*.

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The Poetic Talent of T. Vasudeva Reddy: A Critique

**Pashupati Jha*

Indian critics are always a little too cautious in appreciating the emergence of a new poet; so they go on harping the qualities of old masters from Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, Shiv K. Kumar, Jayant Mahapatra, A.K.Ramanujan, R. Parthasarathy, Pritish Nandy, to K. N. Daruwalla, and so on. There is no harm in highlighting the virtues of these established poets, but it is harmful for the further growth of Indian English Poetry to ignore the new talents, who may have matching, or at times even superior, qualities. Muse is always in look for fresh creative talents; it is the sacred duty of literary critics and scholars to welcome their talent, analyze their poems without prejudice, encourage research on them, and place them in a proper perspective. While in the Western mindset, hierarchy has long been replaced by merit, it has, unfortunately, yet to take place in India, where feudal attitude is still dominant over democratic temper. It is precisely for this reason that new talents like Charu Sheel Singh, Rukmini Bhaya Nair, Niranjana Mohanty, Bibhu Padhi, Lakshmi Kannan, T. Vasudeva Reddy, Prabhanjan Kumar Mishra, Tabish Khair, Gopal Lahiri, Ranu Uniyal, Nandini Sahu, and many similar others are not given proper space that they richly deserve. This tilted trend of focusing on a very fortunate few alone most of the time, is a highly pernicious practice pursued by the high-brow, self-proclaimed, and exclusive critics.

The first quality of a literary critic is to have a wide, liberal taste and unbiased attitude that automatically allows

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him to see the unseen by locating merit in even the remotest of places. I am reminded here of Thomas Gray:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
 The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

If such gems of poetic genius are always left in the lurch, it would be a great loss to Indian English poetry. Poet-editors, like D.C. Chambial, Pronab Kumar Majumder, Binod Mishra, C.L. Khatri, Anil K. Sharma, Chandra Mouli, and Vivekanand Jha, have done a lot to encourage new talents and bring good poems from the dungeon of oblivion to public light. Academic-poets and creative writers, like R.K. Singh, Charu Sheel Singh, B.S. Naikar, and Dalip Khetarpal have also added their creative persuasion to push many a shy, hesitant poets ahead. But, on the whole, the poetic-critical scenario in our country is far from satisfactory. It is in this context that I am persuaded to write on the poetic talent of T. Vasudeva Reddy, who has written so far ten poetry collections, two novels, many critical books and essays and, even in his seventies, is still writing with gusto. Yet, he has been largely left unheard, unknown, unsung.

T. Vasudeva Reddy was born in 1943 in a village near famous temple town of Tirupati. So, Nature, serenity of religion, and sincerity of aim and action come naturally to him. An academic and prolific writer, Reddy has retired as Principal of a Postgraduate College, with the Best Teacher Award from Andhra Government, and prestigious National Fellowship of the University Grants Commission. He is also a recipient of Michael Madhusudan Academy Award for his poetry. Born and brought up in rural surrounding, he captures the village scene, with all its pathos, quite graphically in "Women of the Village." Their endurance, hope, and patience come to the fore very poignantly in these lines:

Beneath the pale peepal tree
 by the fast drying pond
 in the double roasted hamlet
 women stand like expiring candles...

weaving desires in the plaits
of their cobra-long hair
they carry pots of sweat
covering staring breasts....(SFTS 153)

Here, sharp and effective poetic expressions like "double roasted hamlet," "expiring candles," "pots of sweat," "cobra-long hair," "staring breasts" are highly suggestive, speaking volumes for the poetic maturity of T.V. Reddy. There is striking resemblance, too, with the remarkable poem "Indian Women" by Shiv K. Kumar. The pervasive passivity of Indian women waiting endlessly for their males is brought to the fore very tellingly in both the poems. "Tattooed thighs" in Kumar and "staring breasts" in Reddy go for sensuous appeal of the women. Yet, the alien reference to Mississippi river in Shiv K Kumar, probably because of his education and stay abroad, makes all the difference. Reddy, educated in India, compares the long tress of village women to black cobra, pointing both to the sensuous and symbolic appeal of snake, which, mythologically and psychologically, relates it to carnal desire as well as to the possible pernicious outcome of such a passion. No such reference is possible in Kumar's poem except the meandering current of the big Mississippi indicating perhaps the long curls of the Indian women. To me, while the "Indian Women" of Kumar is intellectually conceived and written with all poetic ambience, "Women of the Village" by Reddy is more realistically drawn and written with an emotional touch. How wonderfully Reddy can transform the natural scenery into living, vibrating life can be seen and felt in many of his poems. In one of his thousand haikus, he tersely and passionately describes the first flush of love on the face of the beloved: "A bride's blush—/ a parrot's biting kiss fresh/ on the guava fruit." (THP 9). Only a poet living in the lap of Nature can capture such a scene. Similarly sensuous is his depiction of the natural topography of the Kalyani Dam in the poem of the same name. He looks at the dam as a passive beloved caressed and kissed by the passionate lover—the waves dashing incessantly against its body;

Veiled by green foliage
 teak trees and tamarind trunks
 the thorny waters roar
 and rape the rocky banks;
 fiercely caressing
 the frigid stones... (Majumder 2, 383)

Quoted lines of Reddy are remarkable; he uses highly suggestive imagery to denote physical passion. Without titillation of any type, he symbolically says a lot about the aggressive passion of water, while the dam—the woman, giver of life—suffers the brutish male rage. Like his village woman, the Kalyani Dam is depicted here as both the sufferer and the creator/preserver of life. This passionate male aggression is carried further in the poem in such intense and brief expression as: “seminal cataract gushes/ into rocky crevices/ of craggy cliffs”. Thus, the victim-victor reference of the first stanza is aptly extended into the subsequent lines.

This mingling of beauty of Nature with that of carnal desire is again present in Reddy's “A Drop of Rain:”

I relish the primitive smell of earth
 and its taste fresh, dry or damp,
 the intoxicating breath of rain
 that kisses the thirsty earthen cheeks. (Krishnan
 147)

The Nature of Reddy has a Keatsian sensuousness couched in bare simplicity. At times, he dramatically contrasts music of Nature with the unpleasant noise, indicating both sides of the coin; with more emphasis, of course, on the sublime side. In the poem quoted above, he talks of “whispering rustle of leaves” side by side with “hissing whistle of the wind,” and the “distracting choric song of the frogs.” Thus, his keen observation of Nature seems akin to both Keats and Wordsworth. He is charmed by the enchanting beauty and sensuousness of it all. In one of his haikus, he is just overwhelmed by the naked beauty of Nature:

Nude, lush green garden
 Feels fresh, slim, shy and sensuous—
 Fairest Eve in Eden. (THP 17)

An intermixture of assonance and alliteration provides unique music to Reddy's poems. So close is his observation that he notices birds and their activities in the background of Nature and transforms them in brief but pointed poetic expressions:

On trees bird sing
in the backdrop of green foliage;
Songs greet the spring...
Echoes of koel's note
Fruits of melody of the full throat...
Little sparrows dance
basking in morning sunlight;
innocence is in trance. (THP 111)

Growing age and the surrounding squalor in society have made Reddy sad and pensive. He is disenchanted with the corruption, selfishness, cruelty, and profanity that he finds everywhere. His sensitive poetic soul feels the agony of tormenting time: "Reality sleeps, / Justice yawns and snores; / the widow weeps" (THP 13). Reddy, who lived his long, academic life amid books, is quite frustrated to see libraries deserted and decaying in "Mortuary of Books." It is, in fact, the decay of old aims and ideals that saddens the poet. Crass materialism has replaced the ideals enshrined in books. But he foresees a sure revolution of ideas in years ahead, when those virtues discarded now, would be resurrected from the pages of books:

Let the long forgotten angels
Wake up from torpor and resurrect,
Break the fetters and regain Paradise
May their creative spirits in fury rise
Or the setting sun may never rise. (Majumder
2,386)

In these hard, dark times, the poet feels the pinch of his own fleeting age. Although the spirit is willing, the body shows signs of the ultimate end. In these two haikus, Reddy cryptically captures the movement of time:

Birthdays march
Like lamp posts on market road
With back-breaking load.

Soon to old age we grow
 With emotional waste of youthful past;
 Life of a cawing crow. (THP 47)

Yet, the poet has a vision of creative rebirth; life ending in death, and death resurfacing in rebirth, a Hindu belief, is quite apparent in the following haiku: "Autumn arrives/
 Leaves decay to spring again/ with life, a fresh gain" (THP 34). One of the possible reasons for belief in rebirth is Reddy's final faith in God and His grace. He was born near Tirupati; so his association with religion dates back to the early phase of his life. It seems that his faith in Him has considerably grown with passing years. In "Thousand Pillars," he grieves at the destruction of the famous temple near Warangal built by the Kakatiya Kings and profanely plundered by the marauding army of Alauddin Khilji. But things of profound faith cannot be ruined like that:

Still the pillars outlive the pillage
 And cast a pensive spell
 With their intricate patterns;
 The beheaded heads gnaw our hearts.
 (Majumder1, 299)

The blending of religion with art is quite remarkable here. Like sculpted art, the words of scriptures are engraved deep in the heart of the believer; and both cannot be destroyed by the power of sword.

The craving for mental peace brings the aging poet closer to faith, and he yearns for communion with God. This alone can free him from the sinful lust that body unnaturally desires even in old age. So Reddy, eager to get rid of the temptation of flesh, become keenly conscious of his guilt that God alone can redeem. To quote from "Quest for Peace:"

Well I know my useless days are numbered;
 still my heart oscillates to pray for grace
 which alone can change my wayward ways,...
 I find neither light nor reason to gloat,
 words struggle in vain to cross the throat,
 better it is before lord to bend and bow

or I am sure to sink if I fail to repent now...(SFTS
159)

The poet, therefore, is intensely conscious of the interplay between body and soul, between the conflicting demands of flesh and spirit. Thus, in one of his haikus, he reiterates the same conclusive idea: To reach the divine/path is razor-sharp, hard and long/primordial sound and song." (THP 131)

Although a serious academic and scholar by profession, Reddy's poems are lucid, full of common images, applied in uncommon ways to make the reader see the unusual and the extraordinary in his poetics. He is not like the blind followers of Western poets, who use intricate and complex pattern in their poems, even though Indian life still is so simple compared to the Western one. Yet, they do it in India just to abrogate to themselves false glamour and glory. So when Indian poets are using English, their ethos should be Indian; their imagery, rhythmic pattern and idiomatic expression should be Indian—otherwise their poetry would lack authenticity, intimacy, and the vital factor of truth (*Satyam*). If American, Canadian, Australian poets can do so in their own individual style, why we too can't do that? We have been using English for more than one hundred fifty years now; that should give us enough confidence to use that language with all creative flexibility, without any alien, superimposed paraphernalia. T. Vasudeva Reddy belongs to this tribe, who, while writing in English, has not become an Anglophile, and yet has achieved a sufficiently high level of creativity. That is why, Prof David Kerr calls him "a real poet with a commitment to perfection." (Blurb, THP); and Dr Rosemary C. Wilkinson finds him writing "with a natural flow" (*Ibid.*). Bernard M. Jackson further notices in his poems "great perceptive insight." (161) Back home, Nissim Ezekiel has already appreciated his poetic skills: "Like a gifted sculptor, he chisels his poems with the deftness of a master craftsman" (*Ibid.*). For Dr Krishna Srinivas, Reddy is a "poet par excellence." (Quoted in Majumder2, 381). I too have found in the poems of Reddy, distilled inner essence of both secular and religious experiences written with spontaneous ease. His

brevity, apt imagery, appropriate expression, and suggestiveness are unique. It is high time now to bring him from margin to the mainstream of great Indian English poets: "For he on honey-dew hath fed/ And drunk the milk of Paradise."

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Bhisham Sahni's *Hanush* : Questioning Power Structures

* Mukesh Ranjan Verma

Bhisham Sahni, better known for his novels and short stories, has no mean achievement as a dramatist too. His plays *Hanush* (1977), *Kabira Khada Bazar Mein* (1981), *Madhavi* (1984) and *Muavaze* (1993) reveal the same social concerns, sympathy for the underdogs, keen understanding of power structures of society and humanitarian values as mark his fictional works. As a dramatist, he may not be put by drama critics in the same class as Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar and Mohan Rakesh, but in dramatising conflicting ideologies, in conveying subtle shades of emotions, in portraying characters that are both social types and living individuals and in using unadorned natural dialogues, Sahni shows a command over the medium of drama not inferior to that of any major modern Indian dramatist. His first play *Hanush* came when he had already created a name for himself in fiction writing in Hindi. Like his other plays that followed, this play also was written in Hindi. It was later translated into English by the author himself. The play deals with the life of a medieval European locksmith who with his single minded devotion and seventeen years of hard work in adverse circumstances succeeded in making the first clock for his country but who fell a victim to an authoritarian regime and conflicting interests of the power structures of the contemporary society. Around the three phases of Hanush's life - first, when he struggles through poverty, deprivation

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and failure to realize his dream of making a clock hitherto unknown to his part of the world, second, when he basks in a short-lived glory of making the clock, and third, when he lives in a dark and bitter world after being blinded at the order of the king so that he may not make another clock for someone else - the dramatist has created a complex world of personal struggle, political hierarchy and power equations. The dramatist looks at the power structure of the society he depicts from the perspective of the working class people - common artisans, attendants, workers and masses on the road. These people support Hanush in his struggle, are elated when he succeeds in making the clock and are anguished when he is blinded. However, the Municipal Corporation, governed by traders and craftsmen, behaves like a typical pillar of the power structure and competes with the church authorities and feudal lords in grabbing more power and facilities for itself. The office bearers of the Corporation try to use Hanush's achievement for creating a political space for themselves. Bhisham Sahni, with his belief in Marxist philosophy and involvement in left-wing cultural movements in India, has always been critical of these power centres and in this play he exposes the cruel machinations of these centres of power.

Being a Marxist, Sahni is fully aware of the role of money in the social and personal life of an individual. For any artist or inventor, the conflict between meeting the demands of financially supporting his family and realizing his creative dreams which also requires some kind of financial support becomes acute at one stage or the other. *Hanush* begins at this very note. Driven by the dream of making a clock, Hanush, who is an ordinary locksmith, neglects his work and thereby brings misery and poverty upon his family. When the play begins, Katya, Hanush's wife, is complaining to the Priest, Hanush's brother, that she can no longer bear the situation. When the Priest says that of late she has become quite bitter against her husband, she says:

How can a woman respect a man who cannot feed his family? He has almost given up making

locks. It is only once in a blue moon that he makes a lock or two which I go and sell in the market. The whole day long he keeps dawdling with his tools. Can a household run like this?(31)

It is not merely a question of Hanush not earning enough to meet his household expenses, Katya no longer believes in his ability to make a clock. How can an illiterate person, a mere locksmith be able to make a clock when more qualified persons have not been able to do so? The Priest asks her not to talk so disparagingly about her husband because this will shake his confidence in himself. Katya has reasons to doubt his capability:

He has been at it for the last ten years and has made no headway. What chance is there that he will succeed now? The best years of my life have been spent in listening to the pounding of his hammer. I am sorry I cannot bear it any longer. (31)

She even blames the Priest for giving the ancestral house to them because had he not done so, Hanush would have been forced to realize his responsibility towards his family and done some regular work. Now since there is a roof over their head, he has grown complacent. The Priest tries to console her with the prospect of a prosperous future:

Don't get so worked up, Katya. Hanush too is passing through a difficult phase. Once he sees some glimmer of light, some promise of success in his work, rest assured, all your worries will be over. He has only to succeed in making the clock when His Majesty will load him with riches; he may even make him his courtier. Besides, his fame will spread far and wide. Will that be a small thing? (32)

What the Priest says about future events comes out to be true, but with an ironic twist. Katya, however, is not placated by the rosy prospects of future:

I have been listening to such homilies for the

last ten years. I have had enough of them. Am I asking him for anything for myself? If there is no food in the house, how am I to feed my little daughter? Everyone keeps lecturing me. My little boy died of sheer cold. He would keep coughing all through the winter months. There wasn't enough firewood in the house to keep it warm. I would go begging for small faggots to light the fire. For six long months I held my little boy clasped to myself. Where is he now? What do I care for his clock? Have I ever asked him for anything for myself, for clothes or jewellery or anything of the sort? But which mother can bear to see her little child suffer before her eyes. (32)

We realize the truth of her statement. This has been a perennial problem for those who run after their dreams with a single minded devotion. They do not have any place in their minds for anything else. Whether they be scientists or artists or social reformers or other such people who with their endeavours seek to change the face of the world or bring glory to human mind, they go on a single track journey, oblivious of other obligations in life. Many fail to realize their goals, but both those who fail and those who succeed belong to this very kind. The burden of carrying on their domestic or social obligations falls on those close to them. Sahni brings out this fact very effectively in his play. Through Katya, he brings out the crippling effect of the absence of money in a family. Her son died before her eyes but she could not save him from life-taking cold as she had no money to buy firewood to warm up the house. Her daughter is deprived of every facility that a family generally provides its children. She no longer desires anything for herself, but the thought of her dead son and poverty-stricken daughter rends her heart. No wonder she has grown bitter and does not want her husband to continue with his dream of making a clock - something in which she has ceased to believe and even if she believes in it, she can see it clearly that her husband can ill-afford to go on with it. The refusal of the church to grant him financial help any further is the proverbial last straw for her. She accuses

Hanush of being self-centred-

Katya: You are an utterly self-centred person, who can think only of his work. It does not matter a whit to you whether we are alive or dead.

Hanush: I am not doing anything for myself, Katya. That is not being selfish.

Katya: What else is it if not selfishness? You do it either for money or for fame. If you did it for money, you wouldn't be so selfish because your money would feed the family. (49)

Katya, apart from Hanush, is the character that leaves the most powerful impact on the audience/ reader. She reveals nuances that give her character a depth. We see a different shade of her character in the second half of the play. When Hanush does succeed in making his clock, she is very happy but does not make a show of it. She is a God-fearing woman and so her only exhibition of happiness is her obeisance to the icon in her house. When Hanush becomes blind, she is agonized but she finds herself unable to help him. She, however, has started enjoying the financial security that Hanush's success brings in their life. That is why she at first does not agree to let Hanush go away from there because this would mean the end of everything they have. The idea of an unknown country and fresh start in life frightens her. Through the conversation between her and Emil, who has come to her with the suggestion that Hanush should leave the country, Sahni has brought out the dilemma in her beautifully:

Katya: Hanush is a courtier now. He is respected in the court. He lives well, eats well, wears decent clothes, we have a regular home.

Emil: Every time the Court is held, Hanush refuses to go to the Court. He gets enraged. For nights he cannot sleep. You have to coax him to go to the Court on some pretext or the other.

Katya: Slowly he will regain his mental poise. Who can fight his fate and for how long? One has to submit to it sooner or later. (84-85)

Emil tries to make her see the kind of life that Hanush is living after having been blinded. The years ahead of him have nothing but agony and grief in store for him. But as Katya refuses to budge from her stand, he accuses her bluntly of selfishness:

Emil: Don't take it ill, Katya, when I tell you that you are sacrificing blind Hanush's interests for your comforts. This is the naked truth. For the sake of your own selfish interests, you are virtually killing Hanush.

Katya: (taken aback) I never thought I would have to listen to such words one day.

Emil: I am right Katya. Having lived for a long time in privation, you are now afraid of poverty. Hanush may be suffering, but you have money and comfort in the house. Hanush is being sacrificed for this comfort. He has not provided you comfort in his younger days but he is at least doing so now as a blind man. (85)

The success of the dramatist lies in the fact that he does not draw the character of Katya with a single dimension. It makes her character more convincing when we find her clinging to her new-found comfort and security. She, however, changes once again when she realizes that it is not merely a question of Hanush getting reconciled to his affliction but a matter of life and death for him. After he tries to commit suicide by falling before the royal carriage, she realizes that he can no longer be happy in his home town as his dark life and the sound of his clock will torture him every day of his life and so she agrees to leave her home with her husband and daughter.

Katya's response to the absence of money and later to its presence in her life is understandable. It is born out of her need. Sahni attacks the greed for money in the members of the Municipal Corporation which makes them see an opportunity of making money even in somebody else's achievement. It is money as a tool and perpetuator of power that Bhisham Sahni attacks in this play as well as in his other plays, particularly, *Muavaze*. He is his ironical best in

his dialogues when he shows the businessmen in the Executive Committee of the Municipal Corporation discussing ways in which they can make money out of future projects of clock-making. They even leave the Corporation out of their scheme of making money by producing clocks and think of creating an association of clock makers among themselves and enter into an agreement with Hanush for it. It is, in fact, their idea of Hanush making more and more clocks in future that costs Hanush his eyes.

It is in regard to the issue of financial assistance to Hanush that we first encounter the conflict between power establishments. When the Blacksmith suggests that he should approach the Municipal Corporation, where traders and craftsmen are sitting, for financial help, Hanush says that he had thought of it but his brother did not approve:

Hanush: He said, the church and the corporation are at daggers drawn. The bishop hates the craftsmen. Besides, he said, the church had been giving me financial assistance, they would feel annoyed if I approached the corporation.(43)

He goes on to add that his brother says that if he annoys the church, the government too will be displeased with him. He explains to the Blacksmith that since the craftsmen are not on good terms with the landlords and since they also talk ill of the church the King is annoyed with them. At this the Blacksmith says:

That is truly like a king. A king holds a pair of scales in his hands given to him by God. If one side is heavier, he puts more weight on the other side, and brings about a balance between them. That is what is called strategy. (44)

In this play, as in his other works - both dramatic and fictional, Bhisham Sahni attacks establishments that play power games at the cost of common men and women. He also digs at the intellectuals who maintain an ivory tower attitude in the name of principles. In the play we come across references to a professor of mathematics who praises the efforts of Hanush, often advises him on technical points, and

is hopeful of the success of his enterprise. He is an eminent scholar and a well-known man whose recommendations would ease Hanush's problems considerably. But when Hanush had spoken to him about making a recommendation to the government for financial help, he had said "It is a matter of principle with me not to make recommendations".(43) Sahni is aware that this non-committal is merely a cover for the moral cowardice of the intelligentsia which hinders him from coming openly in support of the common man.

The medieval European states, like states in most part of the world at that time, were structured on three pillars of power - the monarchy, the Church and the feudal lords. These centres of power controlled the lives of common men and women in their own ways. By the Divine Right theory, the king ruled over his kingdom as the representative of God on earth. He was considered to be the supreme authority in the state. George says in the play, "Don't forget, it is the King who is supreme, he has a right over everything."(57) The Church, like any institutionalized religion anywhere in the world, catered to the spiritual needs of human beings and was supposed to be the mediator between God and man. As such, the church authorities, like religious heads elsewhere, exercised immense authority over men. But since they were not satisfied with spiritual power only, they indulged in politics as well. The king needed religious sanction for himself and so often he was not in a position to displease the religious head in his kingdom. Nonetheless, he did not want him to become too powerful. This resulted in a covert and sometimes overt struggle of power between the two. The feudal lords formed the third pillar of power in the state. Sometimes they sided with one and sometimes with the other. Bhasham Sahni introduces the traders and craftsmen as the emerging centre of power in the state. He has moved the clock a little forward in this regard, as the trading class in Europe or other parts of the world tried to seek royal favour in the fifteenth century, but not trying to compete with the church authorities or the landlords then. Sahni makes a tradesman, say:

George: . . .That's why, I say: our first priority should be to get representation in the Court. Unless and until that is done, unless and until we have a hand in the governance of the State, we shall always be at the mercy of either the Archbishop or of the Prime Minister. (57)

Sahni goes even further in time scale and makes George say:

You yourself keep saying that a businessman should be farsighted. And I can well visualize how things will be a couple of centuries later when there will be no Kings and no churches. There will only be businessmen everywhere. Girls shall marry only businessmen; men with money will have the last word in everything. (59)

The play shows the aspiration and attempt of the businessmen to play an effective role in power structure of the state. Hanush, the common man, becomes a tool in their hands and becomes a victim of this power struggle.

In the play we do not come across any active role of the feudal lords but only get references to them. When the members of the executive committee of the Municipal Corporation meet, they discuss about the growing proximity of the landlords with the Archbishop. One of them reports about a secret meeting between some landlords and the Archbishop the previous night. The craftsmen look upon the development with suspicion:

Shevchek: The landlords are again on the ascendance. They are getting closer to the Archbishop. And they do not want the craftsmen should be given any representation in the Court. They will get round the Majesty and get their demands accepted. (51)

That is the only time that we hear about the landlords. Sahni does not make any comment in this play on the role of the landed gentry in the lives of the common people. Nor does any member of that class take any part in the action of the play. It is with the church and the monarchy that the play

primarily deals with.

Being a Marxist, Sahni was opposed to the influence that any institutionalized religion exerted on the lives of the people. 15th century was a period of religious reform movements in Europe. In the play also, which is set in 15th century Czechoslovakia, though the play simply mentions medieval Europe as its background, we come across a reference to John Huss or Jan Hus, as he was known in his country, an early 15th century Czech priest, philosopher and religious reformer who was burnt on the stake for heresy. Huss was a major influence on the Protestantism that came into force later on. When Blacksmith and Emil talk irreverently about a clergyman, Katya objects and says that their minds have been vitiated by John Huss. Hanush, however, agrees with his friends:

He is not far wrong in what he has said, Katya. Haven't the church people amassed enormous wealth? Don't many of the clergymen live a dissolute life? Why should anyone point a finger at them if they led a good, pious life? And this is precisely what John Huss says. (45)

Katya's advice to them to concern themselves with their work only is a typical response of the common man who does not want to antagonise powerful men lest his own life is affected.

At several places in the play Bhisam Sahni makes fun of the clergymen. Jacob was sent to jail for three years for stealing a pig from the house of a clergyman. Emil says had he stolen from a peasant's house he would not have been punished so heavily. But we come across the most satirical remark on the church when we hear George reporting a meeting between Hanush and the Archbishop to whom he had gone to request for financial assistance:

Hanush told this to me himself a few days ago. The Archbishop had said that to make clocks was an affront to God. If God had so desired, couldn't he have made the clock too? God has created the sun, the moon, the planets. Was it difficult for him to make clocks? The sky would

have been studded with clocks. The sun and the moon are God's clocks given to man. When God himself has not made the clock, why should a man try to do so? It is blasphemy. (54)

Hanush had told the Archbishop that a clock made by man already existed and it was installed on a church in Europe. The response of the Archbishop was, "That must be a Protestant church. The Protestants are all sons of Satan." (54)

It is against the monarchy that Bhisham Sahni comes most heavily. The King presented in the play is an authoritarian, tyrannical and manipulating ruler for whom his own welfare is what matters alone. We get the first intimation of this fact through a craftsman:

Blacksmith: These are difficult times Katya. The king is nobody's friend. He pats now one and then another on the back. When he notices that craftsmen are asserting themselves, he begins to patronize the landlords and the clergy. When he finds that the church is becoming too independent, then, to clip its wings, he begins to patronize the craftsmen. Such is his strategy. (45)

The craftsmen are also aware of this fact. The play presents manoeuvring and counter-manoevring between the King and the Municipal Corporation of which the only victim is Hanush. The issue is the representation of the tradesmen and craftsmen on the Council of the King. Both the clergymen and noblemen are opposed to it. But the tradesmen are aware of their growing importance and so want to create a place in the power structure for themselves. The installation of Hanush's clock becomes a bone of contention between the church and the municipal corporation. The Archbishop wants the clock to be installed on the church whereas the tradesmen want it to be installed on the municipal hall. They are aware that if the issue goes to the king he would not dare to oppose the will of the Archbishop. Nor will it help them if they suggest that the clock should be installed at the palace. The dramatist

has brought out beautifully the attitude of the business community when they are dealing with established centres of power. While some are diffident and want that a petition should be made to the King and his permission sought before the clock is installed on the Municipal Hall, there are others who are bold and assertive. They suggest that they should go on with the installation and later on if they realise that the King is not happy they would show their willingness to shift it to some other place. When the King visits the Hall - it is his first visit to the Municipal Corporation - and shows his displeasure that his permission was not sought before installing the clock there, the tradesmen give an answer to which he could not object. They say that the clock has been installed there in honour of his visit to the Municipal Corporation and now if he wishes so it could be shifted to some other place. The King agrees that since the Corporation building is in the centre of the town, it is a suitable place for the clock.

The tradesmen use the visit of the King as an opportunity to request him for the representation of the craftsmen and tradesmen on his council. As the trade has grown manifold and is bringing much revenue to the state, so it would only be proper if the King is made aware of the difficulties faced by the businessmen of his state through their representatives in the Council. There are sixteen guilds of craftsmen and tradesmen in the state and they want eight representatives in the Council to represent two guilds each. The King is a wily person and deals with them in such a way that shows them their place. Unfortunately, the pawn which is sacrificed in this game of chess is Hanush. The King asks Hanush how long did it take to make his clock, and when Hanush says that it took seventeen years to do so, he shows his displeasure by asking why was he not informed of it. The simple and honest artisan replies that he did not know whether he would succeed in his mission or not, and till he succeeded, there was not much that he could show to anyone, let alone the King. When Hanush tells him that the Municipal Corporation helped him financially in this task, the King asks why he did

not approach him for help, knowing it fully well that a man like Hanush had no chance of approaching him. Throughout the scene the King keeps shifting his stance. Earlier he had indicated that he had no objection to the installation of the clock at the Town Hall, but suddenly he grows angry and asks why his permission was not obtained before installing the clock there. He threatens and bullies the tradesmen, making them cower before him and at the same time appeasing the Archbishop who is present there. He shows appreciation of Hanush's work and awards him a thousand gold pieces. He fixes a monthly stipend on him for looking after the clock. But his masterstroke comes after that when he announces that Hanush will enjoy the status of a Courtier and henceforth will sit in his Court. Turning to the chairman of the Municipal Corporation, he says that he has now already given representation to one of his men. He flares up when the idea of making more clocks is put before him and since he does not want that another clock should be made, he decrees that Hanush be deprived of both his eyes. A stunned Hanush keeps begging for his mercy but he only puts salt to the injury when he instructs that even while carrying out his order, Hanush should be treated respectfully as he is his courtier.

The agony of the blind Hanush raises him to the level of a tragic character. He now wants to destroy his clock but his blindness has made him helpless even in this regard. When men on the street show their love for him and express their heartfelt sympathy for his condition, he finds his life all the more unbearable. He tries to commit suicide but fails even in that. The transformation shown by the dramatist of a simple hearted ironsmith possessed by a desire of making a clock to a bitter, blind courtier is convincing and does not reveal any false note. So he succeeds in eliciting our sympathy for the protagonist completely. Hanush reaches a tragic grandeur as the creator in him is awakened once again when he is face to face with his clock in the last scene of the play. As the clock stops working he is summoned by the officers of the King to set the clock right. Hanush laughs at the irony of the

situation. He goes there with the intention of smashing his clock, but as soon as he touches the clock, a tremor runs through his body. He once again becomes the creator of the clock. After a few days of sustained work, he succeeds in making his clock chime again. He says to Katya about a simple man who was sent to help him, some blacksmith:

He said to me 'How can you be angry with the clock, Hanush, it's you who have made it? How can one break something that one has made?' As I listened to him, Katya, I began to feel ashamed of myself. I felt that I was a very small man. I had not made the clock for myself, isn't that so Katya? Once it was made, it belonged to everyone. (98)

Hanush is now a man at peace with himself. He is not afraid of death when he is arrested and taken to the King on the charge of treason.

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From Common to Classic: A Proposition for Popular Literature

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"Popular literature includes those writings intended for the masses and those that find favour with large audiences. It can be distinguished from artistic literature in that it is designed primarily to entertain", states the *Encyclopedia Britannica* on the construct of Popular Literature. Romance, fantasy, science fiction, detective story, murder mystery, comic books and cartoon strips make different genres in popular literature. The craze for Popular literature is gaining momentum today. Many factors contribute to its popularity, ranging from the stereotyped patterning of life to the burgeoning complexities in the psycho-social trajectories of thoughts. On the scope of Fantasy literature, which is a representative form of popular literature, Anna Czarowus writes, "Fantastic or fantasy texts ...are not only set in some other world, but may also comprise an intricate structure of worlds and of their inhabitants other than the central alternative one." (Czarowus, 95)

In the contemporary literary scenario which is seen under the impression of cyberspace, globalization, and postmodernism, many times, popular literature has seen a trend of overlapping with the artistic and classic literature. Different socio-economic factors stand responsible for this trend. Popular literature takes the readers to an imaginary habitat in the world of fantasy. The audience easily associates with the new world because, to quote Rachel La Bozetta, "status, class and power are as prevalent in our world as

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they are in the wizarding (imaginary) world, and they are always in which society can be divided." (LaBozetta, 12). In the current state of affairs, the line between the real and the imaginary is getting thinner. Emerging complexities of human life in global village, the cyber tribe spreading beyond the boundaries of states, different fancies and phantasms emanating out of it, effects of different neo patterns of colonization, and the prevailing rivalry between the acknowledged history and the emerging histories are preparing such a mindset which finds pleasure, relief and sojourn in the world of imagination. We can call it a phase of romantic dallying or wilful escapism. This socio-cultural web helps a reader associating with the trajectories of the new locations.

The present paper focuses on the process that takes place in making popular literature (common literature) a classic. Now, it is an accepted fact that fantasy literature like comics, traditionally treated as junk literature or light writing, has started asserting its existence in serious literary discourses. Mc Cloud defines comics as: "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequences intended to convey information or/and to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer." (Understanding, 9). Citing Hillary Chute, we can say that it is "as a hybrid word-and-image form in which two narrative tracks, one verbal and one visual, register temporality spatially. Comics move forward in time through the space of the page, through its progressive counter point of presence and absence: packed panels (also called frames) alternating with gutters (empty space)" (Chute, 452). Hillary further writes, "highly textured in its narrative scaffolding, comic doesn't blend the visual and the verbal? or use one simply to illustrate the other? but is rather prone to present the two non-synchronously; a reader of comics not only fills in the gaps between panels but also works with the often disjunctive back-and-forth of reading and looking for meaning."(Chute, 452)

The cardinal patterns of humour, adventure, substance and representation make the entry of comics in the adult

world besides their role in the general target group, i.e. the young readers. In a way, the comics have bifocal motives and their impact becomes prismatic. Different groups of readers find varied subjective utility across the pages of comics. Cogent presentation, popular themes, and a *sui-generis* appeal in the personality of the central character of the texts in this genre, make it a significant artefact of popular culture. In the 'fever and fret' of modern life, when we seldom have time to 'stand and wait' and 'share and care' the imaginary world of comics becomes fascinating. Here, an adult reader gets fascinated to reliving the childhood buoyancy, where s/he could shed off all the worries and visions. Comics come closer to the heart in such a mind set. In this context I want to introduce the Discworld comics that have received warm welcome by the readers of various age groups. With a modest beginning as popular literature, the Discworld Comics have attained the status of classical literature.

Sir Terence David John, popularly known as "Terry" Pratchett, is the creator of Discworld comics. The impact of H. G. Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, P.G. Wodehouse, Tom Sharpe, Jerome K. Jerome, Roy Lewis, G. K. Chesterton and Mark Twain etc. is visible on Pratchett's writing. Pratchett in his personal life, feels great attraction towards computers, video games, natural history, astronomy and crime fiction. This fascination has prepared a fertile ground to him for writing the comics in the Disc World Series. *The Colour of Magic* (1983) is the first comics in the series, finally making a score of 41 primary texts. Several secondary and related stories also emanate out of it. *The Color of Magic, Soul Music, Lords and Ladies, Thief of Time, Men at Arms, Interesting Times, Guards! Guards! Wyrd Sisters, Small Gods* and *Mort* are the most popular and the most representative works amongst the comics in the series.

The *locale* of these comics is the Discworld universe which is an imaginary land. The Discworld is a giant disc, fixing its base on the backs of four huge elephants. Great A' Tuin, a turtle swimming in the space, gives support to these elephants.

The setting of these comics shows a cogent synchronization with the development of the Discworld. They seem to keep an account of the world's origin and development. Since various religious myths, across the continents, have shown the references of the earth's base, a reader establishes a familiar association with the Discworld set up with a very little effort.

On the one hand, the Discworld comics present the common artefacts of fantasy that are, in main, the fairy tales, witches, vampire religion, small gods etc., and take the reader to a world of fantasy and imagination, and on the other, these texts are capable to move even a serious reader to apply the tenets of critical thinking, humanism, postmodernism, uncanny and many more tools for decoding the secrets and symbols. The Discworld accommodates a galaxy of characters ranging from Wizard, Death, a pale horse, named Binky, the principal witch, her associate, apprentice witches, a professional criminal, Assassins, Death-associated characters, Dwarfs, Gnomes, Gods, golems, monks, undead and many more. They represent almost every shade of human existence, life and action. Although many plots proliferate in different auxiliary texts of this series yet everything happens in the same imaginary locale, the Discworld. It is the creation of this imaginary locale that makes difference, and carries the common reader to a trance like situation.

On the importance and process of creating an imaginary/fantasy/secondary world, JRR Tolkien, a legend in the field of fantasy literature, has to say that "to make a secondary world inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary Belief, will probably require labour and thought, and will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of elvish craft (Tolkien, 6). Terry Pratchett stands titan in this act, and fulfils different ideal conditions set for it.

The user friendly writing style by using footnotes and parody especially in case of the early Discworld comics, and satirical tone, puns, allusions and cultural references, sometimes dialogues in capital letters and no quotation marks,

make greater readability of these works. For creating special effects, the author shows his own inventions like 'ohtarine', which is a 'fluorescent greenish-yellow-purple' colour. 'Ohtarine' becomes a colour of magic.

Emerging as classic in the genre concerned, the Discworld comics have received a warm welcome in the popular culture(s) as well. The advertising sector, cinema, TV series and media industries have worked and reworked on the comics in this series. These comics have inspired the making of many theme parks across the globe, creation of videogames like *Discworld MUD* (multi-user dungeon), production of a music album titled *From The Discworld* (1994), and a number of radio, television and cinema adaptation. In a way, crossing the genre of the popular literature, the comics in this series have come into the main stream literature. Now a question arises, how this journey takes place? I mean the journey from the common to the classic. It is the enchanting craft of the author which helps any literary work in transcending its general stature towards becoming a classic. The skilled professionals in this art bring such a readability and content into the texts which attract the interests of the readers of every age group.

During the course of the present research work, I conducted a survey on 100 adult readers. During the survey, I asked, the respondents a question; "what fascinates the adult readers to read a fantasy literature or comics? Many responses were recorded. Out of these, the answers of more than 60% respondents covered the following four points:

- i. Because the adult world is too real, and reality at times is too harsh. The world of comics and fantasy gives a sojourn.
- ii. The adults, at times, get tired of the monotonous life. In fantasy, they find a safe escape.
- iii. The world of fantasy and comics provides innovative trajectories of hope.
- iv. Comics, that are fantasy in illustration, evoke the senses in much better way.

While accepting the Carnegie Medal for his Discworld Comics,

Pratchett has defended the genre of fantasy saying that, “fantasy isn’t just about wizards and silly wands. It’s about seeing the world from new directions” and this conviction has led to the making of his world of disc world series comics. It is the illusory likeness of the Discworld which should be given credit for winning the respect of a classic for it. By his writing, Pratchett has created a phantasm, and if we consider the statement of Michael Naas, on the power of phantasm, we can have a clue to say why the Discworld has gained entry in the world of classics. Naas writes that:

(Phantasm) does not exist but that we believe exists. A phantasm that would be nothing other than a belief in a phenomenon that transcends itself, that spontaneously gives rise to itself – like an Immaculate Conception. For in any consideration of the phantasm, one must be interested less in the ontological status of the phantasm than in its staying power, its returning power, I would be tempted to say its regenerative power. In a word, one must be interested in the fact that, to cite an English idiom, the phantasm has “legs” (Naas,6).

In the evolution of a popular writing towards being a classic or artistic literature, in my view, there are five steps, suggested as follows:

Step 1: Reader’s Interface with Popular Literature.

Step 2: Association with the Parallel Habitat-Adaptation

Step 3: Romancing the text (State of Addiction and Enchantment)

Step 4: Beloved Syndrome (Persistence of vision)

Step 5: State of Trance (Calling it Classic)

In this process, initially a reader interfaces a work of comics/fantasy taking it from the common (popular) literary sector. On the milieu of fantasy writing, Eric S. Rabkin has to say that, “fantastic worlds, when we first enter them, whether

with the sigh of relief or the gasp of terror, come alive for us as alternatives to the real world. The real world is a murky place where dust accumulates and people die for no good reason, and crime often pays and true love does not conquer much. (Rabkin,3). The reader gets engrossed into the imaginary world of fantasy in comics, and establishes an association with the parallel habitat suggested by the popular text in question.

On the construct of the alternative world, Rabkin says that these are "not merely different from our own, but alternative to our own. "Fantastic worlds-perhaps paradoxically –are defined for us, and are of interest to us by virtue of their relationship to the real world we imagine to have been thought normal when the story was composed.... Read as response to the real world, fantastic worlds take a great significance". (Rabkin, 4).

Many works of fantasy do not stand the tests at this phase. The strength and charm of the Step Two (Association with the Parallel Habitat- Adaptation) takes the reader to the phase of Romancing. During the romantic dallying with the text, the reader reaches the state of addiction and enchantment, and here germinates the Beloved Syndrome. In general image, a beloved stands flawless to the counterpart. A lover seldom sees faults in the partner in love. Such a perception makes difference, and the common writing becomes unparallel. In Derridian terms of phenomenology, and phenomenology of perception, we find that it becomes a fascinating point, "and contrary to what phenomenology, which is always the phenomenology of perception, has tried to make us believe, *contrary to what our desire cannot fail to be tempted into believing*, the thing itself always escapes" (104 emph. mine).

The state of addiction and enchantment is a dream like situation. In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004), Albus Dumbledore says, "in dreams, we enter a world that's entirely our own." The reader, thus, develops the persistency of eye vision, and later on, he cannot compromise

in calling it something less than a classic which is reaching the state of classical trance.

It is the heightened level of the author's skill that makes the secondary world (the world of fantasy) enchanting and life like. Anna Czarnowus cautions on it, "not only should the secondary worlds be invented imaginatively but they should also be made believably by their author so that the audience can succumb to the illusion that the worlds actually exist somewhere. The worlds would thus be secondary by name only, since when you enter them you are made to feel that they are no less real than your primary reality." (Czarnowus, 96).

Pratchett's writing easily completes the journey from Step One to Step Five. He is one of the bestselling authors, by selling more than 85 million books worldwide. Their translation in more than 37 languages, with many adaptations and productions, stands testimony to it.

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**Specimens of Authentic Literature :
Developing Communicative
Competence for ESL Teaching**

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Teaching language for communicative competence needs the skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking; and the development of language areas like vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation through the literary texts. Literature is taught as an authentic material for cultural awareness, language embellishment and personal involvement in life with the suggestive and associative meaning-possibilities of the language. Apart from poetry, drama, fiction and non-fiction as literary texts there are many real life contexts, and settings in travel timetables, city plans, forms, pamphlets, cartoons, advertisements, newspapers or magazine articles. But to enhance the language learning through literary awareness both language and literature transmit the message and motivate the learners to interact with the texts and provide adequate pedagogic outcome in content and form. Language teachers both as language investigators and language entrepreneurs believe that language develops knowledge for the evaluation of literature in its linguistic opulence and communicative competence. In this regard literature-specific syllabus in educational curriculum helps to design the activities based on materials capable of stimulating greater interest and involvement of the learners.

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Introduction

Language teaching through literature as a practice is an enjoyable experience for every linguistic community all over the world. Literature may be oral or written, but language production in either case is a spontaneous process. The popularity, propensity and prominence of any language lends to its rich exploitation in literature. While literature involves imagination to understand the reality of life and existence, language learning through the use of literary texts makes appreciation of literature better by strengthening the skills of the language learnt. This is due to increased access to functional use of language that helps in laying bare the beauty of literature. When in language classes certain literary texts of poems, novels, plays, short stories etc are prescribed, the reality of life is understood making the language - vocabulary and structures - in use provide a joyful experience. The Teaching of English as Second Language (TESL) or Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) programmes in the background of teaching English and training of English teachers is a matter of pedagogy decided by the language teachers to help learners grow familiar with the areas and genres of literature. This process of teaching language through literature is to have focus on the basic skills like – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW); and basic language areas like – vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation to make the readers grasp the underlying benefits of doing literature.

Authentic literary texts as source materials for language curriculum on English instruction have been gaining currency in the present context of English language instruction to use more and more of literature in language classes. Language educators not only incorporate literature for ESL/EFL instruction and for the benefit of the students but also use it for the “flourishing of interesting ideas, learning, and improved instruction for all” (Sage 1). For proficiency in English, “language teachers prefer literature the most as the viable media to provide linguistic opportunities to the

language learners through designed activities based on the material to stimulate greater interest and ensure involvement of learners" (Carter and Long 3). Language is used as a stimulus for interaction under the communicative approach to language teaching. The importance of language teaching through literature becomes self-evident as the literary texts yield to the attainment of higher levels of language skills and communicative competence in different language activities.

Literature as Authentic Material

Literature teaching is primarily language teaching. Teaching of poetry, drama, novel and short fiction makes the readers familiar with the underlying reasons and criteria for language teachers. It benefits different language skills when the teacher needs to improvise the understanding of literary texts in the classrooms at the time of teaching. In the language classroom, language teacher should use the literary texts of different genres to teach language skills with the practice of lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and stylistic knowledge. In class room method of teaching foreign language, the teacher uses literary texts as – valuable authentic material for language enrichment and enrichment of understanding. Apart from this universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, and suggestive power, and ambiguity factors in literature become the powerful source materials for understanding language. Any form of literature that represents real life can be authentic materials which become helpful for the primary purpose of teaching language. But many authentic real-life contexts which are found in travel time-tables, city plans, pamphlets, advertisements, cartoons, newspapers and magazine articles can be included within language course materials to teach and enrich the actual language samples of real-life. Since literature reflects real life experiences, this can be used as authentic materials for the exposition of different linguistic forms, communicative forms and meanings. Literary texts

not only help in the attainment of higher levels of language skills but also make language acquisition more effective.

Teaching language through literature develops communicative competence as well as language activity. Since literature is constituted by language and it represents one of the most recurrent uses of language “the linguistic analysis and its access to literature makes it an ally of language” (Brumfit and Carter 1). But when the language teacher teaches a literary text with “the illustrations of grammatical rules” (Duff and Maley 3) in method and form the reader loses his/her literary interest in content. For transmitting the message in literature the learner takes language of the text as a means of communication. Literature is discredited as a tool for the structural approach to language teaching. Although it is difficult to establish communicative activity through literary texts the learners still become able to use the high concentration of linguistic features like metaphors, similes, poetic lexis, and use of language in nursery rhymes, proverbs, publicity, slogans and in certain incidents.

Understanding Literature through Language Skills

Literature communicates ideas, thoughts, beliefs, understanding, emotions, feelings and anxieties through the language. The readers in their personal involvement foster a habit to develop, share, and reciprocate their emotional responses. For this literature has a beneficial effect on the reader in his language learning process. Literature and language learning involve the development of a feeling for language or responses to texts with expectations, interests, and needs. The language learners develop their strategies to the receptive cognition of language through productive skills of communication.

The purpose of language is to fulfill the purposes of the learner in his learning and perceiving. Even in the age of information technology, globalization and international

communication the study of language through literature provides learner's competence, performance and motivation. Modern studies in linguistics, especially in sociolinguistics show that learning culture through literature is an influential factor in international communication. Language variety and syntactic patterns in the domain of literature serve on many ways to the literary devices like metaphor, structural ambiguity, alliteration, semantic density and some phonological patterns that create an atmosphere of meaning through their subtle usages. Literature as "an ally of language" in communicative approach illustrates grammar, lexical items and authentic examples of language use.

Teaching Language in Literature Classroom

The reader of a literary text should not neglect its functional methods like structural approach to language, communicative function, and learning of authentic language samples. In language teaching the learner waits for authentic samples of language that serve the social communicative function at the appropriate situation. In communicative approach between the teacher and students the use of literary texts in the classroom helps to earn the knowledge of literary use of language, and its characteristic use to generate different opinions among the learners in multiple interpretations and cultural information. When literature becomes active, autonomous, and central to the learning process the literary text becomes the central focus of attention. In classroom teaching literary text establishes learner's relation to the real world language in its methodological understanding which stimulates linguistic activities, and provokes and motivates the learners in their personal experience.

In literary understanding, discourse and perspective texts play the pivotal role in developing language learning abilities through different linguistic clues. When literature is used for language learning abilities it is understood in a sensible and effective way. Literature provides language learners the possibilities of usages and language competence

through the reading of the texts. Literary texts provide language material in its varied ways not inside the classroom but for the learner's emotional responses in social interactions. But through the reading skills and listening comprehension "language materials are used for deducing the meaning and use of familiar lexical items and understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances" (Grellet 4-5). Through its meaningful expressions, semantic density, density of allusions, ambiguities in social and palpable realities literature develops language-learning abilities and involves stimulating and enjoyable linguistic communication. Since the subject matter of literary discourse is authentic for focusing social and palpable realities in prescribed, mechanical and standard word pictures literary texts are used to learn language in real life situations and communicate them with the fluidity of expression. The use of literature to teach language contributes to a better linguistic understanding, a development of creative skills, and a higher language proficiency which further contributes to literary appreciation (Ramsaran 42). For motivating the language learners language teachers use literature as a strong motivating power on personal experience.

Literature is useful for Language Learning

Literature provides subject matter with the power to motivate learners and help them in exploring the possibilities of usages and meanings that enhance their language competence. Literature provides real feelings to generate powerful motivation in the class-room for richer language learning and reinforcing messages. It generates feeling among the learners through words, grammatical forms and usages of language. Literature provides a wide range of language structures which the language learners use in the mechanical responses of language for the understanding, responding and enhancing of thought. As language is power and power cannot be asserted or impressed if it is not effectual. The contextualized body of a literary text becomes a vehicle

to perceive the richness and diversity of the language. The selection of a literary text in relation to enhancing the language level becomes evident as a potent resource for sharing emotional responses.

The selection of the literary texts for language classes is needed on the basis of language level to motivate the interest of the learners and elicit strong, positive and personal reactions. When the literary text becomes useful for language learners' linguistic and extra linguistic knowledge it becomes meaningful and amusingly useful for real-life experiences of the learner. Simple language of a literary work facilitates comprehensibility for the enjoyment of thought, emotion, feeling and situation in its proper perspective. The ESL/EFL teachers need student-centered approach toward comprehension of a literary work. This is the reason why literary selection is needed to stimulate the learners linguistically for their speculation, interpretation, evaluation and comprehension of author and readers' personal reactions.

Language teaching through literature becomes possible only when literary contents, ideas and subject matter train the learners through assignments and compositions. It enhances logical reasoning, independent thinking and careful analysis of the text in ESL/EFL classes. Teaching poetry, drama or prose for language learning becomes multidirectional. Reading a literary text enhances speaking and listening skills, improves pronunciation; and improves abilities and attitudes of feelings in language activities. Literature encourages oral skill, facilitates awareness and pronunciation practice through vocabulary, and idioms in the semiotic level of signifier and signified; and symbolic level of signified. Enriching language through literature also motivates the learners' interest, enhances communicative competence, critical thinking, and learning of difficult, boring and unmotivating subject matters through comprehension skills.

Different Literary Genres for Language Skills

Reading literature enhances language skills both at the preparatory and secondary levels of learners. Therefore, for language teaching specific syllabus is necessary to be made with the literary texts from different genres to provide the canonical instruction and to improve the language skill and language ability. For language teaching when syllabus is designed excerpts from poetry, drama, novel or short stories are specifically kept to develop language ability of the learners.

- (i) Excerpts from poetry are kept for linguistic understanding and literary appreciation. In language learning poetry offers the basic language skills through its linguistic features and figures of speech like syntactic patterns, polysemy of words, metaphors, alliteration and imagery. In language classrooms poetry excerpts present the deviation from normal language and attribution of imaginative meanings, musical sounds and sensitivity of words that form its composition and enhance the interest and ability to analyze. For educational benefits "language of poetry in its phonological, lexical, semantic, graphological vocabulary and with the properties of rhyming and rhythm enhance learners' love and appreciation for the sound and power of language" (Cubukcu 1). The language of poetry sensitizes interpretations through its usages that evoke feelings and thoughts ever heard or remembered.
- (ii) Teaching drama in language classroom is a good source for language teaching. This not only makes the learners familiar with its context but also makes them aware toward the culture of the foreign language and native language with grammatical structures to generate high interest and enjoyment. The language of drama promotes the spirit of comprehension of life experiences both in particular circumstances and extra-linguistic world. The language of drama develops critical thinking skills, listening skills and comprehension skills for promoting imagination, awareness, empathy and fostering of concern for others. In foreign language classes drama teaching reinforces the concept of realizing the social problems, and increases sensitivity,

emotional stability and examination of moral attitudes through communication skills. Although it provides effective technique for communication through dialogues, monologues soliloquies, asides and songs in different contexts of the situation in the authentic subject materials, it comprehends verbal/nonverbal aspects of the target language.

- (iii) The teaching of a novel in language classroom becomes beneficial to master the linguistic system. When novels portray the situations of life in a realistic way its linguistic system enlightens the human lives with the knowledge of different cultures of different people, improves critical thinking skill and real life-like settings and situations. It improves the oral and written language skills in the holistic learning of the language and critical thinking of learners' activities. Understanding the emotions of the characters at different situations enhances learner's interest and thinking activities in his/her captivating imagination and cognitive emotional levels. While teaching novel in the language classes it is found that through the delineation of memorable characters language comprehension is made with the time, place, person and situation. For foreign language classes, intriguing story of a novel is necessary for its captivating imagination of human conditions. Novel becomes suitable to increase learner's cognitive and emotional levels through its language.
- (iv) The teaching of short stories for learning language becomes highly resourceful. Since "the world of short fiction both mirrors and illustrates human lives" (Sage 43) the inclusion of short fiction in ESL/EFL curriculum offers the benefit of enriching reading task of the students. Short fiction chiefly enhances readers' worldview and ability to discover the world of wonders and world of mystery. Short stories as authentic materials enrich critical thinking skills and facilitate cultural knowledge. For enhancing the understanding of the learners and understanding of the surface meaning and underlying meaning of language short fiction becomes immensely helpful. Like other literary genres short fiction makes contribution to the development of cognitive abilities.

While all the literary genres and selective texts of literature

make learning language a joyful experience for students in ELT class rooms the language experts emphasize four language skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) that make learners to understand the ground reality of language structure and primary emotions like anger, love, jealousy etc. which are personal as well as universal.

Language learning only becomes an enriching experience with the selection of appropriate texts, through campus interviews, group discussions, and personality development programmes. This can provide the command over language to the learners when they are taught or trained to develop different sub-skills like spelling, handwriting, grammar and punctuations in paragraphs or structuring the sentences. Apart from developing critical thinking abilities and motivational spirit through vocabulary and comprehension skills of language the learners gain right kind of delight and wisdom from the literary texts which are representational rather than referential, informal but appealing, and emphatic for learners' imagination and towards society. The other productive moods like teaching literature through audio, music CDs, film clips, newspaper and media clips enrich language learning more easy diverse and enjoyable.

Conclusion:

Literature deals with the eternity, existentiality and essentiality of values in life. It starts in delight and ends in wisdom. It is for all ages and never ceases to inspire the readers irrespective of their age and gender. In foreign language classrooms popular use of literature provides a strong motivational power, communicative approach, morphosyntactic and social-communicative competence. Enriching language through literature is an experimental process both in EFL/ESL curriculum at the primary and secondary stages. Literature can bridge the acute realization of the cultural differences and understanding of normal and natural human differences. It opens the windows to intercultural awareness, and human reality to nurture

empathy and tolerance for diversity. Both literature and language teaching involve the development of feeling or response to language in the literary texts. Interpreting literary texts through language skills helps the learners to retain the functional use of language in their memory and in linguistic competence of everyday speech and different social situations. Textual reading strategies develop learners' ability in the pragmatic contextualization of linguistic expression.

Language teachers and instructors need first to understand the importance and effectiveness of teaching language that creates interest in the learners for its spontaneous and impressive use through the appropriate selection of literary texts. Language teachers also need pedagogically-designed appropriate materials for the language classroom. Preparation for TESL/TEFL programmes requires questionnaire or interviewing activities. Relevant literary texts are to be used in language classroom to suit learners' language proficiency, interests, age, sex etc. The literary texts should be practically suitable for the daily use of language in learners' communication intention. For critical and analytical learners Custodio and Sutton explain that, "literature can open horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore" (20). To sum up, it can be said that language provides the learners with a rich source of authentic material to develop literary competence by effectively internalizing the language at a high level. Teaching language in literature class creates highly motivating, amusing and lively situations for the language learners. Literary texts play a vital role in developing language skills for learners' communicative purposes in the real world.

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Dialectics of Oppression: A Parallel Reading of Select Indian Novels

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Mass Literature, Literature of Action, Literature of Protest, and Marginalized Literature are different names of the emerging genres of literature, which have blossomed the world over out of socio-political and cultural transformation. Besides, a strong tendency towards self-representation has been rising among those discriminated against for centuries. Though there are different philosophers like Foucault, Bakhtin, Althusser, Gramsci, Derrida or Spivak who have written on this topic, the German philosopher Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida were perhaps the first to decentre the centre and to bring the margin/periphery into the centre itself. However, Althusser, Gramsci, Foucault, Edward Said and Ngig) brought the questions of marginality into prominence. In the post-modern era plurality of cultures, genders and ethnicities is established with this argument that no particular type should be privileged over others. There should be an equal representation for each class, caste, gender, race and culture. In other words every literature has to articulate the feelings, aspirations, pains and sensibilities of all depressed tribes across the globe who have been described by Gayatri Spivak as the 'Fourth World'. It refers to the world's original people who are literally pushed to margins for the contemporary history and geography of the world's civilization to be established. K. Sachidanandan writes, "Dalit literature empowers the marginalised by retrieving the voices, spaces and identities silenced or suppressed by casteist

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powers". (*Indian Literature: Positions and Propositions* 14) It is a revolt against dominant ideology and cultural hegemony. It examines the human condition and provides inspiration for struggle to the marginalised because authentic shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope are its cardinal ingredients. The position of Dalit literature can be graphically understood in terms of the paradigms such as the colonizer/colonized, oppressor/oppressed, victimizer/victimized, dominant/dominated and subject/subjugated.

'Dalit' is a term taken from Marathi word 'Dalan' i.e. a class that is exploited. The term 'Dalit literature' was first used in 1958 at the first ever conference of Dalit literature in Bombay. Dalit literature is, therefore, literature written by and about such category of people but in its broader application Dalit means those who are crushed and downtrodden. Silence, suffering, victimization, exploitation and marginalization are what constitute the position of subalterns who are now globally struggling for their own identity, their own voice and right to self-representation. Arjun Dangle has rightly observed:

Dalit is not a caste but a realization and is related to the experiences, joys and sorrows and struggles of those in the lowest stratum of society. It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary. (Dangle 93)

The feelings of oppression, humiliation and rejection have been expressed by different Dalit writers in different genres of literature like short story, novel, autobiography, biography etc. And there remains a symbiotic relationship among different genres and languages of Dalit writings. The similarity is in the portrayal of discrimination and exploitation in myriad forms and making this literature an instrument for self- discovery, self- realization and reclaiming identity and the dissimilarity is in the variation of theory behind their works and their way of presenting the ideas. Dalit literature puts a human at its centre and registers a strong protest

against fixed frames of centre, race, tribe and gender for showing the value of human liberty. It questions the mainstream literary theories and upper caste ideologies and explores the neglected aspects of life. Dalit literature is mostly experience-based. Authenticity and liveliness are the hallmarks of Dalit literature. Shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope are the stuff of Dalit literature. Among all the Dalit writers, Om prakash Valmiki occupies a prominent place. His autobiography *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* is a tragic tale of the community to which he belongs. He has made revolutionary transformation of Dalit consciousness. It aims at giving expression to Dalit's pain, suffering and self-awareness. It was first published in Hindi in 1997 and was later translated into English by Arun Prabha Mukherjee in 2003. In post-independence India, 'Joothan' refers to scraps of food left on a plate, destined for the garbage or animals. The untouchables down the ages have been forced to accept and eat joothan. Valmiki very categorically remarks about this sort of life. He observes that after working hard day and night, the price of their sweats was just joothan.

In *Joothan*, Valmiki has talked about the discrimination they had to face in the school at different points, He says:

During the examinations we could not drink water from the glass when thirsty. To drink water, we had to cup our hands. The peon would pour water from way high up lest our hands touch the glass. (Valmiki 27)

Valmiki was admitted to a primary school on his father's behest. However, he was not allowed to sit on the benches but on the floor away from the upper caste boys, at the back by the door from where he can't see the blackboard well. The students often hurled epithets on him and also beat him casually, turning him into an introvert. Even the teachers looked for excuses to punish him, so that "he would run away from the school and take up the kind of work for which he was born"(16) Later, a new teacher arrived, who used to thrash him almost daily. One day he asked Valmiki to take broom and sweep all the rooms and the playground in the

school. He had to spend full days sweeping the courtyard. He was bound to be humiliated by the upper caste people. If he came dressed in new clothes they commented, Oye chuhre, dressed in new clothes, if he was dressed in old clothes he was called beggar and that even in abusive terms. His teachers often called him in abusive language, 'Abey chuhre ke... where are you hiding...' (19). Seeing him sitting in the corner the headmaster pounced on his neck. The pressure of his finger gradually increased. As a wolf grabs a lamb by the neck, he dragged him out of the class and threw him on the ground. He shouted:

Go sweep the whole playground, otherwise I will shove chillies up your arse and throw you out of school. I picked up the three day old broom, then sticks. Tears rolled down my cheeks... Each pore of my body was submerged in an abyss of anguish (15).

However, his parents were not like him. Seeing his son sweeping the ground, his father could not control himself and snatched the broom from his hands. He screamed, "Who is that teacher, that progeny of Dronacharya who forced my son to sweep?" (16). The Headmaster called his father's name and roared back: "Take him away from here... the chuhra wants him to educate... Go, go, otherwise I will have your bones broken." (16) Valmiki's father could not be deterred from his determination by the Headmaster's shout and he declared in a louder voice: "I'm leaving now... but 'this chuhra ka' will study right here in this school. And not just him but there will be more coming after him." (16) His father's courage and fortitude left a deep and decisive mark on Valmiki's personality. Even his mother was revolutionary by nature. Once she requested Brahmin host, Sukhdev Singh Tyagi for additional food for her children only to be humiliated and told to mind her place, be satisfied with what she already had collected and to get going. Valmiki observes:

That might the mother goddess Durga entered my mother's eyes. It was for the first time I saw my mother so angry. She emptied the basket

right there and asked Sukhdev Singh to pick it up and put inside his house. She further asked him to feed it to the Baratis the next day morning. When he had pounced on her to hit her, she had confronted him like a lioness without being afraid. (21)

Valmiki, being a Dalit, understands fully the pain and suffering of the people of the lower caste. Dr. Sharan Limbale has rightly observed:

Dalits are also quite, gentle, obedient and humblest one of all the creatures and they are not in need of learning about humanity. They have rage and anger in them only for the reason that they have been suppressed by all and have not been provided basic human rights. So their rudeness is very natural. (Limbale 91)

Later, Valmiki was admitted to Middle School, where all the teachers were Tyagis. Most of the students were also Tyagis. He used to narrate the stories to his mother and many a time the characters of Sharatchandra had made them weep together. That was the time when he became interested in Tagore, Premchand, and Sharatchandra etc. The work of the Chuhra caste included sweeping the roads, cleaning the cattle barns, getting shit off the floor, disposing off dead animals, working in the field during harvests and performing other physical labour for upper caste people. They were often beaten by the people of the upper caste and also by the police. The people of Valmiki's village were superstitious, too.

With the passage of time Valmiki reached to class XI. He had opted Science as his major subject. He had become somewhat more confident than before. But he had less number of friends, perhaps because of his lower caste. Om Dutta Tyagi was his English teacher. He was more sarcastic in his remarks. He always tried to make him feel about his lower caste. Valmiki at that time felt that he was not a teacher but a casteist illiterate Zamindar. After passing Intermediate he came to Dehradun with one shirt and one trouser. There the majority of the population comprised bhangi, and jatav etc.

The former liked to be called 'Valmiki' and the latter 'Jatav'. The students in Valmiki's class often made fun of his rustic way of life. In fact, he had become accustomed to such comments. But by and by he was gaining confidence and his friends were also increasing. One day he chanced to get one book *Dr. Ambedkar: Jeevan Parichay* written by Chandrika Prasad Jigyashu. It changed his course of life and in due course he read almost all the books of Ambedkar available in that library. The sense of revolt against the system, lying dormant in him for a long time, got a voice. The word 'Dalit' was included in his dictionary; it was not the substitute of 'Harijan' rather the expression of anger of crores of the untouchables. After sometime he was admitted as apprentice in Ordnance Factory, Dehradun.

After one year training, he was sent to Jabalpur for higher training. There he met some trainees who were Marxists in their thinking and temperament. He had started composing poems also. He had formed a theatre group and gave some shows too in the auditorium of the institution. He read Rajendra Yadav's *Sara Aakash* several times. He also got himself associated with literary activities of Jabalpur. In July 1970 he joined Ordnance Factory Training Institute, Ambarnath (Mumbai). He was very happy to see the rich library of the institution. He came in contact with the Kulkarni family especially Savita Kulkarni. He received much love and affection from that family. But when one day he told Savita his caste she was shocked and she started crying. And that was the last meeting between them. In December 1973 he was married to Chanda, the younger sister of Swarnlata Bhabhi. His parents had died in course of time. He was very much influenced by Buddha's thought of human freedom. He had fully associated himself with Dalit movement. In Maharashtra Dalit Panther had given a new form of Dalit movement. The Dalits were being tortured in government and semi-government offices. Those Dalits who had got education were facing identity crisis. In order to get rid of this problem they started improving their 'Gotra' a bit, thus 'Chandril' or 'Chanchal' from Chinaliye, 'Saudai' from

Saude etc. His mother's gotra was 'Kesle' which was renamed as 'Keswal'. Indeed, the pain of identity is the outcome of the reaction against inhumanity of casteism. They also want to be included in the mainstream of the society but the so-called forward class always considers them as downtrodden and inferior to them. Their intelligence and capability are always doubted. The writers, the scholars and the workers associated with Dalit movement are continuously struggling with themselves. People are not ready to acknowledge their association with the people of the lower strata of society.

Valmiki concludes his autobiography by pointing out the fact that caste still remains an indispensable part of their lives. It is a matter of privilege for the upper classes while it is a stigma attached to the Dalits and the other low caste people. It involves a lot of courage and strength to shake off the age old fetters imposed on these innocent beings. Thus, *Joothan* is not just a remembering of the past. It is the structuring of events in the life of a Dalit in such a way as to enable one to analyse and understand the social order that shaped the life. The narration encapsulates the pain, humiliation and poverty of Valmiki's community which had to rely on joothan for satisfying their hunger. The autobiography is a reliving of his past. It tells how 'his story' becomes history. This reliving of the past burns him with renewed pain and humiliation in the present.

Thus, we can say that Omprakash Valmiki through his personal life's history tried to give dignity, courage and confidence to the Dalits. Since God has created every human being equal, the so-called upper caste has no right to humiliate and hurt physically the lower caste people. Valmiki's masterpiece *Joothan* is a saga of the pain, suffering and humiliation of the Dalit class in general and those of Omprakash Valmiki in particular.

The Prisons We Broke, a translation of *Jina Amucha*, the Marathi original is a milestone in the history of Dalit writing in Marathi. It is probably the first autobiography by a Dalit woman not only in Marathi but in any Indian language. Like most Dalit autobiographies, it is also an

expression of protest against the inhuman conditions of existence to which the Hindu caste system has subjected the Dalits for thousands of years.

In *The Prisons We Broke*, Baby Kamble has brought out the internal trauma in the psyche of her people situated on the threshold of a fundamental transformation. It is her Dalit feminist critique of patriarchy. She graphically describes the physical and psychological violence women have to undergo in both the public and private spheres. If the Mahar community is the 'other' for the Brahmins, Mahar women become the 'other' for the Mahar men. Kamble demonstrates how caste and patriarchy converge to perpetuate exploitative practices against women. The Mahar women have shown the remarkable dignity and resilience in their struggle through which they have emerged as the agents of transformation in their community.

The writer after discussing her biographical details in the beginning talks about the condition of women. In those days, it was the custom to keep women at home, behind the threshold. The honour enjoyed by a family was in proportion to the restrictions imposed on the women of the house. Kamble says: "My mother had locked up my aai in his house, like a bird in a cage." (5) She felt so oppressed, so suffocated that she became insensitive and cruel towards the others. She often says angrily: "Morality! What rubbish! It belongs to the man with money... It is only money that matters. Money whitewashes your sin. It's money that brings fame." (6)

The Mahar women were not allowed to touch anybody. So they themselves announced: "Take care little master! Please keep a distance. Don't come too close. You might touch me and get polluted." (14) The entire Maharwada looked upon the four weeks of Ashadh as one of those rare occasions of festivity and joy. On every Friday and Saturday, the yeskar Mahar would carry several huge cane baskets to the temple of the goddess. The entire village flocked to the temple with varied dishes as offerings to the goddess-fried delicacies, curd rice, bhajis cooked with spices and kurwadya. The women of the Mahar community were very loyal to their

husbands. They are very protective about the kumkum on their foreheads. For the sake of the kumkum mark they lay their lives at the feet of their husbands. They often believe: "if a woman has her husband, she has the whole world; if she does not have a husband, then the world holds nothing for her..." (41)

Poverty oozes out of their houses. Their saris are rags and their blouses mere tatters. They after working the whole day return with a couple of baskets full of leftover food. These leftovers see their family through till the next morning for that's what they ate for breakfast, lunch and dinner. They had to fight with cats and dogs and kites and vultures to establish their right over the carcasses, to tear off the flesh from the dead bodies. The Mahars were not allowed to use the regular road that was used by the higher castes. When somebody from these castes walked from the opposite direction, they had to leave the road, climb down into the shrubbery and walk through the thorny bushes on the roadside. Here we are reminded of Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. In both the novels the writers have presented the theme of untouchability in a realistic way. They had to cover themselves fully if they saw any man from the higher castes coming down the road, and when he came close, they had to say:

The humble Mahar women fall at your feet master.' This was like a chant, which they had to repeat innumerable times even to a small child if it belonged to a higher caste. (52)

The Mahar women had to tuck the pleats of the sari in such a way that the borders remained hidden. Only high caste women had the privilege of wearing their saris showing the borders. Their blouses were also made from rags.

Owing to their poverty, they had to face the intense ordeal during their delivery. They would lie completely at the mercy of the women surrounding her. For want of cotton or cloth pads, blood continued to flow. They did not know the use of soap. Women would spit on their palms and clean the baby's face with the saliva. Moreover, the suffering of the

woman was beyond endurance. Many young girls on the threshold of life succumbed to death. The fear of death drove people to the local deity goddess Sarwai and they would perform all the customary rituals. Due to their superstitious belief, the new mother was supposed to eat five particular organs of an animal on a particular day. The Mahars had a duty towards dead people too. When someone died in the village, they had to carry the news to the relatives. Scorching sun, heavy rains and biting cold—none of these mattered. Carrying such messages was really an ordeal for them. Indeed, the condition of the Mahars was no better than that of bullocks, those beasts of burden who slogged all their life for a handful of dry grass. They suffered utter poverty and destitution. They often fell victims to epidemics, especially cholera and plague. Tetanus was another deadly disease from which they, especially women during childbirth suffered. Since they did not know about the medicines, they became easy prey to superstitious remedies and thus losing their lives.

In the Mahar community there was provision of child marriage. Many girls, hardly eight or ten years old were married off; they were so young that they could hardly remember their marriage. For them marriage meant nothing but calamity. They were treated badly in their in-law's house: "She was not a human being for her in-laws, but just another piece of wood." (99)

Thus, the life of the poor hapless women in the lower castes was shaped by the fire of calamities. Though they became strong enough physically but their minds cried out against this oppression. The chaturvarna system created castes and sanctioned discriminatory practices and the practice of making women dependent on men was established. However, the impact of Ambedkar's movement was wide ranging. Inspired by his thoughts, the Mahar community had started sending their children to school. Baby Kamble, the writer narrating her personal experiences says that she was personally very much influenced by the views of Ambedkar. She quotes Ambedkar's views on education:

Educate your children. They, in turn, should spend one percent of their salary in improving the lot of poor children. Only then will their education benefit the community and the generation next to theirs will be educated. (135)

Indeed, the suffering of the people of Mahar community became the writer's own suffering. And she narrated their experiences in her autobiography which was not her individual life history rather the autobiography of the whole community. She, like other women, suffered immensely throughout her life. She was even beaten by her husband who doubted her faithfulness. It was not her fault, she thought. It was rather their male ego which gave them some sense of identity: "I am a man, I am superior to women, I am somebody. If the whole village tortures us, we will torture our women." (155-156)

Mannu Bhandari, a renowned writer of Hindi literature in her masterpiece *Mahabhoj* has focused upon socio-political structures of the society and has depicted precarious life conditions of the Dalits. The story of the novel centres on the village Saroha which is not very far away from the town. So any incident which takes place in the village affects the people of the town, too. A few days ago some huts of the Harijans were burnt in that village and in that fire a man known as Bisesar was also burnt alive. It led to a great political turmoil. Sukul Babu the former Chief Minister and Da Saheb, the eminent personality of the town both of them were worried about the incident and they wanted to get the culprit punished. It was their political stunt as the Harijans constituted a major vote bank for them.

The novel *Mahabhoj* which was written in 1979 presents a realistic picture of the contemporary society. It gives a true picture of the degeneration of values caused by the connection of politics, media and police. Usually 'Mahabhoj' refers to the feast organised at the death of somebody. But here it does not mean the same. Here it refers to the degeneration of human values after independence. How caste and creed have entered Indian politics has been well

described by the writer.

The writer in course of presenting the thematic analysis of the novel has depicted so many characters who stand apart from one another as 'types'. The characters like Rao and Choudhary stand for opportunism in politics. They do not hesitate in spending too much money especially during election. The police officials like Saxena, Thanedar contribute to the degeneration. They create terror among the people and make a false show of their sincerity. They all are loyal to the politicians.

The media, too, is not sincere enough to its duties. Dutta Babu, the editor of 'Mashal' also thinks of his own benefits. The so-called elites are indifferent in their approach. Binda is a close friend of Bisu and he is very fearless. His wife Rukma, too is very ill tongued. Both of them were disturbed by the sudden death of Bisu and they were moving from pillar to post to get the justice. Bihari was another character who was courageous enough to observe: "Leave it! If they see the profit of one paise today they will barter away the whole of their life for tomorrow." (*Mahabhoj* 75)

Moreover, the opposition too has very selfish motive. Lochan Babu represents an honest man but in politics honesty has no role to play. The Dalits have always been used or rather misused for satisfying the selfish motives of the upper castes. The inspector Saxena did not lag behind in questioning Bishesar's father, Heera about his death. But all the questions put to him were only for the sake of formality. Binda and his wife were also interrogated in the police station. The people belonging to the upper strata of society were indulged in merry making and a grand rally was being organised. Kashi, an important character in the novel observes: "Why not we must celebrate Bisu's death and the atrocities done to the Harijans." (154)

Ultimately, Binda was arrested on the charge of killing Bisu, though the fact was otherwise. It was the political power which controlled the socio-economic situation of that village particularly and the other villages in general.

Thus, we can say that the writer has successfully portrayed the contemporary socio-political scenario which is anti-Dalits. The people of upper section of the society pose to be sympathetic and helpful to the Dalit class but they, in fact, use them for grinding their own axe. Lochan Babu, though an idealist but is rejected from the main stream of the society. Jorawar Singh may be compared to Rai Saheb of Premchand's *Godan* and Vishwanath of Phaneshwar Nath Renu's *Maila Aanchal*——all the three believe in exploiting the people but in different ways.

Dalit literature, thus, represents significant historic phase in the awakening of a large mass of suppressed people in India. It is their voice for liberation as well as of protest, dissent, and rebellion. Valmiki's writing is very simple, but there are hard-hitting questions at the feudalistic society. This spirit of interrogation is a characteristic feature of all his works and is very prominent in *Joothan*. The term 'Joothan' symbolizes the hardships suffered by the low caste people of India for centuries of alienation and isolation. Omprakash Valmiki, through this work presents himself not as a writer, but as a member of Dalit community who makes the unheard voice of these suppressed people echo in this world of literature. His *Joothan* is an example of the Dalit protest literature and is written with, anguish and a controlled anger against society. It exhorts Dalits to improve their situation through education and criticises society for ill treatment and marginalization of Dalits.

Baby Kamble in her autobiography *The Prisons We Broke* shows how the body, especially that of the woman becomes a site where the dynamics of caste, culture and patriarchy operate. Her story brings out brilliantly how she has offered an insightful observation to the fact that the moment they entered the feudal space, they were forced to bend their back in honour of the upper caste. Kamble in her narratives of Dalit women's suffering brings out the worst form of exploitation and physical torture that the Dalit male inflicted on Dalit women. The physical torture not only involved physical injuries but also inflicted deep psychological

pain, leaving a scar of humiliation in the minds of dalit women.

To conclude, we may say that Dalit literature has emerged as literature of negation and rejection, of protest and revolt and hence assertion. On the one hand it is a negation of existing unjust, unequal Indian social order while on the other it has a fervent appeal for the creation of an egalitarian society based on humanism. Dalit literature is being written out of intense, burning experience and consciousness. Indeed, the Dalit writers hit the present caste-based society in order to give a new model of society———a model based on harmony, equality, liberty where a human can live like a human.

Moreover, the Dalits and the downtrodden are leading miserable life in the modern times. In all the three works under reference, the reality about the Dalits has been presented with utmost sincerity and honesty. Even after sixty nine years of independence the status of Dalits in Indian society is as miserable as it was in the early times. Today we are progressing day by day but we have not changed our mindset. We simply discuss the problems and conditions of the Dalits but all those discussions end in nothingness and we do not come to any solution to their problems. Since centuries the Dalits have been denied and largely ignored by the society.

The Dalit writers in general and Omprakash Valmiki, Baby Kamble and Mannu Bhandari in particular have successfully depicted Dalit consciousness, Dalit agony, assertion, resistance, anger, protest, mobilization, and Dalit experience in their writings. They do not look at the subject from a distance; rather they become very much part of it. That is why there is no universal appeal in the Dalit writings. Moreover, it is a fact that the Dalit writers need to view the Dalit consciousness objectively. They need to respond to the past with patience in order to change the degenerated system of society. It is the mindset of the people which requires to be changed for the upliftment of the downtrodden.

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The Use of Cultural Media in the Plays of Vijay Tendulkar

**Sandhya Saxena & **Shaifali Saxena*

In an attempt to search for one's own roots through revisiting the past, the post- independence Indian English drama has significantly used the folk forms for theatrical performances. The use of effective folk forms not only provides new literary modes and techniques to literary artists but also helps them reach out to the explanation of several contemporary social issues and problems. These folk forms are cultural media through which culture transmits its message from one generation to the other. This audio- visual mode comprises extra- linguistic elements to convey the message powerfully. The folk forms can be studied as effective means of lively social documentation as they create a distinct environment which naturally binds the audience during the performance. McLuhan in his the *Medium is the Message* (1967) argues that,

“(a)ll media work us over completely,” and they are so powerful in their approach that “they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered (26).” He further argues that media not only works as a medium but as an environment. This environment, in fact, has a deep aesthetic and psychological effect on human beings. (*IJES Vol. L, 435*)

The growth and development of Indian drama owes largely to the traditional folk theatre. In the later days also folklore has been a constitutive element. In the traditional

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theatre most of the performances were acted in the open air theatre. The devices used were the entries and exits of the actors from the audience, addressing the audience during the action of the play and commenting upon a situation while the action takes place on the stage. This device established a close actor- audience relationship. Vijay Tendulkar tried to interweave these traditional devices within the fabric of Indian drama. Shukla Chatterjee comments:

Emerging as a Marathi playwright during the 1950s, more specifically known to be the post-Independence or transitional or experimental period of the history of Indian theatre, Vijay Tendulkar, along with his contemporary playwrights began experimenting with various forms in search of a 'new theatre – the theatre that could break the barriers of regional traditions and represent the 'nation'. The search for the new theatre continued with experiments in both content and form. In the 1970s, by suitable mixing of various styles and techniques from Sanskrit, medieval folk and western theatre, modern Indian theatre saw another major experiment – the harnessing together of tradition and modernity. This gave modern Indian theatre a new, versatile and broader approach at every level of creativity. (*Shukla*, 222-223)

After 1970, there have been serious attempts to employ elements of folk culture in modern drama. This trend is known as theatre of the roots movement. Leading Indian dramatists writing in different Indian languages like Habib Tanvir, Girish Karnad, Chandrasekhar Kambar, Vijay Tendulkar and others pioneered this movement. (*Behera*, 18) This movement was initiated to bridge the gulf between English urban theatre and Indian rural drama with the vowed aim to re-establish the cultural identity of India. However, the movement was put aside on the pretext that it could ensnare Indian Drama in the "framework of false Indian essentialisms" (*Behera*, 20), leading the way to the emergence and growth of the new theatre.

The modern Indian drama flourished under the influences of classical Sanskrit drama, regional folk forms

and Western theatre. Folk theatre of India has originated from religious mythology. It also represents the cultural identity of a community through songs, dances, beliefs, customs and dresses. Vijay Tendulkar, one of the pioneers of the dramatic renaissance in India, has immensely contributed to the form and pattern of Indian drama through a combination of traditional and modern theatrical devices. Through folk techniques he exposed the political radicalism and daringly uncovered the political hegemony of the powerful as well as the hypocrisies in the Indian social mindset while contemporary writers were cautiously exploring the limits of social realism. Tendulkar accepts that someone should narrate the ugliness spread in man's life by the society. To express his views to public he used familiar techniques like *Tamasha*, *lavni*, *Bhavannkani* and others.

Folk music is an English denomination including both traditional and contemporary folk. This term was investigated in 19th century but is frequently applied to music that is older than that. Traditional folk music, transmitted from one generation to the next through oral tradition, is generally regarded as the music of the lower classes composed by unknown composers. It has a striking difference from commercial and classical styles.

By merging folk elements with other dramatic devices in *Ghasiram Kotwal* Tendulkar uses a vibrant theatrical form. The play is steeped into folk drama format with its elaborate use of facial expressions, mime, songs and dances. It contains the traditions of *Tamasha*, *Sutradhar*, Chorus and *Kontan Khela*. Besides, a human curtain is formed and dispersed for dramatic purposes according to the requirement. Invocations to various gods and goddesses like *Ganapati*, *Saraswati* and *Laxmi* in the course of the play provide a characteristic folk setting to the play. The play begins with an invocation to Lord *Ganesha* himself, dancing and singing, and folk form *Tamasha* is used from beginning to the end of the play.

Ganpati dances the Ganapati dances,
Brahmins of Poona bow and prance. (*Repeat*)
Pious Brahmins,

Keep on dancing,
 Holi Ganpati,
 Keep on dancing.
 Now let the drum beat!
 Now let the drama heat!
 Heaven, hell and earth-complete!
 Heaven, hell and earth-complete!
 Saraswati-devi,
 Goddess of Wisdom.
 (*Ghasiram*, 361)

The blend of the different types of songs to explain the scene is another very significant feature:

Four stand as accompanists for the kirtan. Some Brahman women enter and sit in the stage audience.... The abhanga changes to a lavani – a change from a religious song to a love ballad. The Haridasa sings a lavani. Suddenly an abhanga. Back to lavani. Nana in lavani state of mind. The last of the sermon – repetition of God's names – comes loudly. Nana looks unblinkingly at a pretty girl. She is beautiful, shy, and innocent. .. The girl goes to bow at the Haridasa's feet. Falls at his feet. Nana steps towards her like a cat. All go but the girl stays behind, prays before Ganapati. Nana gestures to the servant to close the door. (*Ghasiram*, 377)

Tendulkar has used this style in a couple of other plays as well. One was initially a play for children, *Raja Rani ko Chaiye Pasina*. Even before that he tried the form of 'Tamasha' in legitimate theatre but did not succeed. And after *Ghasiram*, Tendulkar's *Vittela* (1985) too has music as a key component.

Vijay Tendulkar establishes new carves for modern Indian drama through the use of folk forms, modes of recitation and techniques of narration particular to Maharashtra. No other playwright except Tendulkar has made such a fantastic use of folk theatre. During the conversation a repetition in dialogue gives a ballad feature to his plays. The dramatist specifically uses this repetition in dialogue to bring a comic relief in the play as it speaks

ironically about a serious situation.

BRAHMAN: Oy. Oy. You son of bitch. Don't you have eyes and ears?

SUTRADHAR: I'm sorry, O priestly Brahman.

BRAHMAN: Don't you have any manners?

SUTRADHAR: I'm very sorry, O lordly Brahman.

BRAHMAN: Don't you have any brains?

SUTRADHAR: I'm very sorry, O honoured Brahman. (*Ghasiram*, 364)

The modern Indian theatre is intimately connected with its sources that are classical and folk theatre. The Marathi *Tamasha* has a resemblance with the Greek chorus in the configuration of the singers known as *Jheelnari* who recapitulate the refrain after the main singers in the initial *Gan-Gawalan* part and the subsequent musical composition in the exhibition. These various folk forms of theatre like *Khyal*, *Bhagat*, *Manch*, *Swang*, *Nautanki*, *Tamasha*, etc, originated from divergent regions of India and Tendulkar acquires recourse to some of the traditional forms of Maharashtra such as *Kirtan*, *Bharud Lavni*, *Lalit*, the dancing *Ganesh* and *Saraswati* of the old Marathi stage. The following excerpt has been praised for musical beauty:

No, he lying Brahmins are all headed to the courtesan's house- the Bavanakhani to satisfy their lust for erotic dancing, to listen the lavni (love song) which they prefer to call as holy 'sermon'. It's like Mathura! They say for decorum sake.

Ram Shiva Hari!

Mukunda Murari

Radhakrishna Hari,

The street of Bavanna became for a while

The garden of Krishna. (*Prasad*, 206)

In this play *Abhangas* (devotional song) are mixed with *Lavnis* (love songs). This is united segments of the *Dashavatar Khel* which is based on the ten incarnations of

Vishnu. The musical accompaniment was the *Mridanga* and *Jhanga*. The *Tamasha* form used by Tendulkar was executed by a roving Troup of about seven actors, including dancer, a comedian, a main actor and a chorus. *Tamasha* was extremely famous during fairs and festivals during the times of Sawai Madhav Rao Peshwa.

Tendulkar's *The Vultures* is undoubtedly the most violent play which reminds one of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. On the whole, the play is, no doubt, unrefined in its shocking portrayal of domestic violence caused by avarice. Rajaninath, the illegitimate son of Pappa Pitale has two roles. In the first place he is the chorus, for it is from his songs that the history of Pitale family is revealed along with the avarice, cruelty and viciousness of the members of the family. In the initial scene he sings rather long song to relate that twenty two years have passed since the incidents narrated in the play took place. The house of vultures shatters. Ramakant became pauper and both Ramakant and Rama, therefore, had to leave it. Rajaninath, the chorus type character is sad to see Rama following her husband as is conspicuous in the opening lines of the song. He sings:

So Rama went away
A statue of emotions chilled to store
Alive, she followed after
That leaving death, her master
With dogged loyalty. (*Collected Plays*, 201)

His play *Encounter in Umbugland* employs the folk theatre in a fascinating way. Music, verses and an interesting chorus churns out events like the newspaper headlines of the modern world. The presence of the eunuch Pran Narayan to comment on politicians and the world of politics imparts a folk setting to the play. The play is written in the tradition of the folk drama and makes an extensive use of chorus which provides important information about the forthcoming events along with commenting on the existing political chaos. Tendulkar drives his motto clearly in the following way;

Darkness at the height of the day,

Umbugland in deep dismay,
Sun sinks in to the gloom,
Umbugland becomes a tomb. (*Collected Plays*,
282)

His play *Silence! the Court is in Session* is a mock trial of simple and straight-forward school teacher Miss Leela Benare who has an illicit relationship with a man and faces the inhuman attitude of society against her. The stunning monologue of Benare captivates the imagination of the Marathi audience:

The parrot to the sparrow said.
'Why, oh why are your eyes so red?
'Oh my dear friend, What shall I say?
Someone has stolen my nest away'
Sparrow, sparrow, poor little sparrow! (*Collected Plays*, 282)

The mock trial functions as a play within a play, a very popular form of the ancient drama. It exposes the innate cruelty of the city-bred male chauvinists of Bombay towards Benare. Through the metaphorical mock court the characters have right for authority and power and try to trap each other, but the power play that underscores the games operates more through the monologues rather than dialogues.

Sakharam's frenzy for his *mridanga* in *Sakharam Binder* prepares an atmosphere of fanaticism to some extent. He loves *mridanga* and falls into a trance after playing on it. An atmosphere of frenzy is provided to the play through the shouts like *Mangal Murli Maurya* off the stage.

Thus, Tendulkar uncovers the stark realities of their contemporary world through the blend of literary, musical and theatrical devices in his plays. He has changed the form and pattern of Indian drama by developing carefully crafted forms, modes of recitation and narrative techniques prevalent in his region. The uniqueness of Tendulkar's craft lies in "the combination of the elements of various folk forms, not of a single folk form, to forge a powerful dramatic strategy in evoking the playwright's reading of the present-day socio-

religious cultural situation of violence, sexuality and intrigue, power- drive." (Behera, 44)

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Transformation of the Book into Cinema: A Critical Perspective on a Bollywood Movie Bajirao-Mastani

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Introduction

Bajirao-Mastani is 2016 Filmfare award winning riveting Bollywood movie which enthralled the audience with its subject of love of two lofty historical characters made immortal by their love and the opposition and outrage they face from typical purists. This Historio Romantic Drama by Bhansali portrays the subtle and devoted love story of 18th Century General (Peshwa) of Maratha history who remained unvanquished till he passed away at the battlefield of Raverkhedi along the banks of the river Narmada. Bhansali acknowledges his gratitude to the novelist N.S. Inamdar on whose Marathi Novel 'Rau' (1974) this film is based upon.

The present paper is an outcome of the heightened impact of the impression created by the movie 'Bajirao-Mastani' followed by the hypnotized re-reading of the novel 'Rau'. Both of these works of arts take hold of reader's minds and keep reverberating in their minds.

Discussion and Analysis

Any ideal fiction has six features; characters, plot, point of view, setting, style, and theme. Ernest Hemingway says;

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'Prose is architecture, not interior decoration (Leder, 134). This applies perfectly to 'Rau' by N. S. Inamdar. *Rau* has a powerful story to tell and its characters are very well developed. The 18th Century Maratha General and the Prime Minister (Peshwa)'s guts to offer equal stature to his beloved Mastani and their son '*Samsherbahaddar*' is outstanding and very rare. In that era, having multiple love affairs beyond marriage was quite common; they were called '*Angawastra*' in Marathi. But this lofty and larger than life hero drew tragedy with his equal loyalty and devotion in depth of love towards her.

N.S. Inamdar is a noted historical novelist in Marathi Literature. His novel *Rau* talks about the high-rank officer, Prime Minister, Peshwa as the post was called, Bajirao, a young invincible warrior and an efficient administrator. 'Rau' as he was addressed by all falls in love with an extra-ordinary Muslim artiste Mastani, and till the end of his life, continues loving her and being with her. The story of Bajirao and Mastani is an epitome of devotion in love and the depth in togetherness. Facing all opposition, standing firmly against all the oddities and being with each other in difficult times were natural things for both of them. In an era of no mobile no social media, the telepathy could work between them positively towards strengthening their relationship despite all the ordeals of life, facing all heinous, insulting treatment meted out to her in a casteist capital Pune, Mastani managed to maintain calm and sweetness in her. There is a kind of gracefulness always present in her behaviour. This was quite shakening that even in the prevalence of the age old concepts of traditional conservative society that *Bajirao Peshwa*, the man of high stature rises to the invincible warrior and establishes his sovereign power all over the Hindustan. He dealt with Rajputs, Jats, Bundele, Mughal, Nizam and Rohile; the regional rulers in then India and all other various castes and religions. He used to win wars like an eagle's eye.

The novel opens on a very serious note, though magnificent, the new palace 'Shaniwarwada' situated in Pune is recently inaugurated and is astonishingly lofty. The

old friend of *Peshwinbai*; *Kashibai*, and wife of *Bajirao Peshwa* comes to meet her and this lady, *Bhanu* sarcastically gifts the ashes of her dead husband knight *Atre* blaming *Peshwa Bajirao* for his partial behaviour in snatching *Atre's Vatan / Jagir* (rewarded land) and rewarding it to *Purandare*. This resulted in the suicide of *Atre* in distress. His widow *Bhanu* curses *Peshwinbai* that she, too, like *Bhanu* will pine for her husband's love and be deprived of the same in future. In the backdrop of all prosperity and happiness this episode creates a tension. The dire curse by *Bhanu*, the widow of *Vatandar (knight)* *Atre* on the backdrop of opulence and grandeur is little disturbing in the beginning and it creates ominous restlessness in the minds of the readers, but it seldom creates anything pessimistic in *Kashibai's* mind as she is engrossed in looking after the *Shaniwarwada*. *Peshwa Bajirao* is always busy in various battles one after the other and his being at home is like commas between the two battles. One very striking thing about *Bajirao (Rau)* is that he has never lost the battle not even one. Being prime-minister of *Satara Chhatrapati Shahu*; a descendant of the great Maratha warrior of 17th century; *Chhatrapati Shivaji*, he has to look after many other administrative duties which are taken care of by his young son *Nanasaheb* and *Appaswami*, (*ChimajiAppa*) his younger brother. *Rau's* mother '*Radhabai*', a very powerful woman has undoubtedly taken charge of everything until recently she started feeling that her complete hold on her son *Peshwa Bajirao* is diminishing and *Nanasaheb* and *Ambajipant*, the Chief Officer of the court are taking the centre stage. She is not ready to leave control of anything. *Rau's* sisters *Bhiubai* and *Anubai* both were married off in *Pune* itself and are connected to their mother and thereby *Shaniwarwada*. Time and again their advice is sought. Both the sisters along with the mother *Matoshribai (Radhabai)* are sternly against the love affair of *Rau* as the basic difference in *Rau* and all other upper caste and class courtesans is that *Mastani* was his beloved and unlike others he always treated her as his second wife. *Rau's* mother, brother *Appaswami* and both the sisters did not object to having an extra-marital but the whole objection was to treat

her as his wife and to attempt to bring her to Shaniwarwada, which couldn't happen. Bajirao always believed that 'the greatness of man depends not on his birth but by his work, contribution and deeds' (Rau, 23).

Mastani has devoted herself and loved Rau to the extent that she has acquired all Hindu religious rituals for him. The episode of Mastani's *Abhishek* (the holy repeated bath to the deity idol) in a temple for Rau's long life and good health creates furore in Brahminical conservative atmosphere in contemporary Pune. Had it been in the 21st century, it would have become the private affair, and the relationship would have definitely not suffered to this extent. At the end the stubborn Radhabai is also ready to accept the relationship except for her religion. Having more than one wives and multiple love interests were very common thing for kings and knights in the contemporary era, the real problem was the religion, caste, and so-called purists atmosphere.

Also the love affair of Bajirao-Mastani was not because of the dissatisfaction in Rau's marital life; he was very busy to think of all this, it was nothing but the undeniable chemistry between him and Mastani, the sheer love between them. He was destined to meet her when his own mother, brother, even his own wife went against him, he even was ready to sacrifice the post(s) of *Peshwa* and General of Maratha army. Finally, these all oddities and stress take toll on his health. He never wanted to do injustice to Kashibai. It was she who cut off the relationship with him. He even wanted to give equal right to *Bhikaji* who was his father's illegal son. He always thought one should be known by his ability. He knew that Maratha Empire under his leadership was winning every battle but was becoming bankrupt in debts (Rau, 80).

There is an interesting episode. Once he is playing chess with Kashibai in a very jovial and light mood. She is trying to explain him how to play and he doesn't understand the game. For him the real play is on the battlefield. He tells her he doesn't even remember that when his childhood shifted in young leadership in battles. By the time he could

understand and be mature, there already was a sword in his hand and it was full of blood of many from the battlefield (Rau, 88). There is a ring episode in 'Rau' too which reminds us of the famous ring episode in *The Merchant of Venice*. The ring episode here differs from the ring episode in Shakespeare. Bajirao very easily sacrifices the precious *Navagraha* ring brought for him by *Kashibai* to keep away an evil eye and gives it away to a boatman navigating to cross the greatly flooded river *Krishna* to meet his beloved Mastani. Such is the devotion and depth in love!! The poor boatman returns the ring later to Radhabai understanding the royal significance of it upon which Radhabai scolds him nastily. The courage and daring Peshwa has shown in love relation, is invincible. Similarly his courage sees no limit when he goes to meet *Neezam-ali* of Hyderabad and has negotiations and pact with him. He himself sums up his character saying that he lived in a trance right from the moment he had been made the Peshwa by Chhatrapati till that moment, he was daring in battle as well as love. He had sacrificed many things in life just like that so the advice of being patient and go slow is of no use for him (Rau, 143). This is the answer given by him when he was given advice of being patient by *Ambajipant* on the ring episode. This episode doesn't end here; later on Rau gives that ring to Mastani as a token of his love and his being of hers completely. He removed the *Navagraha* ring from his finger, kept it in the thali (plate) of *puja* (worship) which was offered to him by Mastani on *Diwali Padwa* Day, when women offer *puja* (*Aukshan* in Marathi) to their husbands for their long healthy life. He heaved a sigh of relief and said that that was the only thing left, now as I am giving you this ring I have become yours inside out (Rau, 385)

Similarly, the character of Mastani is also portrayed very peculiarly. She was not just an ordinary dancer and an epitome of beauty had an outstanding dancing skills, great devotion and depth in love. She deserves the *kumkum* on her forehead put by *Bajirao*. *Bajirao* thinks the lady in front of him was not an ordinary woman, she was not just the

common, the dancer but a heavenly damsel epitome of beauty. She had offered not only her love but her life as well for this unique man and this man (*Bajirao*) had accepted her with equal sensitivity. He had given her that special place in his heart and thus he applies the holy *kumkum* on her forehead. It is necessary to know here that applying a kumkum tilak has a special significance in Hindu culture. It is the symbol of *Saubhagyam* for Hindu women. (Rau, 146-147)

Both of them lived for each other. It was a divine chemistry. It was like where Rau will be, Mastani will always be there and vice versa... (Rau, 188). Mastani was attacked twice, but she was saved by Rau. Once she was made to leave Pune. Rau went after her and found her. It was unquestionably the true love. The palace priest *Krishna Bhat* typically represents the conservative Pune which was pretentious. He wanted Rau to do the penance for eating non-vegetarian food. Rau wanted to do penance by making Mastani his wedded wife and giving her place in Shaniwarwada, the official new residence of Peshwa. He built a special independent palace for her which was called *Mastani Mahal*. He wanted to do the holy thread ceremony for *Samsher* also thus giving him equal rights. He couldn't do that because of *Krishna Bhat*. In the end, all these oddities and ordeals of life took toll on his health. He feels helpless but courageous in front of the destiny; he expresses his mind to one of his trusted old soldiers saying he doesn't know to fight the war with destiny. He told the old soldier that when Bajirao was small he taught him how to play sword, how to fight war but he has not taught him to fight with destiny, he is the man who accepts the challenge and do not surrender (Rau, PP. 391). The ending of the novel is very moving. It makes the readers emotional with the true saga of love. Bajirao has fallen sick; he has a very high fever and is in his illusion considers Kashi as Mastani and leaves for his eternal abode in heaven.

Inamdar's language is undoubtedly his forte. The dialogues he had penned are unmatched to any other and keep reverberating in reader's mind. They take hold of our

mind. And the readers are drenched in emotions with this tragic and historic love story of Bajirao Peshwa (Rau) and Mastani. As Mastani herself had wished, her name is always taken with *Rau's* name as *Radha's* with Lord *Krishna*.

Transforming a Book into a Cinema

While transforming a fiction into a cinema, the director must consider the various aspects. In a novel we can read and develop our opinion about various characters. But in a cinema the point of view is of the director and it is portrayed in a frame before us readymade. American poet Vachel Lindsay in *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915) proclaimed the legitimacy of the motion picture as a great, high art on the basis of the parallels, it has with all the arts and its separateness from anyone of them. The moving picture (cinema) has far greater appeal in masses when we take into account its effectiveness. While establishing the legitimacy of film as an art, Einstein and Lindsay strongly consider the vast multifaceted canvas of movies. It is interesting to remember here that in expounding his famous theory of juxtaposition or montage, Einstein admitted that the novelist who influenced him the most was Charles Dickens. Though he was hardly the first to connect American Cinema to the 19th Century novel, his essay now serves as the 'locus classicus' of an important strain of criticism stressing direct ties between the film and the novel. While Lindsay and Einstein may have disagreed about the relation of film and literature, both wrote to assert legitimacy of film as an art. Making a cinema out of a book is an art. Gustav Faubert says; "the less you feel a thing the fitter you are to express it as it is..." But you must have the capacity to make yourself feel it. This capacity is what we call genius, the ability to see to have your model constantly posing in front of you. Cinema mediates ideas regarding nation, gender, caste, class, community and sexuality. This is particularly true in case of Bajirao-Mastani as it portrays the real story of historical characters in 18th century in 20th century frame. *Bajirao-Mastani*; 2015 film portrays the contemporary culture and tries to mediate

between the contemporary culture and present culture. Cinema relates in complex ways to the civic and the political and offers us several vantage points to tackle what *Rajadhyaksha* has termed the Bollywoodization of Indian Cinema (Rajadhyaksha, 2000). Indian Cinema is cultural reproduction. The study of Indian Cinema has a long and rich history. Cinema in India has been studied as a profoundly significant national popular domain that has negotiated various transitions and conflicts in the socio-cultural and political fabric of India for over a century now (Madsen, 1973). The point of view is described and unlike literature there is a scope for the development as there is no omniscience.

Bollywood has its own style of making movies and it cannot be escaped in *Bajirao Mastani* (2015) which is based on Marathi Novel, Rau (1974). Bollywood creates such a kind of atmosphere of make-believe world, which influences the real world and vice versa. Cinema is a medium of cultural gratification through meaningful films. Critic *Surendra Tiwari* says that Cinema is such an art which manipulates extremely innovative ways to express human experiences. *Bajirao–Mastani* is an apt example of this. North Korean leader *Kim Jong-il* in his treatise on Korean Cinema which applies to Indian cinema also; 'On the Art of The Cinema' says that revolutionizing cinema is a means of revolutionizing the whole art and literature. The cinema occupies an important place in the overall development of art and literature. As such it is a powerful ideological weapon for the revolution and construction. Therefore, concentrating efforts on the cinema, making breakthroughs and following up success in all areas of art and literature is the basic principle that we must adhere to in revolutionizing art and literature." (From the Preface of 'On the Art of the Cinema'). The present paper is an attempt to study and analyze the movie *Bajirao-Mastani* in this light. This film is an enjoyment as well as an attempt to throw light on how an eternal divine love is wasted in the hands of shoddy customs and traditions. Bhansali portrays it all through the suffering of his characters.

The Movie Bajirao-Mastani:

The movie opens on a very lofty frame showing the magnificent grandeur of Maratha Empire led by Chhatrapati Shahu and anointing Bajirao as the 'Peshwa' or Prime-minister and General of Maratha Empire. With his courage, talent and ability, his deserving skills, there is no turning back. His leadership skills, politically wise nature, his courage and valour knew no bounds. Under his leadership, the Maratha army lost not a single battle they fought. With his single call, everybody would follow him with announcements and sloganeering of '*Har-Har-Mahadev*'. Under his leadership, Maratha Empire started dreaming of establishing its rule on the entire Hindustan. In one such war spree, Mastani, the daughter of the Bundelkhand emperor king Chhatrasal, comes in his life. Bajirao gifts his own dagger to her which is very symbolic. Both of them fall in love with each other. He is captured by her charms while she is hypnotized by his personality. Peshwa goes to Bundelkhand to help the kingdom to free them from *Jauhar's* army. While returning mesmerized by her charms, he gifts his dagger (*Katyar*) to her which had a different significance in Bundelkhand. In Bundelkhand, accepting a dagger of a man like this is accepting him in wedding. Following *Peshwa's* trail his beloved reaches, the then capital of Maratha Empire Pune; which though royal has typical conservative atmosphere and on this backdrop the love story suffers to the great extent. She is unwelcome there. It is a tragic love story against a grand lush backdrop with graceful bejeweled women, gorgeous costumes and beautiful choreography. The love story is passionately portrayed but lasting impression is made of Kashibai by Priyanka Chopra. Her loss and anguish is felt by viewers. The story of Bajirao-Mastani is outstandingly emotional and passionate but can't root the viewers to what you get after reading the book. *Deepika* as Mastani looks beautiful but there are some moments where viewers may feel, that real Mastani should have been more than this. One also remembers the old Marathi serial *Rau* in which the actress *Ashwini Bhave* had played the role of

Mastani. Also, the *Bajirao's* struggle to balance as a general of Maratha Empire, between his duties and two wives is subtly reflected. At one place, between the conversation of Bajirao and Kashibai, after she came to know about Mastani, there is the mention of *Radha*. This conversation relates the love of Bajirao-Mastani to *Radha-Krishna* as a beautiful touchy episode, where Kashibai says that *Radha-Krishna* are always remembered together though *Rukmini's* love was also genuine. In a way, she tries to say that her love is also genuine, though Bajirao has unwavering love for Mastani. The casteist and religious stigma in contemporary Pune is strikingly portrayed. The portrayal of Radhabai is aptly done. She has all controls over the households of Shaniwarwada. She is very stubborn about her so-called pious and royal lineage. When her son, talks about penance by getting married to Mastani and giving her the official status of his wedded wife she respects her son, appreciates him but firmly asserts her displeasure and denial to do so.

Sandeep Charterjee's cinematography is refined and enlivens the movie atmosphere. There are many remarkable one liners e.g. Bajirao boasting about his sword fencing and his *assertive mention about his ishq, mohabatt (true love) for Mastani*. Other dialogues like Radhabai's scolding, *Nanasaheb's* outrage on his father for doing injustice to his mother, *Mastani's* monologues and that Marathi flavour given in between adds to the beauty of the movie. And the way *Ranveer Singh* while playing the role of Bajirao has done his dialogue delivery is surely commendable. His very presence gives the vibes about his courage, bravery, passion or his uniqueness. The only point in the movie where audience would hesitate about Bajirao is 'Bajirao-Peshwa' singing a song and dancing. 'Bajirao' of *Ranveer* is definitely an improved and long lasting performance on audience's mind and movie canvas. The Hindustan Times gave four stars out of five, terming it soaring, searing and visually sumptuous and wrote, "*Bajirao Mastani* plays out like an operatic swooning, feverish love poem" (Wikipedia). Bhansali has been successful in making it an epic romance tale which was in a

seed form in his mind taking shape more than a decade's time. Some critics have compared its grandeur and magnificence to *Mughal-E-Azam*. The true love is beyond religion, caste or any other compulsion. Though there is marital infidelity, having multiple love affairs and multiple wives was an absolutely common thing in the contemporary era. But *Priyanka's Kashi* has perfectly shown the hurt feeling of a wife. The cinematic liberty shows the two women dancing together as if there is a tinge of sisterhood, which would not have been possible in real life.

Thus the movie *Bajirao–Mastani* is a gorgeous movie about the tragic love story of *Peshwa Bajirao* and his half Muslim Princess Mastani. It has claimed many accolades, critic's appreciation and audience's approval. Though the ending of the novel sounds too dramatic that Bajirao has hallucinations in fever and his suffering and loneliness without Mastani, he meets his end considering *Kashi* also as Mastani in the end. But it manages to get desired impact in a superb way. It seems Bhansali had wanted to make this film for almost 12 years. We must accept, when he has completed it in 2015, its success knew no bounds.

A Comparative Perspective:

Comparative study is a significant area of research. Max Mueller says; "All higher knowledge is gained by comparison and rests on comparison" (Pathak, 1998, 25). Henry Gifford remarks in the same manner "A culture that ignores what is happening outside, very soon goes provincial and dies" (Gifford, 1969, PP. 81).² Matthew Arnold supports the same view. He has also emphasized the necessity of comparative study in order to understand one's own literature better. These critics have more or less the similar opinion which supports the view that comparative study is essential to understand any literary work or culture. What Matthew Arnold or Lionel Trilling have said of Literature as the mirror of life is true in case of Hindi cinema also. Anil Saari in his book; '*Hindi Cinema – An Insider's View* says'; "Hindi films have always reflected the prevailing mood of the society in the sense that

they have truly been entertainment for the masses. Hindi cinema continues to play a certain socio-political role, showing the world as it is by the light of its convictions and conventions."

The primary distinction between the novel and the cinema arises from the fact that the former is a verbal medium whereas the film's is essentially visual. Cinema is the combination of the first person and omniscient narration is common and will tell the perspective of all the characters. This is not possible in the book. *Rau* and *Bajirao-Mastani* both are equally two significant works of art chosen for the present study. It is, in fact, a journey from *Rau* to *Bajirao Mastani*. There is the theme of love and religious and casteist stigma which creates oscillating scenario in it. *Rau* is an outstanding story portrayed by Inamdar, however, it does not portray the details of battles of Peshwa. Dwelling upon the unrealistic aspects of movie is a tough task as well. The scenes where Kashibai and Mastani meet become dramatic and unreal. So is the case with the dance and music. Bajirao Peshwa is shown dancing after one of his battles, which is unimaginable through the contemporary social standards and also by the standards of royal stature. Some of the critics and veteran film actors like Nana Patekar have scathingly ironized meeting, and dancing of *Kashibai* and *Mastani* warning Bhansali about the Cheapness. They are not *Devdas's* girlfriend *Paro* and *Tawayaf* dancer *Chandramukhi* and cannot be compared to these women. Similarly, Bajirao Peshwa was a man of royal stature, the weight itself of his sword was beyond the capacity of any of people in 20th century. He is shown singing with his fellow mates which might not have happened. However, these all cinematic liberties can be neglected, keeping in mind otherwise remarkable aspects like acting, powerful story and setting of the movie. *Rau* and *Bajirao-Mastani* have mingled and connected with each other like as a sugar and syrup (water). She was *Kanchani* (as *Bajirao* himself calls her with respect). She could handle sword and horse riding very well. In both novel and cinema, she accompanied him everywhere. The

devotion of *Mastani* to Rau portrayed by Inamdar is exactly portrayed by Bhansali in the movie. In the novel, in an episode, *Mastani* calls him a storm, a very powerful personality while at the same time she means that she wants to be perfect for him. The devotion in their relationship as Rau mentions by saying, 'wherever Rau will be, Mastani will be with him; and wherever *Mastani* will be, *Rau* will be with her'. They are like two bodies and one soul (Aristotelian concept of love). Similar kind of tuning and being alter egos of each other is portrayed in the movie also. According to Bajirao the similar courage and devotion is required in love and war. The trance created as an impact of love is similar to the trance created after drinking alcohol. Though he acted to be tough and rough and stern, at core, he was fully sensitive and emotional. Similarly Mastani did not want to be away from him but was very adjustable and accommodative in adjusting and accepting whatever time they used to get in private. These all peculiarities in Rau are heightened in *Bajirao-Mastani* on screen and they add to the understanding of this saga of true love. There is a divine power in coming together of two souls. It is not only because of human efforts, this is what we finally say and agree too when *Bajirao* had said it.

Mastani of Rau is an ordinary dancer with a common background and of Muslim religion but Mastani of Bhansali is a half Muslim princess of Bundelkhand, the daughter of King Chhatrasal by his Muslim wife. In novel and in cinema she is like his shadow. The novel doesn't portray what happens to *Mastani* later on, while taking cinematic description, the movie shows both of their deaths. *Bajirao* dies at the battlefield at the banks of the River Narmada in Raverkhedi and *Mastani* in the harsh imprisoned confine in Pune.

While comparing these two works of arts one thing should be accepted undoubtedly and that is whether a novel or a movie it is heart-wrenching tale of two unfortunate lovers, who suffered and struggled utmost. Both the novel and the movie have successfully portrayed the tough times they went through.

Conclusion

The present paper has analyzed the transformation of book into a movie. Converting a book into a film is not an easy task. Bhansali has successfully done justice in recreating and reconstructing that reality, except for few unrealistic scenes, such as showing Peshwa Bajirao singing and dancing. This saga of true love keeps reverberating in our minds for days after we watch it. *Bajirao–Mastani* is a dazzling historical movie throwing light on unsuccessful love story of Bajirao the General and Prime-Minister, Peshwa of Maratha Empire and his second beloved wife, half Muslim princess of Bundelkhand, *Mastani*. Bhansali has reflected the contemporary historical ethos through magnificent settings along with the theme.

Thus, it portrays that true love is timeless and beyond all oddities of life. True love stories never have endings. True love is eternal, infinite and always like itself. It is peerless, pure and always young. The story of *Bajirao-Mastani*, be it in the novel or in the movie, is undoubtedly timeless. In modern times the love-stricken *Bajiraos and Mastanis* are difficult to find but the novel *Rau* as well as the movie *Bajirao-Mastani* creates the scope and space for true lovers. It is also noteworthy that the typical conservative atmosphere is vastly changed in the course of time.

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Assessment of Edmund Spenser as a Poet with Reference to *Amoretti*

* *Rajesh Kumar Lidiya*

This paper, based on *Spenser's Sonnets*, has been written with an aim to provide to the scholars, the knowledge of certain aspects of the writings of the poet who was a leading exponent of his time. The scholars of English Literature rejoice in knowing about the author and his Age because there is a lot of intellectual, religious, political and social significance attached to the author and his Age. An attempt has been made to analyze Edmund Spenser as a writer and a comparison with his contemporaries has been incorporated to ascertain the actual position of the writer during his own time.

The text dealt with here is the famous sonnet sequence, *Amoretti*. The historical and analytical aspect of this work has been attempted to draw the attention of the reader to certain facts, hitherto unknown and unrecognized. Critical notes have been provided for the sake of reference to enable the scholars to comprehend the background to this work, its historical significance and its current impact on the readers.

It was in the latter part of Elizabeth's reign that England found herself as a nation, and became conscious of her destiny as a world empire. A very important aspect was the patriotic enthusiasm of the age. Nearly two centuries of trouble and danger had passed since Chaucer died, and no national poet had appeared in England. The Renaissance came, and then the Reformation, but they brought no great writers with them. During the first thirty years of Elizabeth's reign not a single

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important literary work was produced; then suddenly appeared the poetry of Spenser and Chapman, the prose of Hooker, Sidney and Bacon, the dramas of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and a score of others, all voicing the national feeling after the defeat of the Armada, and growing silent as soon as the enthusiasm began to wane.

The Elizabethan age showed distinct literary characteristics. Next to the patriotic spirit of Elizabethan literature, its most remarkable qualities are its youthful freshness and vigour, its romantic spirit, its absorption in the theme of love, its extravagance of speech, its lively sense of the wonder of heaven and earth. The ideal beauty of Spenser's poetry, the bombast of Marlowe, the boundless zest of Shakespeare's historical plays, the romantic love celebrated in unnumbered lyrics, all these speak of youth, of springtime, of the joy and the heroic adventure of human living, which added a lot of flavor to life, thereby enriching the literary creations of the age.

This romantic zeal of Elizabethan poetry and prose may be explained by the facts that, besides the national impulse three other inspiring influences were at work. The first and foremost was the rediscovery of the classics of Greece and Rome, beautiful old poems, which were as new to the Elizabethans as to Keats when he wrote his immortal sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" - 'Much Have I Travell'd in the Realms of gold'. The second awakening factor was the widespread interest in nature and the physical sciences, which spurred many other Elizabethans besides Bacon to "take all knowledge for his province." This new interest was generally romantic rather than scientific, was more concerned with marvels, like the philosopher's stone that would transmute all things to gold, than the simple facts of nature. Bacon's chemical changes, which follow the "instincts" of metals, are almost at par with those other changes described by Shakespeare in his dramas. The third factor which stimulated the Elizabethan imagination was the discovery of the world beyond the Atlantic, a world of wealth, of beauty, of unmeasured opportunity for brave spirits, in

regions long supposed to be possessed of demons, monsters, Othello's impossible cannibals that each other eat, the Anthropophagi, and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders.

Another significant addition to the scene was when Drake returned from his voyage around the world. He brought to England two things: a tale of vast regions just over the world's rim that awaited English explorers and a ship loaded to the hatches with gold and jewels. The queen and her favourites shared the treasure with Drake's buccaneers, and the New World seemed to them a place of barbaric splendor, where the savage's rattled hut was roofed with silver, his garments beaded with all precious jewels. Before the American settlements opened England's eyes to the stern reality of things, it was the romance of the New World that appealed most powerfully to the imagination, and influenced Elizabethan literature to an extent which we have not yet begun to measure.

There was a prominent role of foreign influence on all the developments of this age. It is possible to comprehend the imitative quality of early Elizabethan poetry if we go through it in the light of these facts: that in the sixteenth century, England was far behind other European nations in culture; that the Renaissance had influenced Italy and Holland for a century before it crossed the Channel; that, at a time when every Dutch peasant read his Bible, the masses of English people remained in dense ignorance, and the majority of the official classes could neither read nor write. So, when the new national spirit began to express itself in literature, Englishmen turned to the more cultured nations and began to imitate them in poetry, as in dress and manners.

A lot has been focused on the contemporary writers of Edmund Spenser in the passages above, dealing with the life history and Age of Spenser. According to the common literary notion, the life and works of Spenser are usually seen with reference to his great predecessor Chaucer. He was a contemporary of one of the greatest writers in English i.e. William Shakespeare. If we compare them, we find many

similarities as well as dissimilarities. The birth-year of each poet is determined by inference. The circumstances in which each died are a matter of controversy.

It is quite interesting to compare Spenser with his predecessor Chaucer. What sure information we have of the intervening events of the life of each one is scanty and interrupted. So far as our knowledge goes, their lives had some slight positive resemblances. They were both connected with the highest society of their times; both enjoyed court favour, and enjoyed it in the substantial shape of pensions. They were both men of remarkable learning. They were both natives of London. They both died in the close vicinity of Westminster Abbey, and lie buried near each other in that splendid cemetery. Their geniuses were eminently different: that of Chaucer was the active type, Spenser's of the contemplative; Chaucer was dramatic, Spenser philosophical: Chaucer objective, Spenser subjective; but in the external circumstances, so far as we know them, amidst which these great poets moved, and in the mist which for the most part enfolds those circumstances, there is considerable likeness. Spenser is frequently alluded to by his contemporaries; they most ardently recognized in him, as we shall see, a great poet, and one that might justly be associated with the one supreme poet whom this country had then produced, with Chaucer, and they paid him constant tributes of respect and admiration.

Although born to parents of modest income, Edmund Spenser was still able to receive an impressive education at the Merchant Taylors' School, and Pembroke College at Cambridge. He learned enough Latin to read and understand poets such as Ariosto and Virgil, both of whom his works are frequently compared to. Latin literature reached its peak with the publication of the *Aeneid* shortly after Virgil's death. His epic heavily influenced succeeding poets throughout Western literature. Ever since people have compared *The Shepheardes Calender*, one of Spenser's early works, to Virgil's *Eclogues*, "Critics have judged Spenser's poetry by its fidelity to Virgilian models" according to Watkins. Spenser, who was referred to

as the "English Virgil" by his contemporaries, was certainly influenced by Virgil's success says Kennedy. The idea of modeling one's career after Virgil's is known as the *rota Virgilli* or *cursus Virgilli*, meaning "the Virgilian wheel or course".

It was also assumed by his friends and contemporaries that he wrote the famous poem *The Faerie Queene* in hope that Queen Elizabeth would be impressed by his work and bring him back to England from Ireland, reversing his exile. From what is known today, he has been known to despise the natives who live there; The Irish were highly discriminated against since they were considered the scum of England by a very large part of the population. *The Faerie Queene* has moral value, conveys important meanings, and pleases the reader. However, its storylines, characters, and ideas severely lack both creativity and originality. Some scholars believe Spenser did not have sufficient education to compose a work with as much complexity as *The Faerie Queene*, while others are still "extolling him as one of the most learned men of his time". Scholar Douglas Bush agrees. "Scholars now speak less certainly than they once did of his familiarity with ancient literature" In contrast, Meritt Hughes "finds no evidence that Spenser derived any element of his poetry from any Greek romance."

Spenser was known to his contemporaries as 'the prince of poets', as great in English as Virgil in Latin. He left behind him masterful essays in every genre of poetry, from pastoral and elegy to epithalamion and epic. Although his prose treatise on the reformation of Ireland was not published until 1633, it showed even then a shrewd comprehension of the problems facing English government in Ireland, and a capacity for political office as thorough as his literary ability. Milton was later to claim Spenser as 'a better teacher than Aquinas', and generations of readers, students, and scholars have admired him for his subtle use of language, his unbounded imagination, his immense classical and religious learning, his keen understanding of moral and political philosophy, and his unerring ability to synthesize and, ultimately, to delight. He was criticized by the lines of Philip

Sidney, Ben Jonson and Daniel but at the same time poets like Charles Lamb called him, "the poet's poet" and Milton called him, "our sage and serious poet".

The text here deals with the sonnets of Edmund Spenser which have been selected from his famous sonnet sequence *Amoretti*. This work is famous for its autobiographical note as well as its technical perfection which brought appreciation to the author in his own time and is rated by scholars of the present day as a work of great eminence. In order to understand it to its depth, the scholars ought to dig deep into the historical and analytical aspects of *Amoretti*.

The literary period of great writers like Spenser and Shakespeare, or the English Renaissance period is roughly termed between 1485-1660. In 1557, the year before Elizabeth became Queen of England, Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, were both inspired by the Italian humanist and poet Francis Petrarch, and were thus responsible for introducing Petrarch to England. The Petrarchan vogue illustrates how conscious the poets of Renaissance England were of their predecessors. Renaissance poets wrote with one eye on their subject and the other on what previous poets had said about the subject. They aimed at making new poems that used the themes and forms of older poems. Therefore, in other words, they were not known to be too creative in the themes. A kind of writing, known as pastoral, enabled poets and storytellers to portray leisured and educated people as though they were shepherds or other country dwellers. English poets also drew on their personal experiences, but they depended on traditional ways of expressing those experiences. During the Renaissance, all the poems were always in meter and rhyme.

Edmund Spenser is known as "the poet's poet" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because so many young writers learned the art and craft of poetry by studying him. He graduated from Merchant Taylor's school and then went to Cambridge University where he received the B.A. and M.A. degrees. His first book was *The Shepherd's Calendar* in 1579. In 1580, Spenser and his new wife went to Ireland.

The locals did not like him because he was given an Irish castle and huge estate.

Spenser eventually met Walter Raleigh and the two met to discuss their current projects. Impressed by Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*, Raleigh persuaded Spenser to join him on a trip to London in 1589, and while there, Books I-III of *The Faerie Queen* were published. In 1591, he returned to Ireland. After his first wife died, Spenser courted and married Elizabeth Boyle, an Anglo-Irish lady. His sonnet sequence *Amoretti* and his marriage hymn *Epithalamion* have often been read autobiographically as records of his devotion to Elizabeth. During a raid in Ireland, Spenser's castle was burned and his infant son killed. Spenser then travelled to London and died in 1599. Along with Chaucer and Milton, Spenser has long been regarded as England's greatest nondramatic poet.

The Amoretti is a sonnet cycle or sequence composed of 89 sonnets. By Spenser's time, the collection of sonnets loosely organized around a poet's love for a lady was becoming a commonplace achievement. Sidney's example, *Astrophil and Stella*, was published in 1591, five years after the poet's death, and even before that time it had been circulating unofficially among the poet's friends and relatives in manuscript form. Other sonnet cycle poets were Samuel Daniel (*Delia*, 1592), Michael Drayton (*Idea*, 1594 and 1619), Fulke Greville (*Caelica*, 1633), and William Shakespeare (*Sonnets*, 1609).

The *Epithalamion* is a wedding song derived from Latin originals which, in the earliest days of the empire, actually were sung by choirs of young men and women who accompanied the bride and groom from her parents' house to her future husband's family's house where they would spend the wedding night. The name, a Greek loan word incorporated into Latin, means "at the bridal chamber", from "thalamus" or bridal chamber.

Spenser's sonnet varied interestingly from Sidney's in its rhyme scheme. Sidney, striking away from Wyatt's and Surrey's closer adherence to the Petrarchan octave and sestet,

usually produced sonnets in the three-quatrain-and-couplet pattern, though he delighted in deceiving his readers by occasionally delaying the stanza break. The rhyme scheme, which usually plays in harmony with the stanza structure, followed a wide variety of patterns other than the typical English scheme of abab cdcd efef gg or Wyatt's more traditional, concatenated Petrarchan octave and sestet scheme of abba abba cdc cdc. The "aa" rhyme in the middle of the octave and the "cc" in the middle of the sestet form two internal links in a "chain" of rhyme.

Spenser, looking back over these alternatives, decided that concatenation offered the best rhyme scheme, but also that the quatrain-couplet strategy gave him the most flexibility to tell a complex poetic "story" within each poem. So most of the *Amoretti* sonnets rhyme in this stanza form: abab bcbc cdcd ee. The chained linkage of his quatrains allowed them either to evolve logically from one another, or to suddenly wheel logically against the previous quatrain while turning on the "axle" of the concatenated rhyme. For an example of the cumulative logical development strategy, see the first sonnet in the sequence, especially its couplet's opposition of "subdew" (with its outrageously spelled pun on the waters that submerged the poets beach combing words) and "renew" (with its implied linkage of the lovers' souls via the wedding sacrament to their resurrection at the last judgment).

The Epithalamion is composed in 24 immensely complex 18-line stanzas whose rhyme schemes vary but use Spenser's typical concatenation strategy to link each stage of the stanza together. A. Kent Hieatt's *Short time's Endless Monument* (1960) demonstrated that each of the 24 stanzas corresponds to an hour of Midsummer's Day, very nearly the day on which Spenser married Elizabeth Boyle on 6/11/1594. Thus, the wedding poem is a compressed version of the larger cyclic view of the love we see in *Amoretti*. Each stanza but the last ends with some form of the phrase "your/our/theyre Ecco ring" and "Ne....nor your/our/theyre Ecco ring." At the poem's "midnight," in stanza 24, the speaker apologizes for

“ornaments” that should have arrived but that this poem substitutes for making “for short time an endless monument”. The poet’s persona in these poems is very closely linked to Edmund Spenser, himself and the poet’s beloved very closely linked to Elizabeth Boyle, who married Spenser in 1594, the year before these poems were published.

According to literary historians, sonnets originated during the Renaissance period of European history. The word sonnet means “a little song”, and given the general literacy rate of Europe at the time, they probably were originally sung or spoken, rather than read. There are three main varieties of sonnets, named after the poets that popularized them; these varieties are Petrarchan, Spenserian and Shakespearean. Regardless of variety, all sonnets share certain characteristics that make them sonnets. All sonnets have these characteristics in common: Fourteen lines, a regular rhyme scheme and metrical composition, usually iambic pentameter.

It is clear that a sonnet is a poem of 14 lines, usually in iambic pentameter, and with a structural balance between the first 8 lines called the octave and the last 6 called the sestet. The arrangement of the fourteen lines, and the rhyme scheme, depends on the particular variety of sonnet. Introduced in 13th –Century Italy, the sonnet was established by Petrarch as a major form of love poetry, and was adapted in French and English vernacular literature in the late 16th-century. Sydney, Spenser, and Shakespeare wrote outstanding sonnets, a tradition that was continued by Donne, Milton, Keats, Wordsworth, Baudelaire, and Mallarme. The sonnet has remained one of the most popular and adaptable of all poetic forms. Among recent distinguished poets who have composed sonnets are Dylan Thomas, Robert Lowell, and Seamus Heaney. The conventions associated with the sonnet have changed during its history. The English poets usually use iambic pentameter when writing sonnets.

Spenser’s Amoretti

Spenser bestowed on his sequence of eighty-nine sonnets

the Italian name of *Amoretti*. His heroine, his "sweet warrior" as he calls her in sonnet 57, is the child of Petrarch's *dolce guerriera*. His imagery is, at times, assimilated with little change from the sonnets of his contemporary Tasso, while Ronsard and Desportes give him numerous suggestions, although he rarely stoops to mere verbal translation of foreign verse. Spenser's *Amoretti* were addressed to Lady Elizabeth Boyle, whom he wooed and who finally became his wife. A strand of autobiography was woven into the borrowed threads. Yet it is very occasionally that he escaped altogether from the fetters of current convention, and gave free play in his sonnets to his poetic genius.

In this sonnet sequence, Spenser's sentiment professedly ranges itself with continental and classical idealism. In two sonnets he identifies his heroine with the Petrarchan or Neo-Platonic character of beauty, which had lately played a prominent part in numberless French sonnets by Du Bellay, Desportes, Pontus de Tyard, Claude de Pontoux and others. Many Elizabethan sonneteers marched under the same banner. Drayton, in conferring on his sonnets the title *Idea*, claimed to rank with the Italian and French Platonists. But Spenser sounds the idealistic note far more clearly than any contemporary. A very good example to this effect is sonnet 45. Like the French writers, Spenser ultimately disclaims any mortal object of adoration in ecstatic recognition of the superior fascination of the character as in sonnet 87:

Through contemplation of my purest part,
With light there of I do myself sustain,
And thereon feed my love affamish'd heart.

Spenser's poem is different from earlier poetry in the sense that it is personal in note. This becomes a striking feature. The poet places himself in the centre of the poem, telling us about his personal situation, emotions and convictions. Such poetry, which expresses the poet's emotions, is called lyric. Lyric poetry became very popular in Spenser's time, the Renaissance, because people began to be interested in the individual. As a literary fashion, in the Middle Ages man was seen as a part of a community but in the sixteenth century

he came to be seen as an individual, unlike every other man. This individualism is reflected in Elizabethan poetry, of which Edmund Spenser is one of the greatest representatives.

In this sonnet, addressed to his wife, Spenser claims to give her immortality in his verse. He does so by starting from a very ordinary, very charming incident that may occur any day in summer by the seaside. The situation is therefore a general one, but Spenser handles it in such a way as to make it intimately personal. Spenser was well-skilled in making optimum use of his imagination, which creates a picture of tender young love through the conversation between his lady and himself, absorbed in each other, against the background of the eternal sea. He would like to preserve this experience forever, but the waves wipe out her name just as cruel time destroys every man-made thing. He is reluctant to accept this situation. He feels confident that he will be able to immortalize his love by a different kind of writing, his poetry, no matter how short life on earth may be. At the same time the writing of the lady's name, which is the central image of the poem, is transferred from earth to heaven. Love, poetry and religious belief are closely associated, which make his sonnets richer to read.

If we make an analysis on the technical front, Spenser's poetry is at a very high level. He uses simple words so skilfully that they create a complete, harmonious picture. After the action of the first quatrain he switches to the dialogue in the second and third, to conclude with the couplet which summarizes the theme of the sonnet. Spenser's perfect handling of vowels and the wavelike rhythm of his poem can only be appreciated when the sonnet is read aloud so as to bring out its melody. His frequent use of alliteration binds the poem together. Hence he keeps up his level of perfection for which he is famous.

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Women as Subaltern in Patriarchal Construct: Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* and Tehmina Durrani's *Blasphemy*

*Shamenaz Bano

Women have always been considered as subaltern in the patriarchal society be it India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. In the ancient times, there were many rigid customs and traditions imposed on them in the name of religion, making their lives miserable. There were child-marriages common both in Hindus and Muslim societies. While Muslims had the "purdah" system for women, Hindus had the customs of Sati. Now, because of the efforts led by many social reformers and the influence of Western education, tremendous changes have occurred in our society making it liberal day-by-day but still women have long way to go to achieve real emancipation.

The present paper highlights the efforts made by two great writers namely, Bapsi Sidhwa and Tehmina Durrani of the Sub-continent in highlighting the problems of women in patriarchal society. Both these writers have tried to focus on various problems relating with the existence of women in a society which is bound by age-old norms and customs hindering the progress of women. Bapsi Sidhwa in *Water* has thrown light on the plight of widows in Hindu society in 1930s when they had to follow many rigid rules and regulations. While Tehmina Durrani in her novel, *Blasphemy* has highlighted the misinterpretation of religion by some clergy men for their own benefit making the lives of women miserable.

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Water is the fifth novel of Bapsi Sidhwa which is based on the ill-treatment meted to women in pre-partitioned India when their lives were very miserable. Sidhwa, who was born in undivided India, in 1938 in Karachi and brought up by her parents in Lahore, now lives in Houston, Texas, USA. Though author of four popular novels, she is best known for her collaborative work with Canadian Indian filmmaker, Deepa Mehta.

Deepa Mehta adapted her novel, *Ice Candy Man* (1991) into a critically acclaimed Bollywood movie in 1998 naming it '*Earth*' and with this their collaboration started. Later, Sidhwa wrote a novel, *Water* based on Deepa Mehta's movie of the same name released in 2005. It was a wish by the producer herself for Bapsi Sidhwa. And credit goes to her commendable writing style which took story to a different level by adding more background to some characters including child widow giving a more interesting touch. For writing this novel she has read extensively about the customs and traditions of India focusing more on widow system. By doing so, she was able to justify the background of each customs and traditions portrayed in the film and novel.

The story of *Water* is set in pre-partitioned India in 1938 when the customs related with widows were very rigid. The protagonist of the novel is a little girl named Chuiya (mouse in Hindi) who was betrothed at an early age of 6 and became widow at a tender age of 8. In olden days, Hindu religion followed strict rules and regulations regarding widow, they were discarded from the house to the widow ashram or if they lived in their own house they were discarded from the family to live a secluded life. With their head shaven, only allowed to wear white cotton sari without blouse and any jewellery to wear or cosmetics to use. With no proper food to eat and just one meal a day for them, they were only allowed to sleep on the ground. They were not allowed to take part in any festivities and were barred from all types of gatherings. On festive days, they had paltry alms by temple-goers where they had to wait like beggars and on regular days were given a cup of rice and a fistful of lentils for every 8-hour of singing

and dancing in temple. So this was sustenance for almost all widows if not for some. If on any occasion, she was too sick to perform then she had to starve as she was not offered food to eat. There were many other harsh rules imposed on them in the name of religion. In this way their lives were given over to penitence although, all these rules and regulations do not exist in today's scenario. But the story of the novel is of olden days when such customs were prevalent in the Hindu society with the backdrop of Indian freedom struggle at its height. The story revolves around Chuyia, the young widow dealing with these harsh rules and regulations of widowhood.

After attaining widowhood, Chuiya was sent to the widow ashram in Varanasi where she was supposed to live her entire life serving the ashram and following the tradition as imposed on her by the society. There were many widows in the ashram of different age groups from across the country. Kalyani, one of the widows living in the ashram, is a beautiful lady who had a secret admirer, Narayan, a young and charming upper-class revolutionary and an ardent follower of Gandhism. Kalyani is forced into prostitution by the head of the ashram to support it. Shakuntala is one of the widows of the ashram who look after various activities involved in the ashram.

The novel, *Water* is an account of struggle of widows in the ashram and society at the time of pre-partitioned India. They had to face various strict rules and problems in every spheres of life without any complain. Reflecting the society of 1938, a period of British colonial power when, it was a time when in the Hindu society, the marriage of young girls to olden men was commonplace in certain parts of India. And if the husband died, especially in the Brahmin family his young widow was asked or forced to spend rest of her life in a widow's ashram; this was a type of punishment given to her because she was held responsible for her husband's death. In this way it was to make amends for the sins from her previous life which supposedly caused her husband's death.

Chuiya is one such victim of this ideology leading a miserable life at such an age when she is supposed to play

with toys. Because of her husband's death, she is considered as a bad omen by her family and society. She never met her husband but is guilty of his death and is forced to self-renunciation. This ill-practice was prevalent in pre-partitioned India but with the rise of many social reformers including Gandhiji, a new ray of hope enlightened for them. This was also a time when Gandhi was at the peak of freedom and nationalist movements, he was also advocate of social movement in India including the change in ideology regarding widows.

Chuiya, being a widow, was not allowed to touch non-widows, even she was not allowed to cast her shadow on them. She is mostly confined to the four walls of ashram engaging her in praying or fasting in atonement for the sin which she has not committed. According to the Hindu belief, widowhood was the direct consequences of the sin committed in the past life as they believe in reincarnation. Women are much freer now as in the olden days they were not allowed to remarry. Question arises as to why widows were treated in this way in India before independence? Answer goes deep rooted in the religion, in Brahmanical tradition, a woman is recognised as a person only when she is with her husband. She has no identity, no existence outside her marriage. Hence, it was necessary that if her husband dies, she should leave everything and cease to exist. This ideology was also responsible for the barbaric act of Sati; the burning of the wife with the funeral pyre of her husband. Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy fought for the abolition of Sati. Credit also goes to the British Laws which also outlawed it. But things were favourable for the men in the society as they were allowed to remarry, keep as many mistresses as they wish or visit prostitutes. And for all these they always took the refuge in religion.

We see examples in the novel when one Brahmin claims that it is their holy texts which allow Brahmins to sleep with any women of his choice, and the women they sleep are the blessed one according to religion. This is the hypocrisy and double standard of the male-dominated society concerning

women and particularly widowed women which the novel exposes. The novelist throws lights on the pains and sufferings of the widows and completely sympathizes with them. Sidhwa herself is related with many humanitarian issues relating women ever since her very young age. In an interview given to the TV channel, she accounts the post partition days, when she helped refugees out of her wits and even against her religion. This maybe one of the reasons that she is able to do justice with the character and even relate herself with the woman who rescued Chuiya and Shakuntala from their miseries.

Water, a heart-touching story leaves reader spellbound with real and sensitive characters leaving a mark whoever reads it. These realistic characters reflects the spirit of the age when society was very different than today's. Though the story of the novel revolves around the protagonist, Chuiya but antagonist Madhumati is of vital importance. The novel opens with the depiction of childhood scene, when Chuiya was at her parent's home. She was a small kid, playing with dolls and games with her brothers. She was inquisitive child with fascination for everything she sees and hears, wandering like a bird in the forests for fruits. She was very soft at heart as we can see her rescuing a pup stuck in a ditch. In such an age she was married when she didn't know the meaning of marriage. For her it was merriment with good food to eat during the wedding rituals with beautiful dress and jewelleryes to wear. She was living in imagination unaware of her surroundings and the impact of marriage on her life. She is very unfortunate that at this tender age her husband dies and she was abandon by her family and in-laws and was left in an ashram for renunciation.

The life in ashram is very hard for her as she never feels at home there and wants to leave it. She wants to change the hard rituals which she finds difficult to follow like fasting and praying all times and also some other self- degrading things like begging. Having an inquisitive nature, she asks questions with elders all the times. Sidhwa has done justice with the character of Chuiya by making it so innocnet that

readers have full sympathy with her throughout the novel.

Madhumati, the eldest widow and the decision-maker in the ashram is a shrewd lady. A person who is hated as well as flattered because of the power she possess, her friend Gulabi an eunuch who is the pimp of the ashram. Is it they who have forced Kalyani into prostitution. Here the hypocrisy is visible as they follow customs and traditions strictly but are involved in such evil act. But Madhumati believes that God will not question her because she is doing all this for the survival. She is an ironical character as though forcing Kalyani into prostitution she instructs other saying, "We must live in purity to die in purity". The other widows did not like her but they fear to question her. Only Shakuntala, a middle aged and enigmatic woman dares to challenge her. A devout Hindu, she is also able to read and write and seeks the counsel of a senior priest, Sadananda. He guides Shakuntala making her aware of her circumstances which has made her and the lives of other widows miserable. He wants her to differentiate between true faith and hypocrisy.

Kalyani, the young and beautiful widow being forced into prostitution for the sake of existence of other widows is being disrespected by them. She has a special status and is not bound to follow strict customs like other widows. She fell in love with Narayan, a man of progressive ideas who wanted to marry Kalyani and she being in his spell breaks rigid rules and also Madhumati's instructions. She further refuses to entertain any clients. She is both innocent and mature but is caught in the whirlpool of her own wish and society. Being attracted towards Chuiya's innocence she makes her friend.

Narayan, an ideal man represents the new India who is modern and does not believe in any kind of orthodoxy. Upholding independent outlook, he is firm in decision to marry Kalyani and is ready to fight against the society, even his family for her. He has a noble thought to adopt Chuiya and make her life better. Sidhwa has portrayed his character as a representative of new India who keeps a balance between politics and literature; he is against British but want to recite Keats poetry in independent India. Being a rationalist, he

questions archaic laws laid down in Manusmriti and later Vriddha Hirata. He exposes Kalyani to modern thoughts of the 20th century like widow-remarriage who inspired by him influences Shakuntala and Chuiya. He is responsible for changing the fate of Chuiya.

Sidhwa is master in the art of story-telling and defining her characters perfectly. It is her characters in the novel which holds you to the text than the story. Reading *Water*, one feels sympathetic with plight of widows especially Chuiya. It is her craftsmanship that one visualizes the situation while reading her novels whether it is *Ice-Candy Man*, *Pakistani Bride*, *Crow Eaters* or *An American Brat*. She is excellent in portraying her characters with realistic feelings, thoughts and actions. Because of her eloquence manner of writing, one feel connected with the characters in their happiness and sorrows. She has presented negative stories in positive manner; although there are gray characters but not black in her stories. As these characters also exhibit some positivity in some way or other like Madhumati sympathizes seeing the plight of Chuiya. What she did was wrong but she thinks she did this for the existence of widows.

In the novel, Sidhwa has highlighted an issue which is of no relevance now as society in the present scenario has completely transformed in terms of rights of widows but it was a time when such things were happenings in our society. Women in those days have suffered a lot due to rigid customs and traditions imposed on them by the society. Their strength to bear all these is beyond imagination and very difficult to imagine in present scenario. In the olden days, the survival of widows in the society was very hard. They were held responsible for the death of their husbands due to the bad deeds of previous birth. It was a curse bestowed on them due to the sin committed in their previous birth hence they have to redeem themselves from their guilt in this birth leading to a life of hardship following the strict rules decided by the society for them. Their sufferings, pains and agonies are very difficult to experience. Being deprived from the society they had often questioned God and Holy Books but their questions

remained unanswered. Sidhwa, a prolific writer of the sub-continent has painted their sufferings with all her passion giving details of all shades and sides of their situations and lives. This shows her genius and versatility. Her strength lies in the ability to make a point without underlining it.

An emotional and touching story, *Water* draws our attention towards an era when the widows had to live in great hardship. Their plight can be summed up in the sense that they were held responsible for the deaths of their husbands. It was a sin for them from which they had to go through the process of salvation throughout their lives following those strict customs and traditions which are difficult to examine in the 21st century. Like in *Ice- Candy Man*, Sidhwa has tried to depict the tragedy through the eye of a child. It is really commendable that Indian society after independence come out from the shackles of such of such orthodoxy and superstitions. We have marched much ahead and now a widow can enjoy all kinds of liberties like other women.

Tehmina Durrani, the famous writer from Pakistan is an illustrious controversial writer catapulted to fame with the publication of her autobiography, *My Feudal Lord*, (1991). It won Italy's prestigious Marissa Bellasario Prize and has been translated into twenty two languages. In this book, she has written about her trauma and torture during her life with her husband, Gulam Mustafa Khar. She has also written Abdul Sattar Edhi's biography, '*A Mirror to the Blind*'.

'*Blasphemy*' is an enticing maiden novel by Tehmina Durrani. Angry and courageous in outlook, the novel places Durrani among the foremost writers of the Indian sub-continent. This novel has been lauded throughout the world for her courage. Durrani is the first woman in the Islamic World who has openly shown the misuse of religion by some Muslim clergy. She has shown that how people twist religious sayings for their benefit. Hence she fears threatened from Muslim fundamentalist on this. The novel has been lauded because it takes a lot of courage to deconstruct and expose the myths that fetter women in suffocating life. An extract

from the book reveals the whole story:

To me, my husband was my son's murderer. He was also my daughter's molester. A parasite nibbling on the Holy Book, he was Lucifer, holding me by the throat and driving me to sin every night. He was Bhai's destroyer, Amma Sain's tormentor. He had humbled Ma, exploited the people. He was the rapist of orphans and the fiend that fed on the weak. But over and above all this, a man closest to Allah, the one who could reach Him and save us. (143)

These are the words of the protagonist Heer, for her husband Pir Sain, who is brutal and corrupt but considered as the man of God. The novel, *Blasphemy*, is a tragic story of the beautiful Heer, who was married to Pir Sain at the age of fifteen. Pir Sain was dazzled by her beauty when he saw her with her mother, who came as a victim of circumstances to seek his blessings. Although being much older than her, he married Heer and made her second wife.

People have different notions regarding, polygamy in Islam which Holy Quran endorses up to the limit of four wives per man. The Prophet, of course, lived at a time when continual warfare produced large numbers of widows, who were left with little or no provision for themselves and their children. In these circumstances, polygamy was encouraged as an act of charity. Needless to say, the widows are not necessarily young women, but usually mothers of many children, who came as part of the deal. Polygamy is no longer common, for various good reasons.

Pir married her because he was fascinated by her beauty but never loved her. He made her his slave and forced her do those deeds which she never dreamt of. She followed her like a mute spectator but he never respected her individuality and never loved her. Throughout her life she has been humiliated, rejected by her husband. He forced her to be involved in many of misdeeds including the rapes of orphans. Heer's agony can be summed up in the following lines:

Love's absence ailed me. I could not imagine

loving my husband. He was a superior and I did not know how to love and be subservient together. Nor had he ever thought of me as a human being, let alone a woman. For no reason had he ever softened towards me, I had stirred him that little. (149)

Heer's husband was a sexual lecher and was not satisfied with one woman but still he was Pir in the eyes of people and was worshipped by them because they were ignorant about his evil nature. He enjoyed a high status in the society being the centre of respect and attention and never suffered on any ground. As Heer comments:

As Yazid, the tyrant of Karbala, never suffered even from a headache, people believed that he was blessed by Allah. But that was a misinterpretation. In reality, Allah had abandoned him completely. He wanted nothing to do with him. (162)

Pir treated Heer very badly and throughout her life she had to bear his atrocities to such an extent that she herself became a dead soul. The Holy Quran states that: "Wives need to be treated fairly and equally—a difficult requirement even for a rich man. Moreover, if a husband wishes to take a second wife, he should not do so if the marriage will be to the detriment of the first." The novel depicts Heer's struggle, whose life is like a nightmare, unbearable for any human being. Living with Peer, she loses her dignity, her freedom, even her humanity till she comes to a resolution to expose the evil-man to the world. And she does this though she herself is ruined in this process. □ She being a weak, fragile woman challenges the supremacy of Pir. As the lines from the novel indicates: Pir Sain was a symbol of munafiqat. I was a soldier. This was a jihad. (181)

This is indeed a very difficult for a woman who is compelled to live a life of seclusion from the outer world to raise her voice against the misinterpretation of religion by her own husband. Living in purdah she made up her mind to fight against the age-old conventions and norms prevalent

in the society in the name of religion. As she herself says: "...my mind was consumed with the idea of purdah. From behind it no call for help could be heard. An abandoned species was trapped in a forbidden world. Everything corrupt happened under the shroud, when it was off a faceless and nameless woman appeared." (164)

Blasphemy is set up in Pakistan, reflecting the struggle of protagonist in the hands of his husband, who is a hypocrite. Although Heer is the most important female character in the novel but there some other minor female characters which are of great importance. Cheel is one such character in the novel which plays a pivotal role in motivating Heer in her attempt to fight with Pir. In the beginning Heer thought her to be an arrogant and vindictive person but later on it was she who was a great support of Heer in her struggle for justice as she herself was a victim of Pir Sain.

The picture which emerges by reading Tehmina Durrani's *Blasphemy* is very dismal. Through Heer, Durrani has provided an insight into the life of a woman bound in a traditionally orchestrated institutional discourses and practices that maintain the regulation of wife. Not only this but in Heer she has also depicted the desire of a woman who wants to break free from the conservative, rigid social and religious rules and conventions of the society which subjugates her. She has raised a voice of a house-wife who has strived to free herself from the age old norms and conventions. However, Durrani's aim seems to be in reflecting the projection of wife's status in the patriarchal society but at the same time she has depicted the power which a woman possesses although being a part of a tradition bound society. A society which completely believes in the commodification of women at all levels. She dares to challenge the objectification and domestic violence inflicted on women and how they can resist patriarchal power and improve their position within the institutions of oppression. For this they have adopt strategies to counter patriarchal values and contradict the marital assumptions responsible for their affliction. Any woman belonging to any section of the society

including the most marginalized and subaltern can improve her status and can challenge the so-called male supremacy if she wishes because she has capability and ability to do so. This implies to all the women irrespective of any ethnic group.

The novel is intense because it is a reflection of Tehmina's own tortured self. The presence of truth leaves a bitter taste in those readers who want women to be dominated by Islam's misinterpreted clauses. The truth is not always sweet. The presence of autobiographical elements makes it intense. As we can see the reflection of Heer's struggle as Durrani's own struggle in her autobiography, '*My Fuedal Lord.*' In her autobiography Durrani realizes that her husband Mustafa Khar deserted his previous wives because they had been weak and submissive, she tries to be less affected by his cruel treatments, and challenges him in open battle. Eventually learning to manoeuvre their fights onto his territory she writes:

The change in me was slow but sure. I had evolved. I was no longer the timid, docile, self-effacing little girl that he married. I was becoming a woman. I felt that I had to be heard in order for him to realise when he was wrong. I obeyed whatever he would impose on me but there was now a difference. It seemed that I performed under duress. I had developed a look which conveyed defiance and disagreement. Mustafa was caught on the wrong foot. He had to reassess his strategy and evolve new tactics to cope with my diffidence. (79)

Through her writings we can see the subjugation of the Muslim women in the hands of their male counterparts but she has also depicted these oppressed women transforming themselves into decision maker and raising to power through their own won efforts and at the same time handling all the domestic confrontations. It is she who had been courageous enough to follow these confrontations in her life and the all these works are inspired by the struggle and hardships of her own life.

Durrani, being the centre of ill-treatment by her husband, felt humiliated so much that at last she was able to gather courage to make decisions of her own life against her husband's wish. She was so fed up with her husband that she even fought physically with him on some occasions. There are some incidents narrated by her in the book when equally leveled her husband in aggression and behavior which Gulam Mustafa Khar never thought before. She has tolerated many physical assaults by him earlier when he tried to beat her by pulling her by the hair and swings her around as he used to before using his favourite threat to break every bone in her body, she attack him back by flinging at him the utensil full of steaming food that she was cooking on the stove. This happened abruptly and he didn't expect this from his wife whom he always thought to be physically weak and fragile. Feeling humiliated and also burnt he raises his hand again to beat her but realizing this she pushed him back and threatened to kill him by the knife in her hand. As she says in her own words, "There was power and conviction in my tone. The days of appeasement were over. I had declared war." (90)

Durrani does not follow the path of Taslima Nasreen or Ayan Hisri Ali. She has endeavored to chalk out a path that evicts the misinterpretation of Islam. She is a modern feminist writer of the 20th century as her writings can be regarded as a template for the changing concept of women's projection in the society. The changes which are occurring in the lives of ordinary women living in a traditional society are the theme of both her novel and her autobiography. The new women of the sub-continent are now following the trajectory of resistance and empowerment. Though bound in a patriarchal marital discourse these women are trying to free themselves by challenging the technologies of subjection.

There is a wrong interpretation in the world which is clearly reflected in the novel that Islam encourages suppression and subjugation of women. But this is totally wrong and is rather misinterpretation. The Holy Quran is addressed to all Muslims, and for the most part it does not

differentiate between male and female. Man and woman, it says "were created of a single soul," and are more equal in the sight of God. Women have the right to divorce, to inherit property, to conduct business and to have access to knowledge. In marriages, Islam insists on the free consent of both, the bride and groom. So girls forced to marry strangers against their will could even be deemed illegal under religious laws. The Act of banning girls from school is forbidden in Islam, which all the conservative organizations including Taliban should know. Islam, on the other hand, encourages all Muslims, irrespective of gender to seek knowledge from cradle to grave, from all possible sources. "To seek knowledge is obligatory for every Muslims," says holy Prophet, "Treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers." From the last sermon of Prophet Mohammed (SAW)

In the present paper, I have tried to reveal the daring effort of the novelists who have dared to raise their voices against the religious hypocrisy present in the society. Both the novelists have depicted how the women are being subjugated in the name of a religion which gives equal rights to women as compared to their male counterparts but which are being manipulated by some so-called religious heads for their own vested interest.

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The e-Poetics of Binod Mishra's Poetic Art

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Communication technology and Internet have influenced the poetic art and language in the present age. Cyber literature has become an independently identified form of writing like other forms of literature. It is defined as "Literature that relies on a cyber medium, particular in order to achieve interactivity." Writing on a computer machine is a different experience. Such writing is often a product of the individual memory, assisted and 'refreshed' by the chronologically maintained machine memories. The inherent thoughts and latent feelings of the creative writer are frequently modified, shaped and adjusted by the prompts from the machine, as there are options readily available, for vision and revision of the vocabulary, word order and syntactical arrangements.

Binod Mishra is an Associate Professor in a technical institute of great academic excellence. His familiarity and professional friendliness with computers and engineering have probably influenced the programming of his poetic language. His poetry collection entitled *Silent Steps and Other Poems (2011)* is a testimony of his close association with electronic medium. This is evident in his choice of language, imagery and themes of his poems. The functionality of the binary language in electronic devices prompts him to develop subtly contrasting phrases in his poetic compositions. The metaphors, similes, oxymoron, the imagery and phrases arise out of his e-poetic temperament and taste, where "mind is a recycle bin, responding to a click

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of a mouse." Mishra writes in his poem 'Unanswered Questions':

"Returning when the day dwindles;
Evening invigorates and night sneaks in,
Perch in my saddle, switch on to the storehouse
of information, entertainment and envy." (*Silent Steps and Other Poems, 2*)

The image of a 'storehouse' is a functional modern metaphor for a gadget like computer. It is equally irresistible to realize the 'coverage' and inclusion of the cellular phones in our daily lives. Albert Einstein once said, "I fear the day that technology will surpass the human interaction." His prophecy sounds more or less fulfilled in the present times when the crisis is discernible, at hand.

Binod Mishra's poem 'Ring Tones' satirizes the tête-à-tête behavior in 'a world war of cell phones'; the mechanical impact of the polyphonic ringtones is evident in the diligent efforts of the user to assign different ringtones for different contacts, expressing love, agony, anxiety and regret. The poem speaks of the 'restlessness bought eagerly from recharge coupons'. His poem 'The Bleak Moon' is an extension of his observation of the saddening impacts of the electronic gadgets. This poem is a running commentary on the mechanized patterns of human behavior:

She presses the numbers
and waits quizzically.
Pat comes a reply on her mobile.
The dimple on her cheeks darkens;
radiance thins giving way to heaviness. (*Silent Steps, 25*)

The futility of life and failure of such devices in creating the 'connects' are communicated sarcastically in his poem 'Sleep'. The day-to-day life imprisoned in the various activities of a smart phone, has made everyone 'weary and heavily lidded', waiting anxiously for the soothing sleep. The sleepless poet invokes ardently the divine powers of Sleep, 'counting resounding snores' of his son. This is surely a pitiable situation, a completely disheartening race, trapped in a

mirage of dried up relationships; the cell phone life is, in fact, the prison of technology. In his poem 'That Day', he is nostalgic for having lost the opportunities to enjoy the natural beauty of life; the healthier way of life seems to have been moved to 'a recycle bin.' It is just 'waiting for a gentle click on the mouse' (07) to revitalize and energize the life through a set of changes in the windows.

Acquaintances and relationships in life seem to be equated with adaptability and the technical term 'compatibility' is the key of smooth functioning, in present times. The formality of relationships is a serious concern for the poet. In his poem 'Silent Steps', he undergoes the dilemma of the 'known and the strange' worlds. There is a sense of confusion with the known set of familiar facts: Stepping on stairs every day, / I realize / the stairs to the tower / unstepped, untouched and unknown. (*Silent Steps*, 1) Human life is a bouquet of antithetical events. Binod Mishra gets quizzical and critical of the fact whether he actually knows well the people he meets in his daily life. The people who know him are, in fact, people 'unacquainted, unseen and unaware'.(01) The thoughtful poet concludes that the daily world, the life and the people are completely 'strange, alien and aloof in a known world.' People seem to be merely 'wired' according to a desired program, but the emotional connection - arising out of trust, love and honesty - is thoroughly absent.

His poem 'In Oblivion' talks about the loss of friendship in a flash, 'loyalty turning into disloyalty at trifles'. The long years of togetherness and a bond built over years can split easily. The question of knowing the person well is under harsh scrutiny, time and again. The pain of such a lost relationship is expressed in these lines: Building castles of hay, / fair weather friends / like in children's games.... (*Silent*, 22)

Among his poems, 'Power Play' is almost an autobiographical poem, presenting the bitter responses of life; this symbolic poem is possibly the masterpiece of the poet Binod Mishra, who writes, "I stood to fall. / My only fault as I knew / was to be humane." (*Silent*, 51)

'On My Being' is another fine poem which is a philosophical account of the outcome of life. Over the years in life, each one of us is carefully attempting to knit the 'yarns of relations', while on the other hand, there are inherent equations forming and "people kept adding/ reducing loneliness..." (*Silent*, 36) Charu Sheel Singh writes in his Foreword of *Silent Steps and Other Poems*, "That being the function of the poet, he must live in two worlds – one he has lived and experienced, the other he is willing to migrate to... Surfacing, desurfacing and resurfacing are paradigmatic strands of all creative process." (*Silent*, x) The dichotomy of longing and belonging to the worlds of the mind and the heart is also a big concern in the modern times. 'The world one lives in' is usually the outcome of 'a world sacrificed behind' and there are also the biting realizations of the deficiencies of the 'world idealized'. In his poem 'Two Loves', the poet feels the pain of the two worlds, drifted apart. Amid all the pains and losses, the 'silence of long years / longed and lost' surface every evening, even today.

The poet Binod Mishra is also a wonderful literary critic, attempting to formulate the definition and role of poetry; he writes in his poem 'Cry of a Poem', about the painful processes of the birth of a poetic work:

A poem cries
to return from the battlefield
like a defeated soldier tracking the doors of
treatyto recreate the lessons of history. (*Silent Steps*, 14)

The theory and practice of poetry involves 'the bitter pricks of sorrows and suffocation to recount the tale of a caged bird'. His lines have a semblance with Shelley's poem 'To a Skylark': We look before and after,/ And pine for what is not:/ Our sincerest laughter/ With some pain is fraught;/ Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Mishra's poetic art presents him as 'a highly sensitive person' who breeds contrasting and 'diabolic' words. 'Truth of Words' narrates the delicate agreement and imbalances

between the word and the meaning ascribed therein; yet there is a good deal of sense, left unspoken on the margin. Charu Sheel Singh writes, "Poetic imagination is binary in structure." We are also reminded of Alexander Pope's famous line "what oft was thought, but never so well expressed." Binod Mishra's theory of poetry demands experiments with the new coinages and the trials and tests of the varieties of meanings, in different situations, in a technology savvy world.

The poet suffers a sense of defeat when a well-drafted writing, carefully chosen words and the writing divided in short paragraphs fails to arouse a favour from the benevolent God. He explores the possible causes and finds a purely technical problem. Our sincere prayers fail to reach God simply because of the poor mobile connectivity and network, he writes: after having tried all your divine numbers. /They always replied – 'Out of range'" (*Silent*, 66)

Like Pope, Binod Mishra has a high opinion of his responsibility as a poet. On one hand, in his poems like 'My Wish' and 'Dear Ganges', he is greatly pained at the polluted Ganges and expresses his ecological concerns, on the other hand, he aspires to have a world full of trees and birds, chanting sweet songs. The advent of a new world is tragic because it has performed 'progress' at the cost of felling of trees and abusing the sanctity of herbs and rivers. He expresses his anger at the behaviour of the crooked minds "pouring dirt, squalor and garbage of their civilized bra/ off into holy Ganges." (*Silent*.8) On the other hand, in his poem 'My Dream', the poet longs for a world where 'men and women together share/ equal honour amid proper care/ where love springs from every being/ and restricts vitality from decaying...' (*Silent*.3) Human beings are not sensitive; everyone is craving for brief pleasures. The virtual world of technologies has neglected things of the real world. The humanistic values require co-operation for peaceful living, and there is a need to reject the use of violence to settle problems. The poet also suggests that the ills of modern man can be cured if one integrates the physical with spiritual and

blood with body. Anuradha Sharama and Urmil Rawat in their appraisal of *Silent Steps and Other Poems*, discover Mishra's poems taking on 'personal meaning' yet are attributed 'universal resonance' which expound the theory of poetic creation. What they record in their article is not devoid of Mishra's creativity:

In his writing, the poet searches for passion as opposed to truth, in the hope that this passion will clarify his stance in the tumultuous world that he has inhabited. Poems take on personal meaning, yet are attributed with universal resonance and expound the theory of poetic creation. (CWC, 23-29)

Thus, *Silent Steps and Other Poems*, a collection of fifty poems by Binod Mishra, is a specimen of his techno-friendly attitude in life and poetic language. His writings are, indeed, curative protests and updates against the 'war of cell phones' and the mechanical behavior of 'fair weather friends'. There is a need to learn to 'edit' the activities and business of life; after all, this is our life.

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The Character 'I' in Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*

* Savya Sachi

If on a Winter's Night a Traveler (1985) is a revolutionary novel by Italo Calvino in many ways: the opening; the story development; the characterization; and the format. This article focuses on the narrative technique and character development. The chief character 'I' is never developed or disclosed because the opening of the novel is such that every reader identifies himself/herself with the central character although the novelist himself says that 'I' is neither him or any of the readers. The onion-strip narrative form is also scintillating because in the end we, the readers, do not get anything. In its purest form it can easily be stated that Italo Calvino has exploited the current mood of the period and has experimented with everything that look for in a text.

The opening line of Italo Calvino's novel "You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*" (Calvino: 1981, 3) is quite an unusual start of a novel as it itself says that it is a novel. When we sit to read a novel we know that it is a novel but this is never mentioned throughout the novel. It begins to be different from others from its very beginning. This technique is quite that of self-consciousness. We have various techniques to begin a novel like the straight narrative (Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*), the flash back (Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*), the stream of consciousness (Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*) etc. But, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* offers to be and claims to be different and altogether of a new style.

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Relax.....tell the others right away...'I am reading! I don't want to be disturbed!...Find the most comfortable position...Adjust the light...Cigarettes within reach. (Ibid. 3-4)

The entire first chapter is about 'how to read this novel?' It deals with the comfort, the mindset and the environment in which a novel should generally be read. Normally, no novel bothers about the sitting posture of the reader or the environment in which that novel should be read. Italo Calvino makes the reader conscious of being a reader and the presence of the novelist guiding them through the novel like a teacher. This may be an encounter of its kind a novel deals with its own reader's posture and environment. No novel begins with an objective to claim that it is a novel, has a novelist, has readers, the sitting postures, the environment etc. Generally, every novel hides the fact that it is a novel so as to connect with audience and influence imagination. *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* carries its author's name within the text to bring up a kind of self-consciousness.

The novels of postmodernist period are a blend of real like characters and reel like events. When we read them we either identify ourselves with the characters or we find them the next door neighbours. They (characters) overlap with our emotions and realities. In spite of being fictional we start believing in them to be real. But, here in the very beginning we find that the novelist appears to us and tells that it is a famous novel, and we are merely readers and should not be emotionally attached to its fictitious characters. The novelist further dissociates us from being a part of it:

So, then, you noticed in a newspaper that *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* had appeared, the new book by Italo Calvino....You went to the bookshop and bought the volume...In the shop window you have promptly identified the cover with the title you were looking for...The thick barricades of books you haven't read. (4-5)

Whenever we go to a bookshop we see lot of familiar names which we want to read but we usually don't because we do

not have that curiosity to read them as we have for the book we have gone to buy. We read about a lot of newly released books and their reviews in newspapers and magazines. We want to try them too. But, certain books arouse so much of excitement that when we visit a bookshop, and in spite of seeing those books which we always wanted to read unconsciously, we buy the book we have gone for. Moreover, when we buy that one, we want to finish it as soon as possible. That is why while travelling we try to take a sneak peek into the book. And, when we open the book we immediately turn to the last page. We see the total number of pages and calculate as how much time it will require completing. Here, Calvino gives a glimpse of human mind after getting a much hyped book, "Perhaps you started leafing through the book already in the shop...Now you are on the bus...You begin undoing the package." (7) But he advises us to have patience and to open the book in the silent and calm room and not on the way.

The novel also employs an unusual way of writing. As per capitalization rules of Grammar the use of capital letters is restricted to in the beginning of the sentence, and also in the middle of it, if proper nouns. But here, in some pages in the first chapter, we find a lot of grammatical break downs.

...the Books You Needn't Read, the Books Made
For Purposes Other Than Reading, Books Read
Even Before You Open Them Since They Belong
To The Category Of Books Read Before Being
Written...books that if you had more than...(5)

Although unusual but as a postmodernist novel such experiments are permissible. In a very strong message Calvino attacks on books that should not be read because they do not serve any purpose but are readily available everywhere. Exactly when we are caught up in a continuous narration of the story we feel sudden break downs. We feel certain discontinuity in narration and only because of its discontinuity of narration it appears to lose its grip from the story. It repeatedly takes us back to the mood of fragility and imitation. The novelist himself says:

"This sentence sounds somehow familiar. In fact, this whole passage read like something I've read before....just when you were beginning to grow truly interested at this very point the author feels called upon to display one of those virtuoso tricks so customary in modern writing repeating a paragraph word for word. Did you say paragraph? ...And as you continue, what develops? Nothing: the narration is repeated identical to the pages you have read" (25)

The novel starts with an explanation of sitting posture; then it deals with the types of book; then it speaks of human mind and only then it narrates a story *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*. It introduces a character 'I' which he never develops in the way of narration. Then suddenly we come to know that the first story is over and we are hung in 'vacuum'. Here, 'vacuum' means we are repeatedly said that we have finished that story, which hasn't come to its logical finish, and we are going to page no. 17. He mentions it on page no. 25. So, its discontinuity hangs us in a vacuum in which we get intimidated but we cannot do anything with it. The only thing which we can do is to give up reading which one couldn't because s/he had bought this with loads of enthusiasm. Author David Mitchell declared it as 'breathtakingly inventive' but in the same breath he says, "...however breathtakingly inventive a book it is, it is breathtakingly inventive once—with once being better than never." The onion strip narrative is very interesting as it unfolds layer by layer but to the utter disappointment of the reader it does not have anything for them in the end. It is a total vacuum.

There are eleven chapters in this novel—each beginning with an introduction. It should be called introduction because we get the story title here. It is a bit disturbing to figure out whether the introductions are the part of narration or the stories—divided into chapters—are the part of novel. And, this confusion destroys the whole objectivity. Out of twelve chapters there are ten completely different stories. These stories are inter-related with each other with a single and common character 'I' like a dream of

ten voyages in a single night. Altogether it is a narrative rarely connecting and substantial. The discourse in this novel is an astonishing feat or virtuosity.

The novelist simultaneously takes up the argument of dominant sex, class and culture through the introduction, which are the only rare continuous narratives. He takes us in rapture and at the end he takes us back to a rupture. He puts us through a fairly long discussion on Cimmerian literature and Cimbran literature. The discussion is very interesting as to know which literature arrived first and which literature has more prosperous literary background. In the end of the discussion we come to the conclusion that the literary background of both literatures is more or less the same as everything figuring in the first literature are the same in the later with a disguised name and both being pseudonym for the same author, "That is the novel,... and it isn't written in Cimmarian but in Cimbrian;... and the author signed it with a different pseudonym..." (73)

Here, we are introduced with other characters like Ludmilla, Uzzi-Tuzzi, Lotaria etc. But, we never come across a single instance throughout the novel in which the character 'I' faces a question, "what is your name?" In the very first chapter we are told that the character 'I' is not Italo Calvino himself. So, there is no character development for 'I'. 'You' remain as a reader and the chief character 'I' remain 'I' throughout the novel.

This type of characterization breaks that age old convention of character development. The character development is a subject of traditional novels. In Emily Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights* we have a chief narrator 'I', who is Mr. Lockwood:

1801 –

I have just returned from the visit to my landlord... I could have fixed... Mr. Heathcliff and I...I behold his black eyes...as I rode up...
"Mr. Lordwood, your new tenant, sir. I do myself..."I felt interested in a man... (Emily Bronte: 1847, 9)

In her novel Emily Bronte first introduces the character 'I' and then she declares that 'I' is Mr. Lockwood. But in the case of Italo Calvino's novel he maintains the secret of 'I' throughout the novel. He never declares the identity of the character 'I'.

Then there are several breaks, suddenly, in the process of the narration. Even when one finishes reading there is feeling of discontent over 'just finished the novel'. If we talk of totality, the story is never finished. The feeling of not reaching to the totality causes the suffering of psyche and curiosity with which one started it. The author gives such a sudden break that the readers meet with a mental accident. As mentioned above, every story—chapter begins with an unusual introduction and we start to bother about 'what is happening?', 'where or which one is story?', or 'where is the character?'.

The novel's introduction takes its shape on a dream pace. The talk over phone is followed by meeting with the professor and ends in a short but funny way. As Allan Massie noted '[*If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*] is a brilliant work of the imagination and intellect working in union. And, by the way, it's very funny also.' (Massie 1989) But, the humorous elements lie only when the conversation is underway. Otherwise, we have to deal with several breaks every now and then and our state becomes funny. These repeated breaks affect the continuity of the flow of the narrative.

Intermittent breaks in the narrative may be one of the chief characteristics of postmodern novel but in this case it completely breaks down the narrative and hence irritates the reader. In *Wuthering Heights* whenever we are introduced to a new character, it breaks the momentum of narrative for introducing the character but further development of that character keeps the pace of the novel on. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez shows the same characteristics, although a little, as we see in Calvino's present novel. Garcia Marquez, too, breaks the pace of the novel whenever he introduces the character but the difference lies in character development.

We are never introduced with a secret character whose identity is never known.

Italo Calvino makes us feel that we are merely the readers and not even the imaginary part of the novel. Generally, a novel does not remind us of our self-identity as a reader. This is very objective and therefore his character 'I' has not been developed. For this he gives reason:

This book so far has been careful to have opened to the reader who is reading the possibility of identifying himself with the reader who is read. This is why he was not given a name... and so he has been kept a pronoun. (Calvino, 1981, 141)

So, Italo Calvino remains throughout self-conscious as a novelist. This self consciousness may have taken shape in him because of his dissatisfaction of excessive ambition, perhaps a megalomaniac delirium. He is very conscious of his own self as well as the atmosphere and environment around the character and not towards the character development. The character development is so confused that it's hard to understand 'what is going on?' Italo Calvino as a post-modern novelist having self conscious identity generates 'self' by making his appearance here and there and, secondly 'me' as a 'reader'. By declaring us as a reader he reminds us of our own mental status. He generates self consciousness towards himself and towards us as well as towards the novel. As Salman Rushdie wrote in *London Review of Books* that 'Reading Calvino, you are constantly assailed by the notion that he is writing down what you have always known, except that you have never thought of it before. This is highly unnerving: fortunately, you are usually too busy laughing to go mad... I can think of no finer writer to have beside me while Italy explodes, while Britain burns, while the world ends'. (Rushdie 1983)

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Expatriate Vision and Voice in the Narratives of Select South Asian Canadian Women Writers

** Shabnam Das Manna*

Every age nurtures literature, which its ethos favors and inspires. Twentieth Century literature in English witnessed the birth of a new group of writers called the South Asian Canadians. The term South Asian Canadian literature is rapidly gaining acceptance as a distinct body of Canadian literature. It constitutes the work of writers who acknowledge a South Asian sensibility or influence or who have been raised with a South Asian identity. The South Asians in Canada come from different corners and backgrounds, speak different languages and carry different cultural baggage. Multiplicity, ambivalence and experimentation are some of the marked characteristics of the literature of this body of writers. The present paper studies the expatriate vision and voice in the narratives of select South Asian Canadian Women writers and the specific literary techniques employed by them to express the dialectic of displacement.

Definition of 'expatriate'

It would be worthwhile to define the word 'expatriate' at the outset itself. As the dictionary meaning goes, an expatriate is a person living outside one's country. He is an alien there, due to the migration from the land of his birth. For all purposes, he is an outsider and lives in a state of 'exile', self-imposed or circumstantial. The word 'patria', which is of Latin origin, means a country. It would follow therefore, that an

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expatriate is one, who is expelled from his 'patria' either forcefully or voluntarily, determined by circumstances. Sometimes the terms 'expatriation', and 'immigration' are used synonymously. However, it is important to draw a line of demarcation between the two, though this line is a thin one. As the term implies, expatriation focuses on the native land that has been left behind, while immigration denotes the country into which one has ventured as a settler. In other words, the expatriate lives on his "ex" status, while the immigrant celebrates his present status in the new country. An expatriate emigrates to an alien country from his 'patria' for multiple reasons—for lure of money or other opportunities, for education and employment, for fear of religious persecution, for political asylum, cultural perspectives and motives or a combination of all these. Meddegama, a Srilankan poet sings of his journey to America and his voice perhaps finds an echo in the journeys of numerous expats across the globe: Full of hope/I crossed the seven seas looking for/the pot of gold (Alilakuzhy 44) ¹

This is the most common reason for several people from the Third World countries migrating to Canada today. Ages ago, it was the similar lure for gold which set off a chain of sailors and explorers from the West, like Columbus and Sir Walter Raleigh, in search of India and the West Indies. In the twentieth century, there are reversals of these journeys and it is the advanced West, which fascinates the underdeveloped and developing countries. The expatriates are the new Columbuses sailing out to create a new literary world.

Fundamental features of Expatriate Narratives

Expatriate writing, in its theory and practice, is the work of an exile, who has experienced unsettlement at the existential, political and metaphysical levels. Expatriation, as a literary phenomenon has assumed immense importance in the twenty-first century, owing to large-scale emigration. "A sense of place", writes Jasbir Jain, "is one of the imperatives

of a writer's being, an imperative increasingly being dislocated through extra-territoriality (102)."² The phenomenon of exile has emerged in our times, due to the uneven development within capitalism and the movement forced by colonial powers, leading to unprecedented migration of the Asians and Africans to the west. Writers, who have moved away from one culture to another, are often caught between two opposing cultural fluxes. This movement has produced a new person whose mind works with two epistemologies. He/She has lost the unifying center, therefore, is either engaged in a process of self-recovery through resort to history and memory, or in a process of self preservation through an act of transformation. The dismantling and dislocation lead to some unknown and intermingled visions. The hybridity experienced by writers who have been culture-hopping, is not just philosophical, it is also local and existential—therefore, the world they project in their writings is a world, which rests upon geographical and cultural dislocations.

Terry Eagleton in his book 'Exile and Émigrés' observes, "the heights of English literature have been dominated by foreigners and émigrés: Conrad, James, Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Joyce (9)"³. Writers, who live in a self-chosen, self-inflicted exile, generally decide to write about the 'here' of where they live. Attempting to create a home away from home, the cross-cultural contacts and tensions between two nationalities and races, form the backdrop of much of their work. The separation from the country of one's birth and cultural heritage sooner or later weighs upon the expatriate and serves as a cause for nostalgia, reflection and very often, creativity. The impulse to take literary journeys homewards—towards history, towards past and towards memory, is the result of the expatriate's long journey from home. Memory, retaining elements of the past in the present, plays a central role in this process, serving most often as the starting point for the process of identity political. Faced with rejection, the expatriate clings to his ethnic identity. Caught between two worlds, he negotiates a new space. Hence, an anxious sense of dislocation is the characteristic of all expatriate narratives.

Expatriate Sensibility in the Narratives of South Asian Canadian Women Writers

While reading the narratives of South Asian Canadian women writers, one finds numerous evidences which show that although Canada remains their base, the land of their physical stay, yet it is their mental journey into the land of their birth, which gives them stuff for their creative writing. These expatriate writers lead a dual existence, living simultaneously in two worlds; the one to which they cannot return and the other, which they cannot leave. Their representations of diasporic discourses are important because they offer fresh outlooks and alternative perspectives into female realities. Negotiating multiplicity of affiliations—as women, as women of colour, as expatriate women of colour, the women writers of South Asian origin articulate a variety of experiences through their emerging new consciousness. Significantly enough, they attempt to balance themselves precariously between honoring and breaking traditions, while building their expatriate lives. They also characteristically chart out postcolonial diasporic realities of the emerging border zones and frontiers in this period of globalization. The shifting designation of “home”, the attendant anxiety about “homelessness” and the impossibility of going back, are perennial themes in their writings. All of them share “the cross cultural existence, the culture shock, and the cultural encounter—it may be cross religious, cross lingual, cross racial or cross ethnic [. . .] (Bhat 57).”⁴ The hold of their country of stay exerts a strong pull and glues them to it, but the lure of home remains a distant, unrealized dream. Expatriate vision is born out of the tension existing between these two forces and expatriate voice is generated out of such a dialogic juxtaposition.

Literary Techniques adopted by South Asian Canadian Women Writers to express their expatriate sensibilities

The South Asian Canadian women writers feel rootless, nostalgic, depressed and alienated and are anxious to express themselves through their culture and language, by fusing the traditional with the modern, the past with the present

and the old with the new. Their expatriate vision reaches out towards its cultural and ethnic moorings in the following ways:

- i) Intense Nostalgia.
- ii) Revision/ Reappropriation of history, epics, customs legends and myths of the native land.

i) Intense Nostalgia: Most of the narratives of the South Asian Canadian Women writers have been related to their experiences as expatriates and express their desire to return to the homeland and the yearning for their family and friends. These writers seem to be attached with an invisible umbilical cord, which exerts a gentle pull homewards. In most of their writings, the experiences related to their homelands and intense nostalgia keep on surfacing, giving strength to the opinion that these authors have been unable to fully adopt and adapt to the land of their migration. Despite being away from the land of their birth, their activities still emanate the native fragrance and a touch of comparison with the homeland is always present. Arzina Burney's poem 'Pleasant Heartbreak' is full of such comparisons. She misses her home and country and speaks nostalgically:

Back home, the thick
Monsoon showers
that brushed instant colour
under the bubbly brooks.
in dirty side lanes,
and of you and me,
fanning our boats
Out to sea (Burney 16)⁵.

A similar nostalgia is found in the writings of Himani Bannerji, who in the poem 'A Letter for Home' tries to reach out to her cultural moorings and reclaim her stake on the land that she has left far behind:

I still have a stake on this land
It is true that I have walked a long way
carrying an earthen jar
With the ashes of my ancestors, earth from my
land.

some grains and oil, and my cast of umbilicus.
 I have buried this urn here
 under my hearth, and built a fire
 that I feed daily, and watch the shapes
 gather and give me the news
 of this other world (Bannerji 3).⁶

Uma Parmeswaran sings in the same tone, fondly remembering the days spent in the idyllic surroundings near her "native Narmada":

There was a time I wrote of marble veined
 rocks chiseled by the stinging waters of my
 native
 Narmada, of rowing across the summer lake
 watching
 water birds wheeling just above, of teeth
 chattering
 winter morns when we trailed our elders to the
 velvet bug-dotted field to squint through
 telescopes
 at the tailed star streaming in the sky
 (Parmeswaran 73).⁷

Yasmin Ladha tries to recreate the flavor and aroma of native cuisine by using native words:

My sakhi-friend and I
 crave for roadside paratha
 so brisk and round
 and hot, hot chai
 (out of steel tumblers)
 in a prairie parking lot (Ladha 8)⁸

In her short story 'Hair', Yasmin Ladha remembers her bygone childhood, symbolized by the bottle of *Bhring Raj* hair oil, "the rajah of rajahs from my Grandmother's stories: chesty, jeweled, righteous and celibate (Ladha 126)"⁹. The bottle of *Bhring Raj* becomes an objective correlative for the author, ushering in a series of images from the past:

Surjeet Kalsey also pens a similar feeling of loneliness, depression and intense nostalgia that Parmeswaran experiences. She is also gripped by a sense of alienation,

which results in an emotional rapture. She sings in profuse strains of unpremeditated art:

Today I am three thousand miles away
from throbbing, bubbling figurines of
my flesh...how much I miss their presence...
how much...the very thought of not being
with them makes my heart droop.
[.]
This is real loneliness
This is real barrenness
I want to walk with you all
I want my chaos back (Kalsey 45).¹⁰

The soul of a person christened and tempered in traditions, feels lonely and rebellious when seized upon by permissive circles of an alien life. The soul soon starts to crave for fresh air, warm sunlight and the rejuvenating rain available in abundance in natural surroundings back home. In this context, Uma Parmeswaran writes in 'Tara's Mother-in-Law' about the mother who feels suffocated and out of place in the Western milieu. She says:

What kind of place you've brought me to, son?
Where the windows are always closed
And the front door is always locked?
And no rangoli designs on the porch steps
To say please come in (Parmeswaran 69)¹¹.

The perpetually locked front door, canned food stored in deep freezers, the wife holding hands with men and the husband with others' wives—all this comes as a cultural shock to Tara's mother in law. She nostalgically remembers India and longs to return to that congenial environment where she has spent her entire life:

Open the windows, my son,
And let me go back
to sun and air
and sweat and even flies and all
But not this, not this.¹² (Parmeswaran 70)

Similar is the plight of 'Mataji' in Shauna Singh Baldwin's short story, 'The Cat who Cried,' who like 'Tara's Mother-in-

law' disapproves of the lifestyle of her son and daughter-in-law. She converts the fireplace in the living room into a shrine making it a sanctuary and refuge from the onslaughts of the western civilization:

We bought the house because we wanted a crackling fire in the fireplace, but that would have to wait till Mataji returned to India because she'd made it her shrine, filling it with statues of Shiva and Ganesha and Vishnudevi, flowers and garlands, incense and Christmas tinsel. It was her refuge, where she began at five every morning to confide her irritation with twanging nasal syllables, the whiteness of people and the grayness of twilight that arrived just when she was ready to face another day of strangeness (Baldwin 36).¹³

In Yasmin Ladha's 'Hair', the protagonist's aunt faces the same predicament. She remembers those times when she would "wait on one leg" to tend to her children and cocoon them from troubles. "Now, in Calgary, she is shy, (too shy) on the phone with strangers. She wasn't this way before—. Here they say her accent is thick. In turn her listening grows thick (Ladha 130)." ¹⁴ Though the aunt is living in Canada, still she has not forgotten her native rituals and practices them religiously in Calgary, in order to renew and strengthen links with the world left behind:

Every Thursday, her room smells of shampoo and incense. She dries pillow cases outside, pegs spray of sage on them to bring the smell inside. Grateful for the kindness of daily things Yama hasn't snatched. Cross- legged on the bed, hair dripping –when she talks to Allah she likes the torrent of holy Ganges dripping down her back...She coaxes Allah to lighten her babies loads. In Calgary, where business is still done at the kitchen table and language is ajar as the praires, she has grown less formal," Give them a break, will you," she tells Him. The small of

her back flooded, warding, warding off Yama.
Soulful, flooded Ganges at her side (Ladha 131).¹⁵

ii) Revision/ Re-appropriation of history, epics, customs legends and myths of the native land: An experience in another country and in another language becomes codified within an Eastern context, when the writer continues to foster ties with the world left behind. This is mainly done through the revision/ re-appropriation of history, epics, customs legends and myths of the native land. More than the nostalgia that attends these inner sojourns, there is a passionate desire and existential need to relocate the philosophy and vision of the homeland, to the alien host culture. To borrow William Safran's words, "the retention of collective memory, vision or myth about the original homeland—its physical location, history etc [. . .] (Safran 85)" ¹⁶ is one of the ways in which the expatriate sensibility reaches out to its ethical and cultural moorings. In rewriting her experience, the writer turns to pluck parables from her own cultural context. Surjeet Kalsey in 'Siddharta Does Penance Once Again,' recreates the spiritual myth in terms of the immigrants' journey away from home, this time towards materialistic values:

I've thrust into the world –
"the home of miseries"
to search for contentment happiness
in any of its corners
How long can we survive the erosion of self
(Kalsey 41)?¹⁷

Uma Parmeswaran's collection of poems entitled *Trishanku* uses the mythical figures of one condemned by the Gods to hang eternally in a limbo, belonging neither to the earth nor to heaven, to symbolize not only the Trishanku like cultural predicament of the immigrant but also her loss of "the world". In retrieving, representing and documenting memories, cultural signs and textual allusions, the writer freezes reality and releases fantasy.

Cultural and mythical symbols like Narmada, *gopis*, Brindavan, Vatsyayana, epidemics, all find 'space' in

Parmeshwaran's poetry. In "Chandrika" (*Trishanku*), her father's death prompts the poet to go back to the spiritual lore and rites of India. *Gangajal* is made to play its role in a palpable way. But she brings in the Assiniboine side by side with the Ganga. She writes:

For the touch of death is on him
and all the waters of Assiniboine
Cannot rub away the smell of darkness
from his arms (Parmeswaran 77).¹⁸

Uma Parmeswaran's poem 'Chandrika', in its syntactical construction is English, but the soul that dwells in the poem is all that India and the Indian way of life stands for. In the poem Parmeswaran lavishly uses verses from the Scriptures like:

Devi Sureshwari Bhagvati Gange
Tribhuvana Tarini Tara Lata Range
Bhagirati Sukhdayini Matasvata
Jalamahima nigame khyataha (Parmeswaran
76).¹⁹

For the expatriate South Asian writer, especially the female expatriate Hindu writer from India, its epics, legends and deities function as both, a resource and a stimulant for creative writing. They form the umbilical chord with which she attaches herself to the ethos and culture that she has left far behind.

Conclusion

Expatriate literature, has 'arrived' and has established itself firmly on the literary horizon. Salman Rushdie aptly describes the expatriate as the central or defining figure of the twentieth century. The exodus of a host of people from South Asia to the metropolitan centers of the world and their prolonged stay there is the crucible of such literature. The basic problem of the expatriate psyche is that of not belonging anywhere, of feeling dislocated and of being without any roots. This is what Homi K. Bhabha describes as the condition of being "unhomed". According to Bhabha, to be "unhomed" does not mean being homeless; "nor can the 'unhomely' be

easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow [. . .] (Bhabha 9)."

²⁰ It is associated further with alienation, a desire to reclaim the past, a desire to go back forestalled by the inability to move out.

The literature of the 'unhomed' South Asian Canadian women writers may be varied in form and genre yet shares some striking common features. Some of them have voiced their protests against their multiple marginalization on grounds of their expatriate status and gender, while the others have articulated their fear and apprehensions about survival in the hostile milieu. There are still others, who have preferred to remain silent. Their self-expression is circumscribed by their inability to transcend the world of fantasy that is frozen in time. The literature produced by them is the result of the call of the home when it has been lost. It is this sense of loss, which becomes a stimulant for creative writing. Their expatriate sensibility indulges in an imaginative reconstruction of homeland. All of them intensely feel the loss of the home, physically as well as geographically. What is lost in reality is created in imagination. The physical alienation needs to be compensated for and expatriate literature is that compensation; it is a surrogate Homeland, imaginative though it may be.

In ultimate analysis it can be concluded that irrespective of the genre adopted by the South Asian Canadian Women writers, their literature shows a striking similarity. All of them collectively strive to create imaginary homelands and India's of the mind. The state of being an expatriate in fact becomes a strength for these women writers of South Asian origin, thereby fixing the vision of home more permanently and indelibly in their psyche. The literature, born out of the dialectic between location and dislocation, belonging and alienation, heritage and hybridity is a creative expression of their expatriate vision, voice and sensibility that lends valuable insights into the existing realities of geographical displacement.

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**Amitav Ghosh's *River of Smoke* :
A Multiculturalist Analysis**

**Dharmapal B. Fulzele*

Multiculturalism is a term comprising the manifestation of diverse communities, cultures and races living together with an attitude of acceptance for peaceful coexistence, continuity, socio-cultural, educational and economic development. Nevertheless, going beyond this basic conceptualization, Jasbir Jain points out, "it is not morally co-existence of myriad cultures or projection of multiple ethnicities. It finds itself constantly in opposition to the dual concepts of 'modernity' and 'uniformity' (xiii). The postcolonial postulates that "a transformed historical situation and the cultural formations that have arisen in response to changed political power" (Young 57). Postcolonial writings evince heterogeneity, multiplicity and particularity in the multicultural set up. P. D. Nimsarkar pours a new insight in this regard as:

In multicultural setting the identity and individuality of each culture and community is perpetually accepted and legally acknowledged. Moreover, this term can be used to denote two types of multiculturalism: first, a state or nation where different groups, with their cultures, migrated from different places, belonging to different ethnic communities exist together with native groups and cultures/s and, second, a place, state/nation, where native groups with distinct religions and cultures dwell together with their

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peculiar characteristics. Further, it can be divided into foreign multiculturalism and native, internal cultural diversity turned into multiculturalism (372).

Ghosh focuses on the reconstruction of history with reference to personal and social/national identity with a cross-cultural and trans-cultural understanding of realities. Ethics of multicultural representation and heterogeneity are the guiding lights of his narratology. For this, Amitav Ghosh has earned unique place in English literary world. As Pramod K. Nayar writes:

Assaulted by multiple historical, cultural and political forces, the migrant usually appropriates several identities. Diasporic literature explores identities forged in the crucible of multiple cultures, cities and races rather than just 'home' and 'alien land'. Indeed, identities are constructed through multiple specificities: race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual preference, language, myth, history (Nayar 201).

Ghosh's deep interest in the problem of individuals worn against historical forces enables him to explore the depths of fundamental human experiences and emotions. In describing his characters, Ghosh discards conventional postcolonial discourse which endorses racial and ethnic differences. He, instead, displays his characters on the level of a kind of supreme universal humanity, or experience. His characters are socio-culturally specific. In the post post-colonial era the socio-economic setup across the globe is fast changing. Globalization has paved the way for a greater cross-cultural relationship. The centrist, white-centric dynamics of power is on the decline. The dichotomy of West/East, High/Low, Us/Other which has so long separated the whites from the numerous ethnic people, is fast losing its significance. This has resulted in the evolution of new concepts like hybridity, dialogism, integration, cultural diversity and tolerance.

Multiculturalism is a developing phenomenon in the contemporary society. It challenges the colonial notion of

the centrist, universal culture of the Whites as being the only legitimate one. It privileges the validity of other cultures as well, and recognizes multiple voices as legitimate. It does not insist that cultures should merge with each other; rather it believes in preserving one's own position. Roy Jenkins, a former Home Secretary of Britain, advocated 'integration' as an important aspect of multiculturalism, defining it as "not a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mental tolerance" (Brah 226). Multiculturalism in the British society was aimed at the cultural integration of minorities.

In order to get comprehensive understanding of the term 'Multiculturalism' one needs to know the knowledge of the subtle difference between 'assimilation' and 'integration'. 'Assimilation' is a process whereby ethnic minorities embrace the customs and traditions of the majority community, by giving up their own, so that they become similar to the majority culture; while 'integration' is the process of interest in a majority culture. It requires an acceptance of the laws and ways of the host country by the minority community without giving up their own identity. Integration is a two-way process where there are cross influences from both cultures. As a social phenomenon multiculturalism seeks to preserve cultural differences and erase the dichotomy of high/low culture. While talking about strong multiculturalism Stanley Fish says, "The politics of difference is what I mean by strong multiculturalism. It is strong because it values difference in and for itself rather than as a manifestation of something more basically constitutive . . ." (378).

In its broader sense, multiculturalism refers to "the social and political movement and/or position that views differences between individuals and groups to be a potential venue of cultural strength and renewal; multiculturalism celebrates and explores different varieties of experience stemming from social, ethnic, gender, sexual and/or class difference" (Wolfreys 97). According to Bhikhu Parekh "the term 'multicultural' refers to the fact of cultural diversity and the term 'multiculturalism' refers to a normative response to that

fact”(128). In academic discourse multiculturalism informs post-colonial literature, especially diasporic writings. Multicultural literature emerged as a sub-genre of diasporic literature, revaluing the experiences of different ethnic and marginalized communities. The discourse of multiculturalism emerged as a rebellious exercise to canonical literature which promotes Euro centrism that works for marginalizing and misrepresenting the cultures of the Africans, Native Americans, and Asians.

Undoubtedly, Amitav Ghosh expresses through *River of Smoke*, a second volume of Ibis trilogy, that people have always been global citizens by being successful traders for centuries. The open mindset of ‘men’ can be observed in the unusual world of Canton as they dance with each other even when they were not gay. So, the present age cannot be called the only age of globalization. In view of that Ghosh reminds us that globalization is not a discovery of our own times; *River of Smoke* lands the reader in an ex-era of globalization across oceans and rivers, where people of various nations, cultures, societies, customs and languages meet to do business and get transformed in many ways.

Amitav Ghosh's projected Ibis trilogy grows out of his full historical research about the mid-nineteenth century opium wars between China and the Western powers led by Britain. The European powers, hiding their greed under the names of free trade and internationalization of commerce, attempted to open the Chinese markets to the malicious opium trade. In the 19th century the East India Company had colonized Bengal and other provinces of Eastern India. To promote their Opium trade, the colonizers imposed opium cultivation in these areas with the result that indigenous agriculture and trade were destroyed. This created havoc in Indian villages and towns. The first book of the trilogy, *Sea of Poppies*, depicts the displacement of the most of people on the Ibis due to the opium policy of the colonizers. *Sea of Poppies* ends with the escape of the convicts from the Ibis which is in the grip of a fierce cyclone in the Bay of Bengal.

River of Smoke begins in the wind-swept cliffs of Mauritius with "La Fami Colver," Deeti's clan, marching in ritual procession to her "Memory Temple." The repressed, exploited young woman from a remote Indian village establishes a multicultural community in Mauritius after serving out her indenture along with eight of her shipmates. With the creation of an indentured community of "ship-siblings from the Ibis" (Ghosh11), culture flows between national boundaries declining the modern narrative of a homogeneous nation. A product of this intercultural negotiation is the "strange mixture of Bhojpuri and Kreol" that had become Deeti's personal idiom of expression" (Ghosh 4).

Amitav Ghosh writes with a global perspective, evident not only in the range of locations and variety of characters he depicts, but also in his insistence on cultural connections that cross presumed boundaries. *River of Smoke* starts with Deeti, a central character in *Sea of Poppies*. Her shrine in Mauritius contains pictures of characters and events familiar to readers of *Sea of Poppies*, but Ghosh quickly shifts the scene to Canton and the small, sometimes friendly and sometimes restricted Foreign Enclave that is home to opium-smuggling merchants. While Paulette and Neel from *Sea of Poppies* appear frequently in *River of Smoke*, Ghosh introduces a wide-ranging company of new characters; most compelling of among them is Seth Bahram Modi, a trader from Bombay who has built his fortune by selling opium in China.

In the novel *River of Smoke*, we see the *Ibis*, loaded with a cargo of indentured servants, is in the grip of a cyclone in the Bay of Bengal; among the dozens thrashing for survival are Neel, the pampered raja who has been convicted of theft; Paulette, the French orphan veiled as a deck-hand; and Deeti, the widowed poppy grower fleeing her homeland with her lover, Kalua. The storm also threatens the clipper ship *Anahita*, groaning with the largest consignment of opium ever to leave India for Canton. And the *Redruth*, a nursery ship, carries Frederick "Fitcher". Penrose, a horticulturist

determined to track down the priceless treasures of China that are hidden in plain sight: its plants that have the power to heal, or beautify, or intoxicate. All will meet in Canton's Fanqui-town, or Foreign Enclave, a tumultuous world unto itself where civilizations clash and sometimes fuse.

The novel evinces Amitav Ghosh's representation of the past, travelling and the mobility resulting from commerce and trade as well as the different types of migration and the language experimentation. In the novel, the Fanqui town becomes a gathering of the community in diaspora: migrant, captive, indentured. The three key transnational networks Ghosh examines in the novel are: the movement of subalterns who were part of the Indian Ocean travel routes, the triangular opium trade between India, China and Britain particularly in the early eighteenth century; and the possibilities of exchange of flora and art.

Deeti's semi-mystical experience mingles the beginning of both *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*. In the first novel, she has an intuitive intelligence that her vision of a tall-masted ship on the ocean is a "sign of destiny" as one finds in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (3). In the sequel, she insists that it was not chance but destiny that leads her to the site of her hidden shrine in Mauritius. Deeti's prophetic drawing of the Ibis on a green mango leaf amazes her daughter Kabutri, and she even puzzles herself with the "sureness of her intuition" (Ghosh 9). The unlettered Deeti transcends the "island boundaries of the individual" and enters into a "symbiotic communion with ... some higher entity, real or imaginary, of which the self is felt to be a part" (Koestler 119-120). Significantly Deeti's creation of her private universe takes place in the inner temple of her puja room. Her pursuit of art reaches its high point in Mauritius where she paints the walls of the cavern later known as "Deetiji's 'Memory Temple'-Deetiji-ka-smriti-mandir" (Ghosh 8).

Deeti, thus, continues the indigenous traditions of art she learned from her grandmother in her native village Madhubani, famous for its gorgeously painted walls and decorations. Unrepressed by her patriarchal in-laws, she

relentlessly pursues her art in her inner shrine, her private domain. In Mauritius too, she has carved out her "puja room," "a small hollow in the rock, hidden away at the back" (Ghosh 7). The members of Deeti's indentured community dispersed within the island and abroad would mobilize once a year to make elaborate preparations for their annual pilgrimage to Deeti's Memory Temple. This Temple becomes a cultural strategy of identity formation. Robbed of a past, a history, a culture, the descendants of Deeti's clan have developed a culture that draws its energy from displacement, heterogeneity, syncreticity.

When Bahram meets Napoleon, his "adaptation in outward appearance" is balanced by "the preservation of an inner distinctiveness" (Ghosh 170). That enables him to admire the teachings of the prophet Zarathustra. Resolving the conflicting spaces of the home and the world within his self, Bahram retains the spiritual distinctiveness of his culture and can make all the "compromises and adjustments necessary to adapt ... to the requirements of a modern world" (Chatterjee 120) without losing his true identity.

In the alien space of the Manchu Empire, however, Bahram discovers his alter ego: "In Canton, stripped of the multiple wrappings of home, family, community, obligation and decorum, Bahram had experienced the emergence of a new persona, one that had been previously dormant within him: he had become Barry Moddie" (Ghosh 52). The name of an individual connotes his fixity in family, nation and ethnicity. "The Name," observes Ashcroft, "stands for the illusion of an irreducible identity that locates this particular subject, this particular subjectivity and no other" (21). The absence of a name or the renaming of a diasporic subject is "the point of potentiality" at which he can be recognized as "cut adrift, absent from the nation or launched into the possibility of new life" (Ashcroft 20).

While Barrie Moddie is "confident, forceful, gregarious, hospitable, boisterous and enormously successful" in Canton, when he returns to Bombay his "other" self would be shrouded and "Barry would become Bahram again, a quietly devoted

husband, living uncomplainingly within the constraints of a large joint family" (Ghosh 52). Ghosh, in this context, seems to be more at home with Stuart Hall's idea that positioning is fundamental to any idea of identity which is "not necessarily armour-plated against other identities" not "wholly defined by exclusion" (46), and endorses the idea of "'unities'-indifference" (45).

Granted "a privileged point of vantage" (Ghosh 370) and thereby serving as the narrator's alter ego, Robin in his heavily descriptive letters to Paulette vividly represents Canton's multicultural world. The pre-colonial world that Robin creates in his letters challenges the contemporary notions about cosmopolitanism being a postmodern phenomenon. He discovers a nuanced world when thousands of Achhas (the Cantonese word for Hindusthanis), Arabs, Persians and Africans lived together in Canton. The guardian deity of the city is goddess Kuan-yin, a "bhikkuni" from Hindusthan. Buddhists from Hindusthan had lived in Canton for centuries, the most famous of them being a Kashmiri monk called Dharamyasa. The most famous of Buddhist missionaries, the Bodhidharma, came to Canton from South India.

The narrator's observations on this issue validate Robin's views on medieval multiculturalism and trans-racial togetherness: "The ties of trust and goodwill that bound the Hongists to the fanquis were all the stronger for having been forged across apparently unbridgeable gaps of language, loyalty and belonging" (Ghosh 346). Despite the vicious nature of the Opium trade, by erasing boundaries between people it enforced cultural diversity. Indians from "Sindh and Goa, Bombay and Malabar, Madras and the Coringa hills, Calcutta and Sylhet" (Ghosh 185) flocked together to create the "Achha" community of Canton. Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Parsis from India, whose paths never crossed in the subcontinent enjoyed an inexplicable "mysterious commonality" (Ghosh 193) which was thrust upon them. They stand united against "every variety of foreign devil" (Ghosh 185).

Neel is quite correct in his observation that “Fungtai Hong was a world in itself, with its own foods and words, rituals and routines: it was as if the inmates were the first inhabitants of a new country, a yet unmade Achhasthan” (Ghosh 192). With the erasure of the boundaries of language, class and caste among these migrants, they replaced the notion of authentic, detached national cultures with a shared openness to the world, advocating idealistic belief in a transracial, human collectivity.

Paulette’s French father is presented as an ardent botanist beyond any mercenary motive who allows his daughter to be nurtured unhindered by racial prejudice. In fact, Paulette develops a close relationship with her ayah’s son, Jodu, and both grow up as close as siblings. Thus, she is able to move beyond the image of the colonial “mehsahib” to a woman who is comfortable in both a sari and a gown, and in French as well as Bengali. Likewise, Baburao and Asha represent an interesting paradigm of heterogeneity as ethnic Chinese who are also comfortable with their Bengali affiliations. Thus, Amitav Ghosh’s *River of Smoke* is a carnival of the multiple, the plural and the fluid. As Homi K. Bhabha writes:

The need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood-singular or communal-that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (Bhabha 1-2).

In a nut shell, globalization is mainly a socio-economic term and has become synonymous with the economic development of a country in the present as it was in the past. It is a continuous process through which different societies, economies, traditions and culture integrate with each other on a global scale through means of communication and

interchange of ideas. Through *River of Smoke*, we come to have a better understanding of how different people of various countries came into contact with each other through trade; and their cultures and languages got amalgamated. Thus, the novel is really a testimony of multiculturalism.

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**Alienation in Assimilation :
Multiculturalism in Monica Ali's
*Brick Lane***

* *Yogisha* and ***Nagendra Kumar*

"What is past is prologue" (Zadie Smith, *The White Teeth*). If we go by the just quoted line, we tend to believe that there is always continuity in one's life. The past is never quite dead, nor the present a complete break from the past. Their physical displacement is coupled with environmental and psychological changes that are difficult to reconcile at times. All our efforts to strike a balance between our past, which we want to preserve at all costs, and our will to adapt to the present result in a state of utter chaos lead to identity crisis, psychosomatic disorder and undecidedness. The present paper tries to probe Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* in the light of the above argument. Will the adopted land really accept the immigrants (the protagonist being one) and provide space within this multicultural place, or will they be treated as 'unwanted', 'inferior others'? How would they respond to this situation? The present paper seeks to find an answer to the above questions by making a close and critical analysis of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003).

Monica Ali, an adroit young British-Bangladeshi writer and novelist, gained a legacy of being a diasporic writer. She was born to British mother & Bangladeshi father and came to England at the age of three. She is an extremely capable and dexterous writer, who has achieved stupendous success with her debut novel *Brick Lane* (2003). It had been shortlisted for 2003 'Man Booker Prize' for fiction and made

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into a film, that released in 2007. Mostly through all the novels Ali adumbrates the spirit of displaced people but the novel *Brick Lane* is the most acclaimed for its picturesque and quaint description of the Bangladesh-British community. It created a furore among the Bangladeshi Sylhet community as they evaluated it as a poor and disparaging representation of their community. *Brick Lane* is her masterpiece, in which she describes the plights of uprooted Bangladeshi-Muslim community and their survival in analogous conditions of multicultural Britain. Monica Ali has shown this critical and demanding situation very poignantly in her novel through the observation of Nazneen, the female protagonist. How she gets married to a man Chanu, who is twenty years older than her in age, "The man she would marry was old. At least forty years old. He had a face like a frog. They would marry and he would take her back to England with him" (BL 17). Her journey proves to be a 'bumpy ride' in this multicultural land, London. Everything is new in this land, it distracts, compels her to accept it as it is. She feels different types of alienation for her limited acceptance in her new homeland, London, Britain. Britain, the country which had once captured their land and colonized them has become their host land. As John McLeod says in his book *'Beginning Postcolonialism'* (2000) "It is fair to say that since the end of the second world war, the former colonizing nations have experienced the arrival of many peoples from once-colonized countries, who have established new homes at the old colonial centers." Here, in Britain, a former colonizing nation, this Bengali community is confronted by many challenges and compelled to live with differences of all kinds so much so that their very existence and survival in this new nation is always under scanner. As Makarand Pranjape says, in the introduction to his book, *'In Diaspora'* while describing about the diasporic people who were once colonized,

These Diasporas, displaced, alienated, excluded, and oppressed, create their own kind of epistemic disjunction at the heart of the metropolis. What was formerly an empire has become the host to

a new kind of colony made up of diasporic peoples from the various parts of the world that it once ruled." (7)

It promotes ethnic diversity within a society, people can experience different cultures and different perspectives, and it is also a boon for building up a strong economy for the multicultural land. Overall it is beneficial for intellectual development. But does it only have advantages? Then, why Chanu who was so proud of his living and getting education in Britain returns to his homeland, to Bangladesh? Why Nazneen gets scared every time while facing British crowd? Has multiculturalism failed here? Let's check it out, with what 'Multiculturalism' is? To understand Multiculturalism in a better way, it is better to know 'Culture' first. According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn,

Culture may be viewed as the symbolic construction of the vast array of a social group's life experiences. Culture is the embodiment, the chronicle of a group's history. Since the group histories of different sections of society differ in important ways, their 'cultures' are correspondingly different. (47)

Some scholars like Caleb Rosado give a positive and optimistic view on multiculturalism by saying,

Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs & behavior that recognizes & respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges & values their socio-cultural differences and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.(02)

In any sense multiculturalism is an assimilation of cultures and mixture of various communities living together but when this miscellaneous structure fills with lots of difference dominating each other, then it creates some problems among which social alienation, racism, and cultural – bias are the major ones. Migrants who have settled in Britain still face

different problems in its multicultural atmosphere, feel dominated. Makarand Pranjape says, "One problem with trying to understand these interpretations is that we don't have a word to describe former empires which now must play host to their colonial chickens that have come home, so to speak, to roost." (P.7) Britain makes them realize at every step its unfathomable power and uncontrolled influence over its immigrants especially those who belong to its ex-colonies. According to Bill Ashcroft, et al., we use the term post-colonial, however, to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. Multiculturalism is one of the features of 'Diaspora'. In recent years this term has been extended to include immigrants, expatriates, refugees, guest workers, exile communities, overseas communities, ethnic minorities etc. Etymologically the term diaspora is coined from Greek word *diesperien-* to scatter or disperse, from 'Dia' means about across and 'sperien' means to scatter. G. Sheffer describes it, "Modern Diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin-their homelands." (3) Vijay Mishra describes it in the introduction to his book *The Diasporic Imaginary* (2007) as a term that refers to "people who do not feel comfortable with their non-hyphenated identities as indicated on their passport." (P.1) Robin Cohen describes it in his work *Global Diaspora* (2008) as an 'Expatriate minority community' and they believe they are not or can never be fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate." (P.6) In the novel *Brick Lane*, which is named after Brick Lane, a street in east London, England, in the London borough of Tower Hamlets, large number of Bangladeshi-Sylheti community has been settled.

The female protagonist of *Brick Lane* Nazneen says in the initial stage of her life in London, "What she missed most was people. Not any people in particular (apart, of course, from Hasina) but just people." (BL 24) She feels alienation without her people, although she is surrounded by people

but these people seem to be unknown to her. It becomes much vivid when Makarand Pranjape further argues, "In a new global environment , diasporas and homelands may, paradoxically, come closer to each other than ever before...Diaspora and homelands have a complex, ambivalent, and, often, dialectical relationship with one another." (12) In this novel Ali describes the same kind of perplexity, and tension of Muslim Bengali immigrants who are finding themselves unable to adjust in a new atmosphere and craving to get peace and stability in their lives. In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen, her husband, Chanu, Mr.Azad—all face this diasporic dilemma of adjusting into a new community, as this cross-cultural panorama compels them to think about their identity. They are suffering from a kind of identity-crisis as they feel strangled with their past in their motherland, Bangladesh, which they have left behind to get a new life with suitable occupation and accommodation in London. As Salman Rushdie comments in his highly acclaimed essay *Imaginary Homelands* "our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel we straddle two cultures; at other times we fall between two stools. (18)

In *Brick Lane*, Ali has shown how Chanu came to London with his degrees to get success and then to return to his land, Bangladesh, but now he is leading a tortuous and suffocating life with his family in Britain. He (Chanu) often discusses all these instances of feeling inferiority complex, of being in a country dominated by whites with his friend Dr.Azad when he confides, "To a white person we are all the same: dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan" (BL 28). These people face indiscretion and lead a screwed up life speculating upon their real identity of what they were and what they have become? The reactions of the diasporic depend on their relationships with their land and its prevailing physical, financial and political conditions as Makarand Pranjape opines, "Diasporas, despite their common origin, may behave in a totally different manner depending on their country of relocation."(8) They feel racism for their so-called brown skin and their minority status in a country famous for its legacy

of ruling over a vast number of countries and for its prestige in the field of diversity and cultural heritage. These Bengali migrants face many problems, among which alienation is one of them, so the researchers are going to bring out those factors to show the feeling of alienation of these Bengali migrants living in Tower Hamlets, London. All these Muslim Bengali immigrants are set largely in the public housing council flats of The Tower Hamlets, which is one of the slums, with cramped almost sordid flats of east London. As Ali has shown the reaction of Nazneen after noticing the small size of the flats when she feels, "She looked and she saw that she was trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, concrete slab of entombed humanity." (BL 76) In the initial stage of Nazneen's arrival she can feel the difference of her own land and being present in an alien land. The novel lays bare the wrenching desires of a family caught in the whirlpool of culture and class. Ali has presented something really out of the box, by taking a Muslim half- educated woman, Nazneen as protagonist of the novel, *Brick Lane*. The way Ali has shown the palpable reality and vibrancy of Muslim Bengali culture is quite remarkable. The place is abuzz with their typical discussions and activities so much so that the place looks like a 'mini Bangladesh' right at the heart of London. It is a vibrant saga presenting the efforts of adjustment, adaptability and acceptance into a foreign culture. Mostly these people dwelling in Tower Hamlet belong to Sylhet community of Bangladesh and have created a place of their own here with the peers belonging to their own mother-land. As Chanu says at one place in the novel, "You see most of our people are staying here are sylhetis. They all stick together because they come from the same district. They know each other from the villages, and they come to Tower Hamlets and they think they are back in the village" (BL 28). Chanu has deep penetrating insight while making this remark about this place and how people live in a bond of their own. He is married to Nazneen, who is a simple village girl who honors wishes of her father by marrying a person of his choice by saying, "Abba, it is good that you have chosen my husband. I hope I can be a good wife, like Amma" (BL

16). Ali has shown the dominating patriarchal atmosphere in the very beginning of the novel. Nazneen, has come to a new land with her husband Chanu, leaving all her near and dear ones far behind to adapt to a new multicultural land, London. Chanu is educated but utterly dominating, narrow-minded and indifferent as a husband. He claims to be Western in his thinking but opposes Westernization of his wife as is evident from his stopping of Nazneen from mixing with other white people when she tries to talk to a white tattoo woman sitting just outside their home. He says, "If you mix up with these people, even if they are good people, you have to give up your culture to accept theirs. That's how it is" (BL 16). He was more content to get a female worker than a life partner in this newly adopted land as he says, "What's more, she is a good worker. Cleaning and cooking and all that. The only complaint I could make is she can't put my files in order, because she has no English. I don't complain though. As I say, a girl from the village: totally unspoilt" (BL 23). Chanu's statement clearly betrays his mind-set which is predominantly patriarchal as he belittles his wife by pitying her lack of knowledge of English language. The fact that she has been brought to this alien land by him as wife and he himself does not care a bit about her, adds further to her afflictions. Monica Ali has portrayed three categories of immigrants— some belonging to lower status, as Razia, some to lower middle class, such as Chanu, and some belonging to affluent class, as Mr. Azad. We notice that the people of lower and higher classes show better signs of adjustment compared to the middle class people like Chanu. Dr. Azad calls it 'Going home-syndrome' (BL 32). According to Chanu, he is finding himself unable to fulfil all those resolutions and promises which he had brought with himself from Bangladesh and this makes him feel alienated and dejected resulting in his derangement from his adopted land. It is very much true that an alien atmosphere starts haunting a person when s/he fails to get his/her aims fulfilled despite abilities, and it becomes tougher when that person belongs to a different ethnicity and culture. All these situations aggravate the alienation of Chanu forcing his segregation

from the events and people surrounding him.. He says, "These people here didn't know the difference between me, who stepped off an aeroplane with a degree certificate, and the peasants who jumped off the boat possessing only lice on their heads. What can you do?"(BL 34)

Nazneen, Chanu's wife needs to learn English, who does not know any other words except, 'Sorry' and 'Thank You'. As an immigrant she needs this medium of conversation to keep herself comfortable in the social life of London and to get rid of all those situations that give rise to embarrassment due to the lack of language while dealing with day to day activities in the circle of Londoners. As Butterworth points out, "The term "immigrant seems to denote a person who is alien, probably unable to speak English with different & possibly inferior ways of life and perhaps implicitly a threat to the existence or the continuance of the "British way of life" (312) Perhaps...being an outsider or feeling marginal is visiting another country with a different language and discovering through awkward experiences that even the most elementary types of communication are extremely difficult."(6) Chanu becomes totally reluctant after knowing Nazneen's wish to learn English because he is still the follower of his own traditions and patriarchy which they follow in Muslim communities in Bangladesh. He puffs his cheeks and says to Nazneen, "It will come. Don't worry about it. Where's the need anyway?"(BL 37)

Chanu who has come here with his wife Nazneen feeling very perplexed in coping up with this new cultural scenario, sometimes reacts in extremely irrational manner. As Avtar Brah seems to be arguing in *Cartographies of Diaspora*, "Cultural differences, however, are rarely the outcome of a simple process of differentiation. Rather, this 'difference' is constituted within interstices of socio-political and economic relations." (122) Life of all Bangladeshi Muslims settled here in London get influenced by the circumstances of its host country which make them realize their being immigrant in this country. All these situations create a sense of isolation and alienation in these people which they have internalized

till the extent that they seem to be indifferent from their surroundings. Ali has shown how these immigrants who basically leave their homeland for economic security feel defeated in their economic aspirations. But she has also shown how immigrant women feel dejected under patriarchy and bear the brunt of alienation. Mrs. Islam, one of the immigrants describes the problem of survival in a foreign country where multiculturalism is prevailed and priority would be given to the one who would be belonging to Dominant culture, as they would get jobs, contacts with a very smooth and simple manner. As Chanu says in this context, "This is the tragedy of our lives. To be an immigrant is to live out a tragedy." (BL 112) Chanu is dealing with a dilemma of being an immigrant, on one hand he gets fascinated by British education, literature and other norms which allows a person to lead a carefree and open life and on the other hand, he follows typical patriarch authority like a Muslim Bengali when he does not allow his wife to learn English language. Nazneen silently bears this pain. It is very much clear that Nazneen's suffocation and lack of freedom and expression was gulping her inside, she terribly misses her sister Hasina, with whom she is connected through her letters only. Nazneen wants to help Hasina but again her own poor condition and fear of Chanu, who hates and shows repulsion for mixing up with poor people create hurdle. As she says, "When she drifted she thought of Hasina, but she made her thoughts as efficient as possible. How much could she save? How much could she send? How would she hide it from Chanu? (p.205) Their poverty is a reason for their alienation, Chanu has become disheartened because of the limited prospects available to him in Britain, in spite of his full academic ability. "The Job Centre called him for an interview. He was offered a job washing dishes in a restaurant."(BL 204) According to Chanu, he is unable to get nice and decent job because of his skin colour, his brown appearance and not being as pink as these people are. Avtar Brah argues here, "Just as social groups with differential access to wealth, power & privilege are ranked In relation to one another, so are their cultures. The esteemed values and modes of behaviour in society are

most likely to be those which are associated with the dominant groups in society.” (19) Brah’s statement seems very appropriate when we look at the plight of immigrants including Chanu, a Bangladeshi Muslim in England who fails to get a job suited to his academic credentials. He remains a second-rate citizen despite being equally competent and capable to his native (white) counterparts. Chanu feels dejected and alienated and as all these situations create disturbance in his personal life and the life of his wife, Nazneen, and their daughters as well. The dominant culture (British white) influences the culture of minority people a lot, especially the second-generation Bangladeshis like Shahana and Bibi, who get much attracted towards it, from their dressing to destination all colored in the forms of Britishers. Chanu observes all these changes in his daughters and he feels very shocked and sad how British culture dominates them and their whole life. He desperately longs to go back home. He firmly believes that he and many people like him (immigrants) have been shaped and seasoned by their native culture and they cannot leave that altogether for a foreign culture. Nazneen also speculates over this situation and she also wants to go back again to see her village, Gauripur. She wants to see Hasina, her younger sister, but again they are not having money, not enough to buy a home, a dwelling place in their mother land. Poverty or low financial background of these people is one of the main reasons for their depression in an alien land coupled with cultural difference. Chanu has started working as a cab driver with ‘Kempton Kars’, to balance the need of his family. Later, all the things change as Nazneen has an unsuccessful affair with Karim and she decides to stay and adjust in London only. Chanu returns to his land, Bangladesh. The novel ends on a very optimistic and hopeful note as it shows how Nazneen seems to have reconciled with her new-found status by refusing to go with Chanu and taking divorce from him. She transforms herself and becomes an independent woman after accepting all the challenges of a multicultural society. We can safely conclude that while Chanu remains an expatriate to the core, ‘longing for a lost home in a lost country’

and ultimately leaves England in search of his 'safe heaven', Nazneen makes a bold statement by facing the challenges in the new land and refashioning herself for her survival. However, whether the outcome of this stay would be positive or negative only time will tell but since the story ends the readers are left to contemplate and conjecture the final outcome. Thus, like the phenomenon of diaspora itself, the novel also remains a process not a product.

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Buddhist Philosophy in the Beat Poets: A Critical Examination

**Shrikant Singh*

Buddhism changed the colour of the cultures it entered. Similarly, it influenced the persons who began to comprehend it. The Beat Generation poets were no exception. Well, many may ask whether the Beats formed a generation. Diana di Prima, one of the Beat poets in her *Memoirs of a Beatnik* (1969) wrote "so the Beats, in short, comprised not so much a generation as a movement; but the impact of the Beats can be seen in terms of generations that followed-the counter-culture of the sixties and seventies." (*The Big Sky Mind*, 10). They fought for distinct spiritual quest for a new consciousness. The beat poets included were Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Gary Snyder, and Diane di Prima among many others. Like the transcendentalists, the Beats were far more than literary innovators and social critics; they were also wandering seekers of mystical visions and transcendence. They went on the road because they could not find God in the churches and synagogues of postwar America. They saw human beings as enmeshed in a vast network of connections with other human beings, with animals, and with life itself. They saw intimate correspondences between the human mind and the life of the universe. (*Big Sky Mind*, 19) It is evident that the Beats were committed to Eastern religious tradition in general but it is also amply clear that they were inspired more by Buddhism than by any other religious tradition. Buddhist concept of the insubstantiality of all apparent sensory

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phenomena helped them to understand life as a play of conditioned cravings and desires. It also provided them a sound philosophy to condemn American materialism. Therefore, the kind and the extent to which the Buddhist Philosophy influenced the Beat poets need a critical examination. The paper is a humble attempt to examine the same.

It is *pertinent* to mention that the Buddhist views which find projection in the writings of the Beats are the four noble truths, the momentariness of life, the concept of nirvana, the negation of ego, the need of compassion and the attainment of enlightenment through meditation.

Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997) became the Beats' chief spokesperson. While studying in Columbia School, he became fast friends of Jack Kerouac (1922-1969), whose novel *On The Road*, based on beat philosophy when published first in 1957 became an instant sensation. These poets played pivotal role in the transmission of Buddhism to America at a time when it suffered from spiritual void. They looked for a philosophy which would rehabilitate man as an integral part of the cosmos and serve to explain satisfactorily the gradual withering away of the social environment. They tended to reject both Christianity and Marxism as these two systems probably offer only a partial explanation of the phenomena of life. Their quest for a total philosophy of life brings them closer to the Oriental philosophical and religious systems like Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, Bajrayan, Hinduism and Vedanta. However, it was Buddhism which had influenced the Beat poets the most. This has been nicely summed up in the words of John Tyrell: "...for many of the beat writers, Buddhism became a form of psychic ballast, and their study of various schools of Eastern thought became both a means of deconditioning themselves from Western habit of mind and feeling, and a way out of the morass of self into which they had so strongly plunged." (*Naked Angels* 25) The Buddhist emphasis on insubstantiality of all apparent sensory phenomena offered a justification for the Beat's severe condemnation of American materialism. Besides, the

Buddhist emphasis on sympathy and compassion for all sentient beings offered to the American people a consolation. It is also true that Beat's literature does not reflect all the aspects of the Buddhism in its true spirit. The Beats reflected views which were against Buddhism. Intoxication prohibited by the Buddha as evil was thought to be a source of trance and liberation.

Poetry of the Beats uniformly reflects the first noble truth i.e. there is suffering in life. Allen Ginsberg takes up the theme of suffering in his poems like 'My Alba' and 'Sakya Muni Coming Out from the Mountain'. These poems echo in Ben Jonson's observation: "life is a general drama of pain where comedy is a rare episode." Ginsberg shows the Sakya Muni as a miserable man:

In robes of rag, eyebrows grown long with
weeping and hook-nosed woe,
dragging himself out of the cave
barefoot by the shrubs
wearing a fine beard
unhappy hand clasped to his naked breast
humility is beatness
humility is beatness
stands upright there tho' trembling: ...(*Reality Sandwiches* 9)

In another poem *A Meaningless Institution* Ginsberg describes the world which appears to his character like a big hospital:

I was given my bedding, and a bunk
in an enormous ward
Surrounded by hundreds of weeping,
decaying men and women.

I sat on my bunk, three tiers up
next to the ceiling,
looking down the grey aisles.
Old, crippled, dump people were
bent over sewing. (*Empty Mirror* 13)

The poet, like the Buddha, makes his character feel the

universal nature of suffering in life and also that despite man's efforts human body melts away. This realization of the Buddha had led him on the path of asceticism in order to find the secret of existence. In the poem "Don't grow Old" the poet tries to awaken the characters with the truths of life through a series of questions and answers like:

Will my arms wither away?
Yes, yr.arm will turn grey.
Will my knees grow weak and collapsed?
Your Knee will need crutches perhaps.
(*Mind Breaths* 82)

In the fifth section of the poem *Father Death Blues* Ginsberg reflects on the secret of existence which the Buddha has decoded:

Buddha Death, I wake with you
Dharma Death, your mind is true
Sangha Death, we will work it through
Suffering is what was born
Ignorance made me forlorn.
Tearful truths I cannot scorn. (*Selected Poems*)

The narrator says that the Death who is the father of every man has acted as the Buddha and has awakened him. When Death acts as the Dharma, it makes our mind and vision new. Similarly, if there is Death of the Sangha, we need to work it out. The poet seems to have grasped the essence of the karma theory of Buddha as is clear from his line of the poem in when he means to say that it is not us but suffering itself (our past karma destines our birth) is born. It also implies that life is tantamount to suffering. He says that it is because of the lack of our knowledge about the true nature of our own existence that we are unhappy. Since now he has known it he cannot scorn the Tearful truths since they are our own creation in a state of ignorance and are part and parcel of our existence.

In his poem *Gospel Noble Truths*, Ginsberg in a simple stanza defines three most important characteristics of life as per Buddha's teachings- suffering, transitoriness and substancelessness in the following stanza:

Born in this world
 You got to suffer
 Everything changes
 You got no soul. (*Big Sky Mind* 116)

Jack Kerouac coined the term Beat Generation and defined that their role should be to love all life and cultivate 'joy of heart'. This led him to deeper study and practice of Buddhism. He wrote the life story of the Buddha entitled *Wake up: A Life of the Buddha* and published his notes on Buddhism as *Some of the Dharma*. In his one of the untitled poems he also depicts the suffering of all beings:

Life is sick
 Dogs cough
 Bees sail
 Birds hack
 Wood cry
 Men die. (*Scattered Poems*, 19)

Following jazz and blues tradition Kerouac's poetry features repetition and overall themes of sufferings as is reflected through the opening two stanzas of his poem *Bowery Blues*:

The Story of man
 Makes me sick
 Inside, outside,
 I don't know why
 Something so conditional
 And all talk
 Should hurt me so.

I am hurt
 I am scared
 I want to live
 I want to die
 I don't know
 Where to turn
 in the Void
 And when
 To cut
 Out (Jack Kerouac, QuickiWiki, 15.1.2014)

Here, Kerouac's lines are deeply permeated with the main theme of the Beats who focused on escape and spiritual alternatives. What is interesting is his embrace of Buddhism. His lexical choice in the poem reveals his good knowledge of Buddhism. The poem in a way is the assertion of the Buddhist theory of Karma. Words 'worried' and 'buried' present contrastive meaning. The second stanza gives Man a hope that Karma may come and end in Nirvana.

In his another poem *September 16, 1961*, Kerouac meditates over the problem of momentariness of life which is the second characteristics of Buddhism i.e. changing nature of life. The poet writes:

Everything comes and goes. How good it is!
Evil wars won't stay for ever!
Pleasant forms also go.
Since everything just comes and goes
why be sad and glad? (*Scattered Poems*, 30)

The Beat poets were influenced by Zen Buddhist philosophy which believes in clearing our consciousness of all the defilement we have gathered in the way of philosophical explanation of this world. In the poem 'The Wide Mouth', Gary Snyder's speakers watch things and actions around and are not swayed by any philosophical notions. Similarly, in his poem 'The Wild Mushroom', Snyder shows that man's problem of life can be solved best by man's response to his uncultivated and uncultured nature as the wild mushroom:

So here's to the mushroom family
A far-flung friendly clan
For food, for fun, for poison
They are a help to man. (*Turtle Island* 46)

In the poem *The Blue Sky* calls Buddha the master of healing:

Eastward from here

There is a world called
PURE AS LAPIS LAZULI
Its master is called Master of Healing.
(Six Selections From Mountains and Rivers 38)

There have been several other themes recurrent in the poems of the Beats. Among them the Buddhist view of enlightenment as well as compassion has acquired marked frequency. Similarly the elegance and grace of the Buddha's life story has inspired many poems of the Beats.

In conclusion, we can say that the Beats were influenced mostly by Zen and Tibetan Buddhism. They not only interpreted but also experimented its teachings in their own way which provided their own theory of counter-culture an ethical and philosophical justification. We may call it Buddhist modernity in the sense that it was understood as per the present requirement and relevance. The practice part of the Buddhism has been applied in parts and not as a whole which had reversed the very meaning of the Buddha's principles of life.

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Unwrapping the Wraps of Poetic Fire : An Interview with R.C. Shukla[#]

*Binod Mishra

BM: When did you start writing poems and what prompted you to choose poetry as your creative field?

RCS: I started writing poems in English towards the end of 1975. As a teacher of English literature in a postgraduate college, I studied and taught Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*. I felt overjoyed and enraptured after studying the two titles. I was so much overtaken by the magic of Milton's poetic genius that a keen desire to write poetry in English took the possession of my poetic impulse. Consequently, I engaged myself in writing poems in English. It was to understand my position as a poet of English that I showed my poems to Late Dr. R. A. Mishra of Bareilly College, Bareilly. Dr. Mishra not only appreciated my efforts but also compared me with A. Alvarez. A more inspiring pronouncement was made by Dr. Surya Nath Pandey of Benaras Hindu University who, in 1992, reviewed my first published collection of poems (*Thanjavur*) titled *Darkness at Dawn*. The review was published in the *Vikram University Journal of English Studies* in 1993. These two giant scholars of poetry fortified within me the idea that I could safely undertake my journey as an Indian English poet.

Dr. Mishra, it was my sharp sensitivity and a great concern with the ironies of human life which prompted me to choose poetry as my creative field. My love for music also took me to this beautiful region.

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BM: Sir, even as a professor of English you started writing first in Hindi and later on switched over to English. Any reason?

RCS: Dr. Mishra, since nature gave me the gift of poetry, I started writing in Hindi in 1966. It was very natural for me to write in my mother tongue. Later on, on account of the influence of John Milton, it was to emulate him that I switched over to English as well. I have not ceased writing in Hindi nor shall I do.

BM: Which English poet has influenced you the most and why?

RCS: I have already told you that it was John Milton who shaped my personality as a poet. Besides Milton, I was also influenced by P.B. Shelley, A.E. Housman and Philip Larkin. But, I must not hesitate to say that the loftiness in Milton's poetry has left an indelible impression on my mind.

BM: Do you think that thoughts in poetry are choked because of language?

RCS: No, Sir. If one does not run after embellishment, one can do his business with the help of simple language.

BM: It has been found that every academician finally turns out to be a poet. How do you react to it?

RCS: This is not true. When you say this, you probably have poets like Nissim Ezekiel and Shiv K. Kumar in your mind. There have been hundreds of poets in English who were not teachers. Keki N. Daruwalla was not an academician

Dr. R.C. Shukla, the bi-lingual poet retired as Professor of English from K.G.K College, Moradabad, U.P. An admirer of T.S. Eliot, Jayanta Mahapatra, Kamala Das and Niranjan Mohanty, Shukla has to his credit *Darkness at Dawn*, *A Belated Appearance*, *Depth and Despair*, *My Poems Laugh*, *The Parrot Shrieks* (I, II & III) and *Ponderings* (I, II & III). Prof. Shukla has been anthologized in various books and published widely in journals. He has been writing regularly despite his old age and frail health.

nor was Kamala Das. PCK Prem who is an acknowledged poet was an administrative officer.

BM: You have been writing a lot over the years. Any specific reason?

RCS: Dr. Mishra, I have considered life to be as mysterious as the sky. It is as deep as the ocean. It is such a long and complicated book that no one has ever claimed to have read the whole of this book. Since my subject as a poet is life itself, its pleasures, its despairs and its innumerable vagaries, I feel I can write as much as I want without ever coming to an end. If nature keeps me healthy, I can anticipate I shall continue to write till the end of my life.

BM: How has technology affected the poetic process in general?

RCS: Technology, in my personal view has very adversely affected the poetic process in general. The use of mobile phones and computer has, no doubt, widened the field but it has killed the essence of poetic process. The speedy disappearance of literary magazines is causing a great loss to poets and poetry.

BM: Is your poetry a reaction to the vagaries of the present day world?

RCS: Dr. Mishra, I do not deny that some of my poems may be reactionary in nature but I must honestly tell you that I am interested in writing realistic poetry. Much of my poetry is concerned with psychological and philosophical realism.

BM: Sir, while your other collections border on different themes, your collection *The Parrot Shrieks* has been written in three parts and is women-centric. Do you feel that women are secondary sex till today or your poems echo frustrated desire?

RCS: Dr. Mishra, the three parts of my collection *The Parrot Shrieks* are not women-centric. The poems included in this trilogy are poems on man-woman relationship. More than 200 poems in the three books deal with the various

psychological conditions of a man who is in love with a woman. The poems are a very comprehensive study of the realistic drama of man-woman relationship. I have claimed in the Preface that no Indian English poet has written so comprehensively and so intensively about what how a man or woman feels during their romantic relationship. The love of which I have spoken in these poems is a very elevated sort of love. In such a love the woman is not only beautiful but also highly intellectual.

I never felt that women are secondary sex. My very keen observation and experiences have led me to conclude that a woman is much stronger than a man. She possesses greater amount of fortitude and self-control. As a matter of fact, it is the woman who is the ornament of life. It is she who makes life a beautiful festival. She may not possess the muscle power of man but she is definitely more powerful and more promising than man. My poems, in my opinion, do not echo frustrated desire. As nature has built them, women are hesitant by nature. They are governed by social fears. Social taboos obstruct their loyalties. It shall be wrong to say that they are generally disloyal.

BM: Your next trilogy *Ponderings* seems to me a sort of inner journey and reconciliations with the world. Do the traps of Maya seem to lose their hold on you?

RCS: Yes, my trilogy *Ponderings* is a sort of inner journey through which I am passing but it is not reconciliation with the world. The truth is that the poems included in the three volumes speak of an agreement with the scheme of nature. One may say whatever one wants but the truth remains that all the charms of life are short-lived. No, the traps of Maya are not losing their hold on me. As a matter of fact, no man can claim to be beyond Maya. It was Maya which made Bhartihari a voluptuous king and it was Maya again which sent him to the forest. Maya is that rope of nature which never leaves a man. Not only this, it is Maya again which brings him back to this world.

BM: Do you think that you have not been paid much

critical attention despite your huge contributions to Indian poetry?

RCS: Dr. Mishra, you are correct. Yes, I have not been paid much critical attention despite my considerable contributions to Indian English poetry. But, mine is not the only case. There are hundreds of poets, both in English and Hindi, who have not been attended by the critical world. Manipulations, not merit, ultimately pay in the Indian system. Only few days back, Yashbharati award was given to some utterly undeserving poets. It really hurts to see poets without much content, colour and calibre getting an award of 11 lakhs with a monthly pension of Rupees 50 thousand. How can this be stopped when the entire system is rotten?

BM: What is your message to the budding poets in a digital age when everyone who blogs claims to have poetic fire in him?

RCS: I do not consider it fit to offer any message to the budding poets. Who shall care for my message?

BM: Please recite some lines of your poem which you consider to be your best.

RCS: It is impossible for me to choose one poem and call it the best from more than one thousand poems that I have written so far. Yes, I am reading for you a few lines of a poem of mine I have very recently written. The lines are:

Tempe is not the
correct address of God.
It's a place where devotees go
to get their peace.
But their desire is thwarted
by their longings
which continue to sit
on the floor of the shrine
.....
God is present in the smiles of a child
He is present in the purity of a woman.
Those who are impoverished
are the samples of the signatures of God.

And if one wants to gather
some real information about the Almighty
he should go and stay at the place
where the dead are burnt.

BM: Thank you very much for this delightful and thought-provoking interview.

RCS: Thanks.

Spoken English : Its Varieties in India and Abroad

**Shailendra Kumar Mukul*

English is a global language. Spoken English is in a continuous flow with its varied rhythms noticeable in various forms of discourse. Man is a social animal and he cannot do without discourse as he has to depend on others for a living and existence. Even though he is a prince and everything is at his command, he has to give orders. Whenever his heart is full, he bursts into exclamations like an ordinary human being. When we turn on TV to watch English channels, we find English discourse going on morning and evening, noon and night. When India sleeps, the USA bustles: spoken English is a worldwide phenomenon, since it is used in some form or other everywhere, either as a native/ second/ foreign language or through code-mixing in a bilingual society.

English is used as a mother tongue in several countries like England, Scotland, Ireland, America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. When we look at the history of English, we find that what the natives speak today has its deep roots in the tongues of the Teutonic tribes. The Teutonic tribes were the Anglo-Saxons who came from the north-west of Europe in 449 A.D. and invaded the British Isles for a hundred years, driving out the Celts and occupying their territory. This is the time when English came into being in the form of several dialects spoken in all their seven kingdoms known as the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy. Time rolled on and these dialects suffered greatly at the hands of foreign invaders. Only a few could survive. Of the surviving dialects, Anglian emerged as the most dominant one. Similarly, the

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Angles dominated the other Germanic tribes in the course of time. It is probably because of this reason that both 'English' and 'England' derive from the name of the Angles.

It is really amazing to note that the language of a small island became the language of the continent and gradually of the world. The nineteenth century was a tremendously eventful period for England. Admiral Nelson's famous victory in the Battle of Trafalgar during the Napoleonic Wars in 1805 gave England naval supremacy as well as control over most of the world's commerce. In his diachronic study of the English language, A. C. Baugh gives concrete reasons for the spread of English as the standard speech:

The establishment of the first cheap newspaper (1816) and of cheap postage (1840), and the improved means of travel and communication brought about by the railroad, the steamboat, and the telegraph had the effect of uniting more closely the different parts of England and of spreading the influence of the standard speech. (356)

Besides, British imperialism was at its peak in the nineteenth century when it included twenty-five per cent of the world's area. It was also said, "The sun never sets on the British Empire." English crossed the British boundaries and started to be spoken even in the British colonies. With the passage of time, English assumed cosmopolitan character and absorbed quite a large number of foreign words. The linguistic outcome of this spread of English was three-fold: British English, Native Varieties of English, and New Englishes.

Standard British English is the standard speech which is also known as British RP. It is a regionally neutral accent in British English. It is the accent best exemplified in the speech of those educated in the great public schools of England. It is a class rather than a regional dialect. It is the speech of the class of the cultivated people in all parts of England. It is also known as BBC English because it was originally adopted by the BBC for broadcasting. But now the

situation has changed. BBC English shows a great deal of variation as English has become a world language and it has to cater to the entire English-speaking world. British RP itself has undergone a great deal of change and there are many modified forms of RP which are known as modified RP. The rapid spread of English to different parts of the world and its use by millions of native speakers in the Commonwealth have changed the concept of RP. Besides Standard British English, there are so many regional dialects in Great Britain which differ from one another. Even among the educated people of England, the speech of the north considerably differs from that of the south. Scots is the dialect of Scotland which is quite distinct from the Standard English of England. Its distinctive features are easily noticeable in the poetry of Robert Burns:

O my *Luve's* like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June:
O my *Luve's* like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune. (150)

In addition to British English, there are also native varieties of English spoken in the erstwhile colonies of Britain, such as the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. As these colonies gained independence from Britain, English used by them developed along different lines, owing much to their racial and cultural conditions. American English, for example, is an outcome of a series of European immigrations from England, France, Italy, Spain, and so on. The most important of them is the immigration of the English Puritans known as the Pilgrim Fathers on the famous ship *Mayflower* to Plymouth, Massachusetts in the USA in 1620. By the year 1640, about 25,000 immigrants came from England to New England on different ships and settled around Massachusetts Bay. After America got freedom from the British yoke in 1783, the Americans were keen to establish their distinct national identity. They demanded an independent status for the language they spoke. The voice of the people for American English can be heard in the writings of the 19th-century American lexicographer Noah Webster. The following lines

are cited by Chhanda Roy from Webster's *Dissertations on the English Language*: "...our honour requires us to have a system of our own in language as well as in government. Great Britain, whose children we are, should no longer be our standard; for the taste of her writers is already corrupted, and her language on the decline" (82). Now American English has got world-wide recognition and differs from British English not only in spelling and vocabulary but also in pronunciation. In their speech, Americans, unlike the British, pronounce *r* even medially and finally in words, such as *car*, *far*, *heart*, *market*, etc. They pronounce *a* not /a:/ but /æ/ in words, such as *ask*, *fast*, *grass*, *path*, etc. In American speech, some individual words have typical pronunciations. For example, *route* is pronounced /raut/, *tomato* /tə meitə u, *schedule* /ske dʒl, and so on.

There are also non-native varieties of English spoken as a second language in countries like India and Nigeria. These varieties of English are generally known as *New Englishes*. Indian English is nearer to British English in both speech and writing. It is an outcome of a series of factors: long British rule over India for about two hundred years, the teaching of English by the British in Indian universities, and the use of English as the mother tongue by Anglo-Indians and its use as a second language in our country. Spoken English in India is in wide use, either as a first language or a second language or through code mixing. The use of English as a first language is made by Anglo-Indians and as an official language in some states like Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya. English is the lingua franca, a common medium of exchange between people of different tongues and cultures. It is the only medium of exchange for visitors to states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu where Hindi is not the first language.d

There are a variety of situations in which English is spoken in India. There is one situation in which speakers are bilingual and can speak both English and Hindi. Bilingual exchange through code-mixing is a common phenomenon. When someone goes to buy a ticket at the railway station or

place an order for a meal in a restaurant, the transaction is not made solely through the medium of English speech. There is a spontaneous bilingual exchange in all these situations. Here is an example of code-mixing in bilingual exchange between a tourist and a hotel receptionist: "Please mere liye eik AC room first floor par book kar dein." "Sorry sir, koi AC room khali nahi hai."

Spoken English can be used even in single speaker contexts which may be called monodic situations. It is the situation in which the speaker does not have a direct audience to address.

For example, commentary at international matches, TV advertisements, announcements at railway stations and airports, and many other such situations require the use of spoken English. These situations require different forms of spoken English which will be determined by the kind of vocabulary the speakers use and the kind of intonation and the pace of delivery they make. Another context is that of interaction in English between two persons which may be called a dyadic situation. When two persons speak to each other, the nature of subject, their predilections, mutual cordiality, and several other factors determine the nature and form of speech. When an officer dictates a draft to his secretary, the speech is marked by clarity and official formality. The rate of delivery is measured and slow; and polite reserve on the part of the boss is achieved by generally using falling tones. There are several other dyadic situations where only spoken English is used: telephone conversations between two persons who do not have a common mother tongue; conversation between a traveller and the visa officer at the consulate; interviews with overseas experts and scholars; a reporter of an English daily interviewing a celebrity; making inquiries at a multinational company about the prospect of overseas employment; and so on.

Besides these situations, there are also some specific group situations which require spoken English. Facing an interview by a prospective candidate in a reputed company requires the precise use of words, appropriate use of stress

and intonation, and clarity of speech. Group and campus interviews demand more on the part of candidates. These interviews require knowledge and practice of taking turns in conversation besides a focus on thematic development by mutual contribution. Giving the demonstration of a product to English-speaking housewives, a discussion with an elite at the club, guiding tourists from other states, and several other similar situations require different language skills in spoken English. At a higher academic level, a scholar, after he has presented a paper at the conference, has to interact in forceful English with an expert chairing the session. A politician has to interact with a panel of experts in a TV show while discussing a burning problem which a country faces. In all these situations, the importance of spoken English in our country cannot be denied. There are many other situations in India in which formal standard spoken English is more suitable than any other form of English. Krishnaswamy and Sivaraman stress the need for different language skills in some corporate situations like a conference or a convention:

The mastery of appropriate register, discursual nuances of speech, such as taking turns in conversation, maintaining pitch concord by keying mutual exchanges on even pitch and similar other features of spoken English require cultivation" (4). In social intercourse, one can do without one's mother tongue but one cannot do without spoken English. English has entered our blood and become our way of life. We can no longer neglect the study of spoken English in India.

When we consider the teaching of spoken English in India, we find that its pedagogy is not adequately informed. While preparing a syllabus, there has been a focus on written English only and no room for spoken English is left. Almost all the examinations in schools and colleges are based on writing. Even exams in English subject are in written form only. Hence, there is no wonder if our students find it difficult to speak English. Even though the classroom teaching is

imparted through the medium of English, spoken form of English is seldom evaluated. Purely examination-oriented students may not take seriously what is not going to be tested. Moreover, there are neither trained teachers nor suitable materials to carry out this work. Even if spoken English is included in the curriculum, the question is which model of spoken English ought to be taught. In India, several varieties of English are spoken, such as Kannada English, Telugu English, Malayalam English, Tamil English, Bengali English, Bihari English, Oriya English, and so on. Amidst these varieties, the only model ought to be followed is British RP. It has got uniformity, intelligibility, and verifiability. It is widely accepted all over the world; and its pronunciation can easily be verified by consulting dictionaries. But who speaks RP in India? Balasubramanian boldly says, “—no one in India speaks RP in any case” (72). The fact is that strict adherence to RP is nearly impossible in an Indian setting. No learner of a second language can produce the true speech of a native speaker. Therefore, in such a case the model of General Indian English (GIE) is recommended for Indian speakers. The model of GIE first suggested by R. K. Bansal is the result of his painstaking work done in the field of phonology. Bansal recorded and analysed the English speech of several educated Indians at CIEFL, Hyderabad and came out with a new concept of General Indian English. General Indian English is a golden mean between standard British RP and the gross regional features of Indian varieties. It is standard Indian English which is free from all regional features. Balasubramanian’s remark about General Indian English is really noteworthy: “This model, if acquired, will at least make the spoken English of Indians free from those features which make it Telugu English, Punjabi English or any one *particular* variety of Indian English” (124).

General Indian English differs from RP in its use of vowels and consonants. While there are 12 pure vowels and 8 diphthongs in RP, GIE has only 11 pure vowels and 6 diphthongs. The pure vowel /ə/ in GIE is used as both short and long vowels in words like *ago*, *cup*, and *bird* whereas in

RP these words have three different pure vowel sounds respectively /ə/, /ʌ/, and /ɜ:/. Similarly, the pure vowel /e/ in GIE is used for both the short vowel /e/ and long vowel /ɜ:/ in RP in words like *cot* and *caught*. Diphthongs like /əʊ/ in *go* and /eɪ/ in *play* in RP are replaced by pure vowels /o/ and /e/ respectively in General Indian English. So far as consonants are concerned, RP has 24 while GIE has only 23. The GIE consonant system differs from RP consonant system in several ways. The consonant /v/ in GIE is used for both the initial sounds in *wine* and *vine* whereas in RP these sounds are represented by two different phonemes /w/ and /v/ respectively. Most of the Indians are unable to produce labio-dental fricatives like /f/ and /v/ and round their lips in the articulation of the labio-velar approximant /w/. Dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ are lacking in GIE. The number of fricatives in RP is 9 whereas their number in GIE is only 6. Consequently, they pronounce *wine* and *vine* almost alike. In RP the final letters *ng* are pronounced /ŋ/ while in GIE they are pronounced /ŋg/ in such words as *thing* and *king*. In RP the voiceless plosives like /p/, /t/, and /k/ are aspirated when they occur initially in stressed syllables, but in GIE they are never aspirated in any positions. In Hindi and Italian, there is gemination. For example, the Indians pronounce *shakkar* with prolonged /kk/ and the Italians pronounce *notte*/nɔtːe/ (night) with prolonged /tt/. But in RP there is no gemination, no doubling of consonant sounds at all. By analogy, the Indians pronounce medial double consonant letters in words like *upper* and *shutter* with prolonged consonants /pp/ and /tt/ respectively. In General Indian English, the letter *r* is pronounced /r/ in all its positions whereas it is silent finally in British RP.

So far as suprasegmental features are concerned, it is advisable to follow native English speakers. Anyone who wants to learn spoken English ought to follow RP model. But it may not be a strict RP model. What A. C. Gimson says is really worth quoting: "It follows that any simplified form of pronunciation should share features with most of the major natural forms" (316). He further says, "It should provide a

base for the learner who has acquired it to understand the major natural varieties of English" (316). In order to be intelligible to native speakers, we should put stress on the right syllable and Make use of correct tone. If *di'rector* is pronounced /dɪ'rektə/, it may sound like 'character to some native speakers. If a statement is made with a rising tone, it can sound like a question. Let us watch the following conversation:

"I am not free. I have to re'ceive a 'guest at the airport. You are 'going to thei' party?"

"No. I am 'busy too. I am 'writing a 'book 'these days."

In order to avoid such misunderstanding, Indian speakers of English should know some basic rules for word-accentual patterns in English:

(i) If a word begins with a weak prefix, there is stress on the root. For example,

a'bode, a'broad, a'lone, be'come, be'cause, etc.

(ii) If a word ends in an inflectional suffix, the suffix does not affect the accent. For

Example,

com'poses, dis'eases, sub'mitted, suc'ceeded, 'travelling, etc.

(iii) If word ends in -tion, -sion, and -ssion, there is stress on the syllable just preceding them. For example,

exami'nation, prepa'ration, appre'hension, com'passion, and pos'session, etc.

(iv) If a word ends in -ic, -ical, -ically, there is stress on the syllable just preceding them.

For example,

spe'cific, ter'rific, eco'nomiC, eco'nomically, po'litiCal, po'litiCally, etc.

But there are also some exceptions: 'Arabic, 'Catholic, 'lunatic, and 'rhetoric.

(v) If a word ends in -ity, there is stress on the syllable just preceding it. For example,

a'bility, ca'pacity, fu'tility, oppor'tunity, sponta'neity, etc.

(vi) If a word ends in -oo or -ee, there is stress on its ending. For example,

shampoo, taboo, employee, nominee, referee, etc.

But *toffee* and *coffee* are exceptions which take stress on the first syllable.

(vii) If a word ends in -self or -ever, there is stress on its ending.

For example,

your'self, my'self, our'selves, how'ever, what'ever, etc.

Besides word-accent rules, Indian speakers of English should know some basic things about intonation. Intonation is "a distinctive pattern of tones over a stretch of speech in principle longer than a word" (185). Tones may be falling, rising, falling-rising, and rising-falling.

The falling tone suggests the completion of meaning and it is generally used in the following types of utterances:

- (i) Statements: I 'want to 'buy a `pen
- (ii) Wh- questions asked neutrally: 'Where are you `going?
- (iii) Commands: Don't make a `noise.
- (iv) Explanations: 'Good `morning!
'How `beautiful!

The rising tone suggests a sense of incompleteness and it is generally used in the following types of utterances:

- (i) Yes/no questions: Would you 'like `tea?
- (ii) Requests: 'Don't make a 'noise, `please.
'Don't make a `noise.
- (iii) Wh- questions asked affectionately: 'How is your `family?
- (iv) Cheerful exclamations: Good morning!
'How `sweet!

The falling-rising tone expresses some reservation:

'John is honest but he is `rude.

The rising-falling tone expresses enthusiastic agreement:

Do you `agree? `Yes.

It is easy to learn segmental features but difficult to learn suprasegmental features of a foreign language. The intonation of English which is a pattern of falling, rising, falling-rising, and rising-falling tones is a complex aspect eluding the grasp of foreign language or second language learners. So Indian speakers of English, besides having theoretical knowledge of intonation, should cultivate the habit of listening to standard English speech. They should try to listen to native speech live or recorded and watch English news on TV regularly. Through regular listening, they will be familiar with intonation and develop the faculty of using correct tones in connected speech. Careful listening will lead to careful speech.

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**Duality of Hostland (Routes) and
Homeland (Roots) in Anita Desai's
*Bye-Bye Blackbird***

*Narinder K. Sharma

We thought...that there would be room in this new world for people like us, people who did not quite fit into the picture. We thought the world was growing wider, more inclusive. And now it seems it was actually drifting in the other direction.

~Jamal Mahjoub in *The Drift Latitudes*

Diasporic experience reconfigures one's sense of 'being' entailing a dualistic identification with the hostland and the homeland. As a result, it shapes an ambivalent and oscillating condition for the subject leading to certain excruciating spheres of existence viz. cultural duality, rootlessness, fragmentation, a sense of exile (chosen or forced) and finally identity-crisis caused by the dialectics of dislocation and othering. It is in this context that the present paper attempts to evaluate the hyphenated diasporic existence in Desai's novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971) in the light of certain insights of Diaspora theory and postcolonial conceptual corollaries relevant thereto. The novel selected for the study explicates the problematics of the diasporic space and thus underlines the duality of hostland and homeland. Being exposed to the onslaughts of racism and consequent existential humiliation, the experiential in-between, irreconcilable and contingent condition emits disillusionment for the protagonists and thus

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unsettles their sense of a stable and coherent identity. Richards, in his essay "Framing Identities" remarks: "Racism fractures the ability to engage with others at a fundamental level by substituting a 'corporeal schema' with a racial epidermal schema... ." (2010: 10). Sartre also declares: "It is the racist who creates his inferior" (1965: 93). In such circumstances, the homeland haunts the subject even more and causes acute bewilderment by way of altering one's sense of self-fashioning. However, on the contrary, such diasporic experience on the part of an immigrant also opens up the possibility of transcending such kind of duality and crisis. It grants him/her an opportunity to 'write against the empire' and thus co-opt a rejuvenated, negotiated and hybridized sense of one's identity deconstructing racism, difference and inequality of the hostland. Such a stance transforms reductionist notions of racial identity into positive racial values. Such a diasporic conjunction unfolds a better model of identity as compared to the one founded upon fixities of race and nation. It also opens up what Bhabha calls the 'Third Space' for the subject in question. This conceptual framework constitutes the critique for the purpose of analyzing the novel under study. The next section of the paper aims at analyzing the novel from the standpoint of the duality of homeland and hostland by expounding the relevant insights from Diaspora and postcolonial studies.

Bye-Bye Blackbird is a novel about the diasporic experience of Indian immigrants in England. The novel highlights the dualistic nuances of the immigrants, who suffer from bitter experiences in the hostland. It results in the making of an existential sandwich whereby the protagonist(s) stand dispersed in the two worlds. It forms an ambivalent and oscillating condition for the character(s) encompassing certain agonizing spheres of existence viz. cultural duality, rootlessness, fragmentation, a sense of exile and finally identity-crisis. Contextually, the dialectics of *dislocation* and *othering* play a pivotal role in creating the thematic conflict in the novel. A worthy critic Iyenger remarks: "In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Anita Desai moves out of the familiar Delhi

and Calcutta, and widely projects the prison—physical and psychological—in which the coloured immigrant in Britain is caught in, both the difficulties and the adjustments there, and of those who return to India” (1984: 470). Thus, the novel epitomizes their cultural dilemmas and the disappointments and agonies that ensue.

Adit Sen, an Indian immigrant, works as a clerk in a tourist agency situated in London. He lives on Laurel Lane, Clapham and is married to Sarah, who is English by birth. He has learnt the art of pocketing insults which are characteristic to an immigrant. Since Adit comes from an English colony, i.e., India; he has a thorough familiarity with English literature for having got matching education in a school situated in the homeland. Such educational training in India has induced a fascination in Adit towards the English manners and life style. Accordingly, he has developed a sort of identifying overture towards the hostland. However, he still longs for the homeland alongwith its food, music, customs, relatives and friends. It is suggestive of the dualism of his hyphenated existence in the hostland.

Adit's repressed and oblique longing for the homeland gets louder with the arrival of Dev—a college time friend. A worthy critic Tripathi holds: “Adit and Dev are in the major part of the novel two poles of the thematic globe of enchantment and disenchantment with England” (1986: 45). Dev's counter-narrative to the racist discourse of the hostland acts as a catalyst in deconstructing Adit's sense of compromising complacency. His rebellious outbursts fracture the assumed coherence of Adit signifying his subsequent altered sense of 'being-in-the-world'. As a consequence of the consolidation of Dev's ruptures, Adit's mental tumult reaches its climax when he visits Sarah's parents. This visit reconfigures Adit's dualistic consciousness and enables him to see through the holes of his immigrant existence. Experiencing the dualistic hyphenation in hostland, Adit's yearning of the homeland grows substantially, and torments him deeply. Consequently, he negotiates this duality by choosing to return to the homeland and thus achieves a

negotiated sense of being.

The novel highlights the scum of the colonial teleology in the English mindset being carried out by its overt racism operant in the hostland. The racist discourse of the novel highlights the pulsating colonizer-colonized polarity which imprints itself pervasively in various codes viz. the social, cultural and political of the British life, suggesting slanted relations between the immigrants and the natives. The responses—compromising or resistive—to such dominant/pejorative discourses vary from character to character in the novel. However, the said colonial teleology finds a direct or indirect expression and reaction in Adit's agonizing complacency, Sarah's oblique sense of shame and persistent discomfort for being married to a brownie (Adit), Dev's recalcitrant outbursts, Millers' contempt, Roscommon-James' reticence and tepid ways and above all the ridiculous rowdiness of Adit's friends etc. The colonial discourse implicitly draws the line between the native and the immigrant in the hostland. As a consequence, the problematics of peripherilization, rootlessness and a dualistic anxiety entangle the immigrant consciousness(es) in the novel. This constitutes the complex diasporic space of the novel.

It is imperative to consider and amplify the idea of 'imaginary hostland' i.e., England (the Empire) from the point of view of a non-native or an individual living in the homeland. Importantly, the non-native conceives 'the imaginary hostland' in terms of its sparkle, glamour, splendidence. However, the encounter reveals that such hollow imagination is fraught with inherent complications in terms of finding dystopic and dis-unitive reality of the hostland to cause frustration and anguish. It is in this context that Dev expresses his sense of wonder at how "...so many generations and so many social and economic classes, had been brought up on a language and literature completely alien to them, been fed it like a sweet in infancy, like a drug in youth, so that, before they realized it, they were addicts of it and their bodies were composed as much of

its substance as of native blood" (Desai 1971: 122). He goes on to label the immigrants as "Macaulay's bastards" (Desai 1971: 121). On facing the overt and covert assaults, the immigrants are silhouetted against the natives signifying their marginalization and muddled existence in the 'real hostland'. Brah looks at experience as a process of signification and a site of subject formation. According to her, "...contrary to the idea of an already fully constituted 'experiencing subject' to whom 'experiences happen', experience is the site of subject formation.... Attention to this point reveals experience as a site of contestation: a discursive space where different *and* differential subject positions and subjectivities are inscribed, reiterated, or repudiated." (Brah 1996: 208). Resultantly, this choicest or forced dispersion unsettles the (Indian) immigrants in the hostland resulting in the cultivation of a sense of loss and cultural duality. Now, the hostland is perceived as a cage.

Here, it is important to make an evaluation of Adit-Sarah confluence so as to decode Sarah's inverse duality of the homeland and 'the imaginary hostland' (India) and her resultant double consciousness in the novel. A noted critic Bande comments: "In dealing with the problem of Sarah, stuck with duality and uncertainties, the novelist projects a comprehensive view of the dilemmas of an alienated self" (1988: 120). Significantly, the marital knot of Adit and Sarah manifests the conjunction of two cultures/nations. It also substantiates Adit's diasporic imagination, whereby he privileges a 'homing desire' in the alien country. However, contrariwise, the marital conjunct with an immigrant/'Asiatic' alienates Sarah in her own country and thus displaces her to liminal margins of her own culture. Their conjugal union starts raising new questions, particularly for Sarah's idea of a coherent and stable identity in her homeland. Having been married to an *outsider*, she fails to understand the ways and means to negotiate her previous notion of self with her newly acquired identity. The existential aberration and consequent alienation are not the problems of the people displaced from their original homelands only, but it is equally true of

the people who live in their own homelands and are distanced by the society for certain socio-cultural transgression(s) on their part. Sarah belongs to such class of people. Though she hasn't been uprooted from her ancestral locale as yet, she is peripheralized in her homeland on account of her marital alliance with a *brownie*.

It is important to point out that the duality of Sarah corroborates the duality of Adit as well and this is because of this aspect that his '*being-elsewhere*' realization gets further concretized. Further, the dominant cultural codes and preferences of the homeland soon show their inflections in Sarah's altered view of her own life. Her marriage to an outsider marginalizes her by her own people/colleagues and thus alters her sense of being in this world so much so that she yearns for an absolutist sort of alienation in her own homeland. She turns out to be the victim of social prejudice/*othering*. Being exposed to direct and indirect onslaughts of racism and consequent existential humiliation, the experiential in-between, irreconcilable and contingent condition emits agony and chaos for Sarah and thus unsettles her sense of a stable and coherent identity. At the same time, her hyphenated being enables her to see through the fissures, holes and gaps of her own culture/society. While answering a question about leaving India, Sarah responds, "...when I think of all the Millers of England, I could leave at once" (Desai 1971: 84). This dispersion highlights a dialectical reconstruction of the native and by the native nurturing space of the in-between. It is because of this reason that she negotiates her duality of the real homeland and the imaginary hostland by embracing Adit's decision to *return* to India towards the end of the novel. It showcases her preference for a deterritorialized and cosmopolitan assertion. This understanding opens up the scope of her hybridization in her homeland too. Resultantly, she starts reconfiguring her disliking for Indian dishes and dresses and thus hybridizes herself to live as an outsider in her own homeland. McLeod comments: "Hybridity...[is] a way of thinking beyond exclusionary, fixed, binary notions of identity..." (2000: 219).

Thus, Sarah opens up her original self for the purpose of 'reinscription'. Thus, she executes a cross-cultural fertilization to embrace the varied facets of the hostland and the homeland to negotiate her duality of existence.

Moving on, it is the time to consider Adit and Dev relationship—the two outsiders in-the-midst of the hostile hostland. They are subjected to the racial marginalization for their *difference* in the hostland. The novel explicates that the secret of initial survival of such outsiders relies on mimicking the natives and that too by keeping a fair distance before proceeding on the dialectic of reconfiguring/hybridizing one's identity authentically. Bhabha considers that mimicry expands the creative tension between the native and the migrant. However, Bhabha develops a positivist view of the notion of mimicry as well in his celebrated essay "Of Mimicry and Man". Here, he brings out the subversive power of the notion. On a deconstructionist note, mimicry assumes a performative role and thus acts to lay bare the inauthenticity of all covert structures of power. An important theorist Gandhi holds that "In effect, mimicry inheres in the necessary and multiple acts of translation; which oversee the passage from colonial vocabulary to its anti-colonial usage" (1998: 149). Mimicry is an empowering tool as it "...locates an area of considerable political and cultural uncertainty in the structure of the imperial dominance" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2000: 157). In this way, mimicry eludes the control and creatively subverts native's authority over the colonized. Bhabha opines that "...the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excesses, its difference" (1994: 86). Hence, it is a state of ambivalence and undermines the claims of imperial discourse.

It is in this context that Adit, Dev and other immigrants are also made to realise that they need to act as mimics by way of respecting the socio-cultural stereotypes so as to survive in the hostland. Notably, the native designates Adit and Dev as 'Wogs' in the public place. Not only this, there are separate lavatories for the Asiatics. Such racial

imputations influence Adit and Dev in dissimilar proportions. Saha observes: "Dev and Adit present two contrasting pictures of self-assessment and self-acceptance in a discriminatory host society" (2012: 2). Adit, being a mimic and "...a romantic admirer of England" (Surendran 2001: 67), readily ignores such slurs and says, "It is best to ignore those who don't deserve one's notice" (Desai 1971: 18). Such incidents reveal the dark side of the immigrant existence. The dismal plight of the immigrants fuel "...the issues like, homelessness and cultural collision resulting in the narratives of nostalgia, mixed loyalties, alienation, ghettoism, loss or renewal of identity, faith nationality etc." (Singh 207: vi).

Considering the reasons of Adit's sense of complacent mimicking in the hostland, it is worth evaluating the circumstances under which he comes to England. Adit comprehends England as the land of his dreams and myriad opportunities for leading a prosperous life. On the contrary, Dev happens to be a potent counter-point to Adit and it is he who questions and deconstructs such hollow defense with his razor-sharp counter-narratives to jostle the sand castles of Adit's seemingly coherent view of the hostland. A noted critic Verma makes an evaluation of this situation and remarks: "The problem of immigration which is at the center of the novel achieves its appeal and dramatic intensity through the juxtaposition of Dev's and Adit's points of view, increasingly divergent [which] forms the complex reversal of situation in the end" (1992: 104). Adit's veneer show of well-being in the hostland is actually a sham since it is not based on an authentic interpretation of the diasporic space. Rather, it is representative of an obscure façade which is too brittle to face the tsunami of racism in the hostland.

On one of the occasions, Adit takes Sarah and Dev proudly to the Millers' mansion in Harrow—his former landlords during his days of struggle in England. Adit considers the Millers' "...as such brave people" (Desai 1971: 78). On the contrary, Sarah somehow knows the reality of such void claims. Therefore, she is much reluctant to visit

them. However, the way they receive Adit, Sarah and Dev trio "...with annoyance, regret or embarrassment" (Desai 1971: 78), it unsettles Adit intensely and also sows the seeds of his rootlessness and ghettoization in the diasporic space. When Adit, out of excitement, asks about a picture which has been transferred from his bedroom to the drawing room, Millers' exchange seething looks followed by an irony-laden sarcastic comment by Mrs. Miller: "I beg your pardon...I should not have touched it without your permission, of course, What a terrible thing to do!" (Desai 1971: 79). Such overt yet sophisticated reactions of the Millers shake Adit's sense of place in the hostland. It rips through the superficial layers of his mimicking the natives. The cold, sarcastic and blunt reactions of the Millers' expose the snags of Adit's mimicry in the hostland. Resultantly, Adit's presumed identification with the hostland starts unsettling now. As a result, his relationship with the hostland turns out to be ambivalent.

Later, in the third part of the novel titled "Departure", the visit of the trio to the Roscommon-James-Sarah's parents brings out the hollowness of Adit's ambivalent and hollow relationship with the hostland. It is here that "...the self-satisfied expatriate gradually finds himself estranged" (Jacob 2004: 170). The visit surfaces the truth of his mimicry in the hostland and thus distorts his sense of being leading to a sudden existential haemorrhage. It torments his assumed sense of coherence in the hostland. Resultantly, it chisels the dualism of the hostland and the homeland in his consciousness. He doesn't witness the warmth of love displayed by Sarah's parents whom they met after a long time. Adit deems it a "...colourless, toneless, flavourless relationship" (Desai 1971: 139). Dev makes a very important observation which further intensifies the duality of Adit. He comments "...[Here] everything tells you that you are an outsider..." (Desai 1971: 159). Accordingly, the visit topples down the stable and coherent Adit and startles his dualistic position towards the hostland. Notably, the racial slurs, the counter-narrative of Dev, the sharp-edged Millers', the Roscommon-James coupled with the imbalanced socio-

economic structure of the hostland demystify Adit's sense of adapted existence and now a serious reinterpretation of his being is the obvious call. It is in this sense that the existential tremours havoc Adit's consciousness. It forms the duality-laden existential earthquake for Adit and also installs the tendency of looking back to the homeland for potential recovery of his hyphenated being. Now, Adit is haunted by the homeland far more frequently and he starts longing for Indian landscapes of wilderness and vastness. Adit's nostalgia acquires the shape of 'an ache' for the homeland vis-à-vis the dialectics of dislocation, and othering in the hostland. In this context of Adit's plight, Richards, in his essay "Framing Identities" remarks: "Racism fractures the ability to engage with others at a fundamental level by substituting a 'corporeal schema' with a racial epidermal schema" (2010: 10). Adit being a subaltern in the hostland experiences the diasporic hyphen and thus yearns for the homeland, its language, culture, folklore and its inhabitants. Since the hostland offers a number of problems for Adit (the immigrant), he is made to feel his exclusion from the mainstream. Being mocked and discriminated against, he is pushed to the peripherilizing limits causing frustration and obfuscation. Such perilous, porous and dualistic existence in the hostland lures him to *look back* for solace coupled with his altered understanding of the homeland. Now, the hostland starts suffocating Adit. The diasporic space of the in-between connotes irreconcilability, fragmentation and identity-crisis. He detests "...this business of always hanging together with people like ourselves all wearing the Label *Indian Immigrant*... It's so stifling, all the damned time being aware who one is and where one is. God, I am fed up!" (Desai 1971: 183, emphasis original). It signifies his derision for the hostland. Having failed miserably in co-opting a hybridized, deterritorialized and transnational identity, Adit takes the ultimate decision to return to India his own land "...where none would call him a Wog or Asiatic" (Kukreti 2008: 47) so as to negotiate the duality of the hostland and the homeland. Adit chooses the route of roots to negotiate the duality and ambiguities of his existence. Thus, he takes the decision to

return to India and he tells Sarah: "I can't stand it, Sarah. I tell you, I've had enough. It's all got to end now. There must be a change. A big change... . Now don't stop me, don't say anything. I've made up my mind....It's all over" (Desai 1971: 197). It explicates that Adit does not embrace the possibility of the hybridized identity as offered by the diasporic space and hence he prefers fixity and rootedness cultivating an ache to return to the homeland the imaginary homeland to be more specific.

Now, it is to consider Dev for the purpose of evaluating his odyssey vis-à-vis duality of the hostland and the homeland. He is depicted as a romantic iconoclast who is able to see through the holes and fissures of the diasporic experience. He decodes the natives as exhibiting a different set of values, likings and preferences coupled with a mask of superiority. It is symbolic of imbalanced power relations controlling the native-migrant paradigm in hostland. This paradigm signifies a kind of dehumanization of the immigrants in the hostland. The stereotypes refer to the discourse fixture(s) determining the relationship between the native and the immigrant. Such fixtures being a semiotic activity are representatives of the imperial/racial dominance by impregnating signs with certain stable signifieds so as to ensure a reductionist signification in the colonial framework and for maintaining the *other*. It leads to a resistance-laden, paradoxical and ambivalent situation in the relationship of the native and the immigrant. In this context, Dev digs out the colonial/racial discourse and deconstructs such stereotypization for the purpose of reconstructing a postcolonial identity of the immigrant. He detests the mimicking immigrants here as well. Dev is astounded to observe the pervasive passivity and docile acceptance of the racial slurs targeted at the immigrants and declares that "...I wouldn't live in a country where I was insulted and unwanted...I will go back to India... . Laugh. Go on. That's all you people do, you lazy immigrants" (Desai 1971: 19). It results in the making of an existential sandwich whereby Dev is disseminated in the two worlds. His feeling of

alienation and the nostalgia has made him grow hateful of every object in the foreign land. He rues his decision of filtering into England. Dev's dislocation from the homeland itself assumes a sort of sovereignty and subsequently reformulates his understanding of the self in relation to the homeland. It is in the light of this complexity of being that he shuttles between the extremes of the hostland and the homeland, the present and the past and the familiar and the distant coupled with a fertile desire for cohering his/her existence by way of assimilation and acculturation in the hostland. In the second part of the novel titled "Discovery and Recognition", the ambivalent in-between of the diasporic space emerges more vividly vis-à-vis the gyral pattern of Dev's consciousness. His hybridity manifests a new self-fashioning. It generates a newness mediating and reconstructing cultural differences. Dev's hybridity refracts the process his cross-cultural fertilization and it helps him in reconfiguring varied facets of his being. It builds polemical assimilation and adaptation of cultural practices so as to endorse his identity by subverting the monolithic structure of the hostland. It helps in de-essentializing the notion of identity by shaping a creative counter-narrative in the Bhabhaesque 'Third Space' for the purpose of envisioning a multilogue of inter-community mosaic. Now, Dev negotiates his duality by deciding not to return to the homeland and says "...all I want is well, yes, a good time. Not to return to India" (Desai 1971: 140). Accordingly, Dev opts for reinscription to live on the edges/margins for which there is a typical Bhabhaesque term, i.e., liminality which literally means 'threshold'. This way, the interstitial layers blast concentration on one signified and advocate perpetual erasures privileging the phenomenon of the in-between and interstitially. Such an understanding assigns Dev's identity a multi-accented and discursive position in the diasporic space christening polyphonic implications in reference to the dualism of the hostland and the homeland.

The preceding assessment of the novel explicates the complex responses of Sarah, Adit and Dev to the duality of the hostland and the homeland. Sarah-Adit-Dev trio faces

the challenges of the diasporic space in different proportions despite the fact of certain similarities and resemblances in the process. An important aspect of the discussion relates to the idea that the displaced positionality of the immigrants' virtual or real unfolds a valuable possibility, so as to reinterpret the totalizing nature of the dominant discourses operating in the hostland and the homeland. As a result, the immigrant enjoys a position to see through the opacity of the said discourses and hegemonic structures confronting him/her. Consequently, s/he is able to comprehend the impurity of the deceptively pure, complete and totalizing notions of the home/nation. In this sense, the immigrant assumes a subtle, authentic position to subvert the authoritative, fixed and totalizing notions of the home/nation for seeing the clear light of the day by way of a novel/hybrid self-fashioning vis-à-vis the requirements of the diasporic space. It is in this sense that foregone discussion brings out the complications of the diaspora space vis-à-vis the duality of the homeland and the hostland.

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**Shivani's *Aparadhini* : Women
Without Men – A Study of Women's
Marginalization**

* *Pallavi Srivastava*

Major changes have occurred in writing literature during the recent decades with respect to the perception of values, socio-cultural commitments and politics of nation. The image of Indian woman has also undergone the process of reconstruction. The colonial venture into modernity brought concepts of democracy, equality and individual rights in India. The social reform movements initiated the first phase of feminism in India that tried to uproot the social evils like Sati (widow immolation), to allow widow remarriage, to forbid child marriage, and to reduce illiteracy, as well as to regulate the age of consent and to ensure property rights through legal intervention. This developed women's critical consciousness about their role and rights in free India. Postmodern Indian women poets such as Kamala Das, Eunice de Souza, Mamta Kalia, Tara Patel, Imtiaz Dharkar, Gauri Deshpande, Suniti Namjoshi, Gauri Pant, Lakshmi Kannan, Vimla Rao, Meena Alexander, Margaret Chatterjee, Charmayne D'Souza, Sujata Bhatt, Tejdeep Menka Shivdasni and a few others totally upset the conventional discourse of Indian English poetry. They introduced in it a new array of thematic contents in new voices and related their experiences in their art from a broad spectrum of styles.

The concept of 'patriarchy' is an important one in feminist theory. The term has been used for women's subordination and oppression in society. It has been used within post-1960s,

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feminism. It denotes the systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination. In this context Charmayne D'Souza's scathing sarcasm on male exploitative attitude is quite influential in the poem "When God First Made a Whore". D' Souza's bold gesture is a landmark for today's woman who is actually quite different from what the earlier feminists describe as woman. This new woman has been all pervasive in Indian English Literature since 1950 and has made their presence felt in Pakistani and Bangladeshi literatures in English as well. Indian English literature falls into two conspicuous segments – the pre and post independence Indian writing in English. The first phase emphasizes native literatures with the fusion of the highest ideas of the East and West. The writers of post independence phase dealt with questions relating to social, economic and political truths in their works. After independence, Indian women poets of significance emerged with their works focusing on the real predicament of women in the male chauvinistic society. In a sense contemporary modern Indian women's concept is a neo-concept and neo-Indian phenomenon. The word "resistance" is an important one in feminist movement in India. Modern Indian women poets have adopted strong subversive strategies to express their inner turbulence. Their conflict between passivity and rebellion against the long-existing patriarchal set up is predominantly the theme of much poetry by women poets. The present paper is a humble attempt to show women's marginalization in Shivani's novel, *Apradhini* translated into English.

Shivani, originally named Gaura Pant (17 October 1923 – 21 March 2003) is a well-acclaimed Hindi magazine story writer of 20th century and a pioneer in writing Indian women based fiction. She, better known to us as Shivani, was recipient of Padma Shri in 1982 for her contribution to Hindi literature. Her most famous novel *Krishnakali* is serialized in Hindi magazines like *Dharmayug* and *Saptahik Hindustan*, leading to her cult status as a Hindi magazine writer. She has reflected the culture of Kumaon in her

writings. Her novel *Kaire Chima* was made into a film and her other novels including *Surangma*, *Rativilaap*, *Mera Beta*, and *Teesara Beta* have been turned into television serials. Shivani had varied experiences from her childhood to her being a graduate from Vishwa Bharati University in 1943. In 1951, her story *Main Murga Hun* (I am a Chicken) was published and she became Shivani from Gaura Pant. Shivani's oeuvre covers – *Chareiveti*, a narrative of travel in Russia and her encounters with literary figures, *Atithi*, (1996), a novel whose central character, Jaya, after a failed marriage meets Shekhar who proposes to her. *Pootonvali* (1998), a collection of two novelettes and three short stories, *Jharokha* (1999), *Chal Khusaro Ghar Aapne* (1998), a novel, *Vatayan* (1999), *Ek Thi Ramrati* (1998), *Mera Bhai/Patheya*, (1997), a novella and her recollections of events and personages, *Yatrik* (1999), her experiences in England where she travelled for the marriage of her son, *Jaalak* (1999), 48 short memoirs, *Amader Shantiniketan* (1999), reminiscences of Shantiniketan, *Manik* —novelette and other stories (*Joker and Tarpan*), *Shmashan Champa*, (1997), *Surangma*, a powerful novel about a political figure and his personal life shadowed by sordid relationships, *Mayapuri*, a novel about relationships, *Kainja*, a novel and 7 short stories, *Bhairvee*, a novel, *Gainda*, a novel and two long stories, *Krishnaveni*, a novelette and two short stories, *Swayam Sidha*, a novel and 6 short stories, *Kariya Cheema*, 7 short stories, *Up Preti*, 2 short novels, a story and 13 nonfictional articles, *Chir Swayamvara*, 10 short stories and 5 sketches, *Vishkanya*, a novelette and, *Krishnakali and Other stories*, 5 short stories. In one of her most popular novels *Krishnakali*, Snehakali has devastating good looks and professional success, but remains tormented — loved and admired by hordes of men but loving no one herself.

Her other works are: *Kastoori Mrig*, a short novel and several articles, *Shivani ki Sresth Kahaniyan*, three novelettes and three short stories, *Smriti Kalash*, thirteen outstanding short stories, *Sunhu Taat Yeh Akath Kahani*, ten essays, *Hey Dattatreya*, autobiographical narratives, *Manimala Ki Hansi*, folk culture and literature of Kumaon,

Short stories, essays, memoirs and sketches and *Shivani ki Mashhoor Kahaniyan*, a collection of twelve short stories. In *Aparadhini: Women without Men*, Shivani surveys the lives of women on the fringes of their societies, prisoners and mendicants, domestic helpers and viragos, those whose existence are rarely registered. This collection is a collection of sixteen sketches and a mix of non-fiction and fiction. It is a collection of interviews with women in prison-lifers for the most part. The sixteen stories in this collection are presented in three parts without any particular rationale of categorizational compulsion. It questions: "Is there a place for single woman? Women without men", who don't conform to societal norms and live on the margins?¹

Aparadhini is translated from Hindi by Shivani's daughter Ira Pande and the afterword is written by her elder daughter Mrinal Pande. Her grandson Aditya designed the cover page of the book. Shivani has established her position as a writer of short stories, children's books, folk tales, memories and essays. She herself realized the prevalent and suffocating pressures of the patriarchal social norms as she had to leave her professional radio singing because her father-in-law disapproved of earning money by singing. Her pseudonym provides her an opportunity to give vent to her suppressed feelings in disguise in this Indian society bound in social taboos. Her visit to prisons made her write women-centred novels with themes like sexuality and interpersonal relationships. Originally written and published in Hindi, these stories reveal the real genius of Shivani:

Characters who might seem pale and uninteresting in real life — an undistinguished, very Orthodox Brahmin priest in a village up in the foothills of the Himalayas, his traditional wife, the village idiot, the widowed mother — take on a human glow and their lives an unexpected resonance. It is the small events, little gestures, nondescript people, that suffuse the world of Shivani's fiction with hope, and the future is something one enters with courage.

Shivani's feminism is like a gentle humanism that does not stop short when it meets the female. Within the world-view of her fiction, there are few contradictions or problems that cannot be transcended with a little sympathy and a belief in the goodness of humankind.²

The sixteen stories published in this collection are presented in three parts without any particular compulsion of categorization. However, these stories are too true to be called short stories. The author's presence is keenly felt throughout. Her acerbic comments, her innate sympathy for the storyteller and her brilliant description of the narrators make her story worth-excellence. Janaki who was imprisoned for conspiring with her brother-in-law as well as for love, gets her husband brutally murdered. The society condemned her as a criminal but Shivani refers her life as hell with her husband. He was abusive and much older than Janaki. She finds comfort with the younger brother. Here, Shivani also refers to the prevalent 'rakhi brother' syndrome in various parts of India which leads to marriages. Janaki never feels any remorse on her act when she is questioned, rather says, "regret what, have I done?" (p.35)³

Aparadhini also depicts some love stories as in case of Dhuan who was a courtesan's daughter and was trained by an ogress of an instructor. She was kept hidden and jailed in a house. Rajula loves a local Seth's son. When he was dead, Rajula runs here and there in search of home and finally settles in an ashram. The case of Rajula questions as to where the home of a woman is in our society. Shivani lays bare the moral landscape – "Where is home? Where do women like Rajula go?" ... "Women without men" – Do they not conform to societal norms and live on the margins?"⁴ However, her serious writings started only during the nine years spent at Shantiniketan. Shivani's writing spans almost the whole century and works as an authentic documentation of the twists and turns of life in pre- and post-Independent India. She was caught in a time when domestic world was all in all for women. Before gender and feminism became important

and self-conscious territories, Shivani was already instinctively writing about it without a self-conscious agenda. She grasped the core issues of feminism, the struggle to find the self and its identity, accepting our responsibilities as women but not submitting to the choices thrust upon us. Ira Pande feels that "We've de-feminised ourselves to prove we are good. Outer manifestations don't give inner strength".⁵

The women we meet in these pages, these eponymous women without men, would have suffered at the hands of a writer concerned with sensationalism or self-interest. They could very easily have been rendered one-dimensionally as superficial objects of pop or pulp, driven by their sexuality and selfishness. But Shivani etches them so delicately that even the most lurid of their stories is full of empathy and nuance. We meet several of them behind bars, most often for murders. A few, like alms-seeking travelers namely, Alakh Mai and Rajula, live without address. "There is no jail on earth that can shackle a free spirit and no spirit so free that its feet cannot be bound in chains we cannot see," writes the author, and this line underscores the spirit of the collection on the whole. Unsentimental yet compassionate and peppered with enjoyable, slightly humorous moments without becoming tasteless, *Apradhini's* most victorious effect is that it assigns such importance to the vagaries of fate – how arbitrary it is, in the final reckoning, that one is only someone who reads about such lives, and not a person whose life such is.

And not, for instance, the deeply sensual Muggi, who left a trail of fourteen coned husbands behind her before falling in love with the fifteenth and who eats terracotta to assuage her sadness or Janaki, who helps her brother-in-law murder her husband as he sleeps in the same room with their children or Alakh Mai, a child-bride who pushed a buffalo, her husband and his mother over a ravine before turning to the spiritual life, the only option available to her or Deshpat, who enjoyed the power of being a gangster moll till the love of one piece of gold ruined her life. In these lightly-etched but strikingly powerful vignettes, we feel intimately

connected to their lives, and appreciative of their agency – not, as would have been the case with a more emotionally manipulative author, feeling badly for or towards them.

There are, however, a few pieces that miss the mark. The first is “Ama”, a recollection of the author’s own mother; in this instance, the subject seems to cut too close to the bone and thus comes across as slightly too maudlin. But the more notable failure is that of the three pieces that consist of the book’s final section and are most likely to be fiction, two – “Shibi” and “Dhuan” – are both about high class courtesans who fall from grace. This line of storytelling carries far too many shades of regressive, parochial cautionary tales on female immorality – a big disappointment in an otherwise obviously feminist collection. The book closes on a less judgmental and far happier note: “Tope”. Ironically, one of the book’s most notable figures is hardly a woman without men – the flamboyant and excitable Christina Victoria Thomas rabble-rouses right from “the historic time when she really spewed fire and brimstone” all the way into old age. Fiction or non-fiction, heroine or harridan, we could always do with more women like her”.⁶

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Tulika Mehrotra's *Delhi Stopover* : A Meaningful Journey

*Rajendraprasad Y. Shinde

Indian English Fiction has travelled a long distance from the days of Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Manohar Malgaonkar, Anita Desai and Vikram Seth to the new world of Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai. Chetan Bhagat brought a whole new experience of Indian youth in his novels like *Five Point Someone* and *One Night @ the Call Centre*. Writers like Vikram Doctor have made a new forays in the fiction colored in Food and Culture. These are representative names and the list will miss quite a few other important ones. From the charge of entertaining the colonial audience or catering to the American taste Indian English Fiction has now come on its own. Globalisation has played key role in this gradual change. One such example of the elimination of the line of difference between global and local or going glocal is the new form of fiction based on the story of adventures of characters of Indian origin but their career making them the part of the global culture. To put it in other words we can say that place has become insignificant and it is the upbringing or the attitude that make the protagonist Indian or American. These adventures remind us of the origin of English fiction with picaros and picaroons in the novels of Fielding or Defoe.

These writers were working for the news-papers and used their experiences in their career to make their characters livelier. Tulika Mehrotra's debut novel *Delhi Stopover* is the authentic picture of a new woman who does not desire to be

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the 'ideal woman' but struggles like any other career oriented man to 'take an arm with a sea of struggles'.

Tulika Mehrotra's first novel *Delhi Stopover* describes the journey of a struggling woman, an actress of Indian-origin who flees away from her career and boyfriend in Los Angeles and reaches Delhi to find a solace. She suddenly enters into the Delhi Fashion world. She gets a chance on the ramp and ends up in the 'style circuit' in the capital. To shed a few pounds she takes to drugs. It comes as a routine because she was going to for a bikini shoot. Albert Camus wanted his characters to live life 'dangerously'. Tulika's protagonist Lila Kapoor is ready to live such a dangerous life in New Delhi. Her intention is not to show that life in the capital is dangerous but to point out that there is no difference between the life in New York or in New Delhi. Nikita Puri of Hindustan Times who interviewed the writer says:

Tulika's book does the round of the dangerously dazzling side of Delhi, Ask her if she is only glorifying the Page 3 stereotype that the city is associated with, and she says," No, not at all. I'm only telling people how in some ways, New Delhi is no less than New York even though no one would suspect. (1)

Tulika has the firsthand experience of the world of fashion. She holds the master's degree in fashion design from the Instituto Europeo di Design in Milan. She worked very hard to make her protagonist as real as possible. She met number of models and designers in Delhi while making the book. She told this to Business World scribe:

I interviewed a number of models and designers including Tarun Tahiliani. Along the way I made some great friends and witnessed the social side of the fashion scene as well. I also attended fashion week in Delhi from both the audience and backstage. My own masters in fashion design from Milan gave me the insight on the entire process from inspiration to execution on any collection. (2)

One would be tempted to compare *Delhi Stopover* with Madhur Bhandarkar's film *Fashion* (2008) but Chicago based Tulika's novel goes further and tells us the dark side of this world:

If what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas then the world of high fashion with its glitzy highs and grimy lows is definitely not stay in Vegas. After Madhur Bhandarkar's *Fashion* (2008), the dark underbelly of this tantalizing world is brought to us by Chicago based journalist Tulika Mehrotra (3).

It may be *Long Day's Journey into Night* or the inward journey in *Heart of Darkness*; we know that the real journey is of the inner self of the individual. Journey in *Delhi Stopover* is a dynamic journey of the writer Tulika and of her protagonist Lila Kapoor. This aspect of journey makes this first novel of Tulika quite interesting. The writer undertakes the journey from America to India in search of writing as a career. Lila undertakes the similar journey in search of a career (she was not sure what career). The writer has finally made up to be a remarkable Indian woman novelist. However, her protagonist had to undergo trials and tribulations in *Delhi Stopover* just to take her journey ahead in the next novel (which is supposed to come next year) *Crashing B-Town*.

Lila is a struggling actress in Los Angeles and moves to Delhi to get the freedom from the stress in her career and the broken relationship. She bumps into the world of Delhi Fashion. Tulika confessed to the reporter that she started the book to be a story of herself but later on Lila developed into an individual. Tulika graduated with a degree in finance from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign before she moved to Milan for her master degree in Fashion Designing. She worked in the Manhattan fashion circuit and got bored. Her father suggested that she should take up writing as a career. She did not take his suggestion seriously initially but later on what her father's suggestion proved out to be a true vocation for her. Lila had to fight against the demons in her mind before being thrown into a casting couch.

The writer doesn't justify this act but shows convincingly that her circumstances forced her to do it. The Hindustan Times reporter rightly comments:

"Mehrotra's heroine not only battles her inner demons, she also sorts out the life of her cokehead cousin, who works as a designer's assistant. Lest you tag her as a Miss Goody Two Shoes, Mehrotra throws Lila into a casting couch. "You and I may understand why she did it, but that does not justify it," she says.

Lila is considered to have a fresh face and she is now ready for the bikini shoot. In this world one is ruled by one's agent because a model cannot remain a model forever unless she builds a brand around herself like Gisele Bundchen or Padma Lakshmi. Considered a fresh face with the "right" attributes (her American upbringing), Lila is caught in a real world where bikini shoots are frowned upon. Where crash dieting is a fad and where your life is ruled by your agent. The natural step for Lila will definitely be Bollywood. While writing a novel on the world of fashion Tulika doesn't forget to mention that Indian Fashion Industry is gaining lot of importance the world over. As a writer she uses all her skills as a journalist in Chicago. She told to Rohini Nair of *Asian Age*: "(I am) an observer of people first and then a storyteller. I believe these first two traits only help to make a better journalist."

The writer does not want the novel to be called a chic(k) lit(erature). She says there are a lot of dark truths in it which we tend to neglect. Her experience in Delhi Fashion World was a culture shock to her. She found out that beneath all the glamour in the fashion industry there is dark painful world of competition. She got the chance to explore India which she had not seen. She felt that India has made remarkable growth in fashion sector and it will be the best competition for the world fashion industry. One may look at the novel only as the portrayal of the world not easily accessible to us but the journey of the writer and the protagonist makes it quite remarkable work among

contemporary Indian Women writers.

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CREATIVE WRITING

SHORT STORY

Serpentine Woman

**Ramesh K. Srivastava*

After the premature death of her husband Jagran, Rajani did not know what to do. She was just twenty six and had an eight-year old daughter Teju to take care of. Her husband used to catch serpents and extract their poison. It was a risky work but he had learnt it from his father and carried out the same ancestral profession. One does not know what happened, but when Rajani had gone to her father's house for a couple of days, one snake, whose poisonous fangs were already thought to be taken out, stung him and he died, leaving her and her daughter behind.

Rajani too knew the work of catching poisonous serpents as she belonged to the same tribe in Chhattisgarh area but had never done so and as such had natural nervousness about it. The problem with this work, as also with fishing, was that catching poisonous serpents depended largely on chance and consequently it could never be taken as a source of regular income. Hence, she always remained somewhat hard-pressed for money.

She thanked God that Vijay Pal who owned a grocery shop had given her the work of cleansing grains and lentils at his shop which helped her in making both ends meet. Since

* **Dr. Ramesh K. Srivastava** is a novelist, short story writer, critic and essayist. He retired from Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, and is currently Professor of English at S. R. Group of Institutions, Ambabai, Jhansi (U.P.)

the grains, spices and other items could arrive at any time of day and since Rajani was doing a good job, Vijay Pal decided to give the family at the back of his grand mansion a tile-thatched mud room with a small verandah before it. It was a matter of relief for Rajani that the family had at least a shade over their heads. When no work was there or when the shop was closed, she went to a rivulet nearby to catch either fish or some poisonous snake.

Jagran, her husband, had a close friend named Shesh Raj who was a snake-charmer. They belonged to the same area and had come to Indore from Chhattisgarh in search of livelihood. After taking out poison from a serpent, Jagran would either leave it in the jungle or give it to his friend Shesh Raj so that the latter could carry such snakes in his bamboo basket and show them to children in order to earn some money.

Once during Rajani's visit to her father's place, Jagran was alone and as such he called Shesh Raj at his house. The former cooked food while the latter brought a bottle of liquor which both of them drank. They slept together in the night, dead drunk, but Jagran did not get up in the morning. Shesh Raj shouted many times, shook his body but there was no movement. Jagran was taken to the hospital where his death was confirmed. The two marks of a serpent's sting on his hand clearly established the cause of his death.

For Rajani and her daughter Teju, his death created a mountain of difficulties. After the rituals were over in which Vijay Pal helped the family, Rajani remained inconsolable and wanted to return to her village in Chhattisgarh. Vijay Pal assured her of all help. He suggested that if after a month or two, she still realized that things did not go well with her, they could go back to her village. In addition to the work of cleansing grains, Vijay Pal employed her to do routine work of sweeping and mopping his house and scrubbing utensils. Occasionally, she even cooked meals for him as his wife was not keeping well.

Though Rajani had somewhat dark complexion, she was far from being black. Her slim tight body and her smooth serpentine neck with a small round face but with large eyes looked quite attractive. When she sat in the front part of Vijay Pal's shop, the customers could not fail to appreciate the black beauty, cleansing and sifting grains of their soil or sand. Her cheap cotton saree appeared worn out and with some tell-tale holes. Vijay Pal felt pity for the woman and often gave away a small quantity of grains or pulses to her in addition to her due charges. Teju, her daughter, either played there or helped her mother in the cleansing work.

Being thirty-five and looking somewhat aged, Shesh Raj ogled greedily at Rajani's body which had a perfect form as if some sculptor had carved her in grey stone. Her shapely body, her swift but graceful gait, particularly her slim waist and popping breasts made her an ideal figure who could have been an enviable actress if she had had only an opportunity. But even then, she set the hearts of many young men on fire.

For a couple of months after the death of Rajani's husband, Shesh Raj continued to help her and Teju. He paid good tributes to Jagran who had been a good person and above all a helping friend. Rajani felt good in hearing of her husband's praise and also that Shesh Raj brought grocery and vegetables when needed and occasionally even declined to accept payment for them, saying, "I bring fresh vegetables for myself. So if I bring a little more, it doesn't cost much. Can't I do so much for my Teju who is so dear to me?"

Finding at least a male member at hand and within sight, Rajani felt a psychological support in him and the feeling of being alone did not invade her. Shesh Raj also felt at home in finding someone to talk to and even to take his care in sickness. The only thing that bothered her was that Shesh Raj regularly drank liquor and many times in his inebriated state talked loudly of many irrelevant things.

"Bhabhi ji!" Shesh Raj said in his drunken state. "You are so beautiful. This is your god-given beauty which should

not be allowed to waste."

"You shut up," Rajani scolded. "At least remember that a growing daughter is in the house. Have some sense of shame. First of all you are drinking in Teju's presence in the house and then talking rotten things before her."

After giving some salted nuts to Teju which she ate with relish, he pulled her to his side, hugged and kissed her, saying, "Teju does not mind anything. She is a good friend of mine."

Teju often enjoyed playing with serpents under the supervision of Shesh Raj. Since their poisonous fangs were already taken out, they posed no danger to the child. When she looked at the New Year Calendar given by Vijay Pal, she was fascinated by God Vishnu lying down fully stretched out over five hooded serpents in the ocean. She went on observing the calendar and then asked her mother, "Ma, why is he lying on the serpents? Doesn't he have a cotton mattress as we have?"

"Probably not," Rajani said smilingly.

"Can I also lie down sometime on uncle's serpents just to see how comfortable God Vishnu must be over them?"

"You may but they might scare you by their hissing sounds even though their poisonous fangs have been taken out!"

The drinking habit of Shesh Raj was increasing day-by-day. What made him inwardly uneasy was the feeling that an unprotected beautiful woman was so much in his proximity but he could do nothing. He drank more and more to muster up some courage but could not dare to say so. Hence, he often came home either drunk or brought a pouch of illicitly distilled liquor and then drank it in the room before Rajani and her daughter. Giving Teju a salted nut or two, he asked her to say yes to what he said. Then he would go on drinking slowly while muttering something, addressing her. "My Teju, are you my daughter or not?"

"Yes, I am."

"So I am like your father. Am I not?"

"Yes, you are."

"And your mother like my wife?"

Teju did not say anything but he took her shaking head to be in affirmative, though Rajani, overhearing him, said harshly, "Don't talk rotten things with Teju."

After the death of her husband, Rajani many times thirsted for a male union. In daytime, she remained busy but the pangs of loneliness became unbearable in the night. Once she dreamt of sleeping with her husband, enjoying every moment of the union but on waking up, she found she had sex with Shesh Raj. Feeling horrified, Rajani angrily asked, "What did you do? How did you dare to come and sleep with me?"

Whispering with a smile, Shesh Raj said, "It is like enjoying the feast and then grumbling that your fast has been broken."

She had no answer because her dream and reality had got mixed together, and hence she could have done nothing to resist him. Then Rajani silently cried over her predicament, taking care not to wake up Teju, remembering the happiness her husband had given and now feeling miserably helpless that she could not quite throw her husband's friend Shesh Raj out because in the absence of a male member, she was likely to be exploited much more by others. Her beauty here seemed to be a liability now. Her daughter too was becoming as attractive as she was.

Knowing Rajani's compulsions, Shesh Raj began to force her occasionally to have sex with him. Being male, he certainly had a lot of physical power which, in his drunken state, got transformed into brutality. Her entreaties not to have sex were crudely throttled. Her loud cries might have scandalized the family and could have resulted in her eviction from the cottage.

"The best thing for all of us is," Shesh Raj suggested, "that we get married."

She looked at his face to gauge the seriousness of his proposal and then said with a long sigh, "Are you going to accept me and Teju? Remember in a couple of years, she will be of a marriageable age."

"No," Shesh Raj said after a long silence. "I'll have nothing to do with her. I earn money barely enough only for my survival; thinking of Teju's marriage would make me mad."

"Then I cannot marry you," Rajani said flatly. "You go your way and I go mine."

"Then who will take care of you people?"

"If god makes birds, it makes their beaks and feathers for their survival. He will take care of us as well."

Vijay Pal occasionally visited Rajani's tile-thatched mud room. He would come and sit on the cot or on the empty wooden crate, there being no other furniture in the room. He said, "Rajani, you have given a lot of courage to my wife and through her to me."

"You too have supported me in my bad times after my husband's passing away. But for you, I would have remained half-mad like a headless chicken."

"Rajani," Vijay Pal said hesitantly. "For all your help, I have brought something for you. Stand here and close your eyes." As she stood nervous and hesitant with her eyes closed, he took out a silver chain from his pocket and put it around her neck.

When Rajani opened her eyes and saw it, she found it exceedingly beautiful, the white glittering chain hanging down her dark-complexioned neck. Gratified and feeling overwhelmed with emotion, she could not check her tears welling up in her eyes and swiftly knelt down to touch his feet, saying, "This is too much, Seth ji."

"Nothing is too much before your services," Vijay Pal said, wiping off her tears and then emotionally hugging her. "You are like a daughter to us. We live well because of your services and help."

In her neighbourhood, Teju watched with fascination some cats and kittens as also their antics. She particularly liked the young ones playing with their mother's tail. Teju asked her mother, "Why don't women have tails?"

"Would you like to have one Teju?"

"If you had one, Ma, like that of the cat, I would have liked to play with it."

Once as the kittens were playing with one another and the mother cat was supervising them, a dog appeared menacingly moving towards kittens. The mother cat rushed threateningly to the dog and stood firmly before it, producing dog-like roaring-cum-barking sounds so loudly that the dog ran away with its tail between legs. Teju came running to her mother and informed her about it. Rajani said, "The cat is a creature much weaker than the dog in normal times but when her kittens are threatened, she becomes so ferocious that even dog runs away from it. That is how God protects the weak from the strong ones."

The last sentence was uttered meaningfully with her face toward Shesh Raj to convey the message that she must not be exploited beyond a point by considering her a weak creature.

When his behaviour became unbearable, Rajani complained to Vijay Pal about Shesh Raj's habits. Vijay Pal advised Shesh Raj not to pressurize Rajani who was a widow with an eight-year old daughter. He apologized and caught hold of his ears, touched the Seth's feet and swore never to do so again. This had happened in the presence of Rajani. However, within a week, Shesh Raj forgot his promises and came back to his earlier self. Rajani had not told Vijay Pal that Shesh Raj often intruded into the room and had forcible sex with her, ignoring that her eight-year old daughter Teju slept there.

Once Rajani had caught a Koriwala snake of the family of Russel's viper. It was very small, like a baby, which she wanted to sell after it grew up a little. On growing up, it

could easily fetch one thousand rupees. Though extremely poisonous, the snake remained friendly with Rajani and her daughter Teju who fed it once in a while with a small lizard, a tiny frog or it would itself catch a small mouse for its food. At other times, it remained safely in a bamboo basket.

Rajani had no box or purse to keep money. There was a small, narrow niche in the mud wall where she kept her savings. She realized a couple of times that some money had disappeared from it. Since Teju never took anything without her permission, Rajani suspected Shesh Raj who once or twice accepted picking it up but denied it at other times. "Shesh Raj," Rajani yelled. "I earn it with so much hard labour. Rather than contributing something for our expenses, you take money without even asking me."

"These days I don't get much money in showing the serpents to the people."

"Then do something else," Rajani shouted. "I let you remain here so that with our income all three of us can manage the household expenses but rather than earning anything you pilfer my money."

"I won't do it now."

"You had said so many times earlier also but if you do it again, you would not find any one worse than me."

But Shesh Raj continued to do so repeatedly because he could not live without taking liquor. There were times when he earned virtually nothing. When he came home, Rajani provided meals on his request but as he asked for some money for a pouch or a half-bottle of country liquor, she declined. It was then that he thrashed her for money before Teju.

Whenever his thrashings failed to yield any result, Shesh Raj threatened that he would steal the Koriwala snake and sell it quietly for its poison. In the night, he drank heavily and forced her to sleep with him, saying, "What are you waiting for, Rajani? Why don't you marry me? Practically speaking, I am already your husband." Dead drunk as he was, Shesh Raj went on saying anything without realizing what it was. "Do you know Rajani? I used to be jealous of

your husband Jagran because of your beauty. Whenever I praised your beauty before him, he remained very proud of you and very happy. One day I told him that someday I will run away with your wife. He said, 'The day you do so, I'll kill you.' But before he could do anything of the kind, one day, when you were at your father's house, I made a poisonous serpent sting him. While playing with snakes from my basket, he, on my provocation, poked a snake whose poisonous fangs had not been removed and I had stealthily placed it among the harmless ones. Being quite drunk, he failed to see my game and died of the sting. Now if you don't fulfill my wishes, someday I am going to do the same with you and then run away with your daughter Teju. In a couple of years, she would make a good wife. You know it very well, Rajani, that in our parts, girls get married at the age of even ten years."

Rajani was shocked to hear of his liquor-driven confession and plans. She didn't say anything. Her anger, which was in the form of ripples earlier, had begun to gather fury now. She gnashed her teeth without saying anything to him. She felt unbelievably shocked, angry and deceived on Shesh Raj's revelations about her husband's killing. A sense of realization gradually dawned on her that he was a dangerous person. If he could be treacherous to his intimate friend Jagran, he could as well be to her and to her daughter Teju.

Knowing it well that the most ferocious animals or poisonous reptiles respond positively to the kind and loving behaviour of human beings, she had found it true in the case of Koriwala viper. During her husband's time, a Koriwala snake was once kept by Jagran in the house for a couple of days before he had sold it. The snake had never harmed anyone. The same way the Koriwala snake caught by Rajani was kept mostly in a bamboo basket but it was allowed to be free every now and then. It remained very friendly with Rajani and her daughter Teju, but the moment it saw Shesh Raj, it hissed loudly towards him and then sulked away in a corner. Rajani took a careful note of it and thought that probably it had sensed human speech or intentions that he wanted to steal and sell it stealthily for

money.

For a couple of days, Shesh Raj did not go out of the house to show snakes. When Rajani and Teju went to work at Vijay Pal's house, he would take some money stealthily from the niche and go to buy a pouch of country liquor. What surprised him, however, was that Rajani remained quite cool in her behaviour—neither pressurizing him to do some work nor scolding him for regularly pilfering her hard-earned money from the mud-wall niche.

One day when she came back from work, Rajani found that Shesh Raj was lying down on the ground and his body was turning rigid. She sent Teju for Vijay Pal who came running and seeing his precarious condition of Shesh Raj called the police. The body was taken to the hospital where he was declared dead. There were two marks of fangs on his right hand. Obviously, he was stung by a snake.

Rajani remained crying that Shesh Raj was a helper who ran around doing many chores and whose presence gave her some psychological support. After a couple of days, Teju asked her mother, "Ma, how did the Koriwala viper reach the niche? It cannot climb a smooth wall. No matter how it reached there, it did a good job. Uncle Shesh Raj often stole your money from the niche despite your entreaties and warnings against it. The Koriwala snake gave him an appropriate punishment for his actions. You shouldn't cry for him."

"I'm not crying for him, Teju," Rajani explained. "He is a good riddance and I am not sorry for what I did. I am crying for your father who was deceptively killed by Shesh Raj by placing similarly a poisonous snake among the fangless ones. When your father poked at it in his simplicity, he was fatally stung by it."

"How do you know of it?"

"It was revealed by Shesh Raj himself in his drunken state."

POETRY SECTION

Peace

**G.Maria Joseph Xavier*

"Care is an enemy to life" ; for it robs our
minds of peace.

Human life is an ocean of worries with a
few promontories of peace

Most of us go the way of Martha and are
worried about many things.

There is no day without night, a year
without biting winter,

A man without care or life without problems

Even an expanse in India without the
cursed thorny desert trees

That absorb ground water and leave the
land bore dry.

Lack of money may be a reason for the lack
of mental peace;

But the lack of peace is not owing to the lack
of money only.

There are evils that grieve our hearts and
disturb our minds.

Those who swerve from the path of
righteousness procure woes.

Love of money abets greedy men to murder
innocence for gold

Cruel times at times unsexes termagants
who kill even women for wealth.

Wealth is mistaken for money which is
nothing when compared with peace.

A good man tastes a peaceful life with his

blameless wife and kids.

A wicked man with all his riches leads a cat
and dog life in a mansion.

Life bereft of peace is worse than death
through self-immolation.

A lass who was married off against her wish
set herself ablaze.

A lad who falls head over heels in love with
a lass dies in love-lorn state.

An opulent lady unable to bear the torture
of her spouse and in-laws

End her days and a lord commits suicide as
his reputation is ruined.

Sinners misuse power to mint money and
corrupt officials accept bribe.

They gain pelf but lose the precious peace of
mind and live under threat.

Wherefore the people sell their eyes to buy
the ravishing paintings of even Raphael?

A morsel in a house of peace is better than
an elaborate feast in a palace of strife.

Labour not to become rich; keep his
precepts; Heavenly peace will become yours.

"A peaceful life is rather to be chosen than
great riches"

* **Prof.G.Maria Joseph Xavier**, Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

Wall-Hanging

**D.C. Chmabial*

Whenever
past
interferes with present
creates tsunamis.

Build a wall,
a dam,

to contain the tsunami.

Let the water of hope
flow in cascades
reflecting the sunlight
in dreams.

Make an attempt.
See through the opacity
form and transform,
mould and remould
the waves emerging
in the sea yet to be born.

Weave a wall-hanging
of myriad patterns:
rainbow shades.

What a Justice!

The fire test for purity.¹
The test for virtuosity.²
The test for piety.³
The test for chastity.⁴
How many tests?

How's it
every time
a woman
in the witness box?

Men, in the society, go scot free;
though they perpetrate,
perpetuate misdemeanour
with her. On her.
Human sanctity,
if ever, violated,
is violated together.

She's to suffer consistently.
She's made a scapegoat.

Every time.
Always.
What a justice!

Here the allusions are to:

¹Sita – the wife of Lord Rama in the Ramayana;

²Draupadi – the consort of Pandvas from the Mahabharata

³Ahilya - the wife of Gautama Maharishi Myth can be found in Brahmanas, Puranas, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata, Her seduction by Indra.

⁴Anusuya – the wife of sage Atari, one of the saptarishis. And how she served food to Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (naked as per their wishes) by turning them into babies.

* **Dr. D. C Chambial**, Editor, Poetcrit, Maranda, H.P.

Recycling Relationship

**Pashupati Jha*

After forty years of wedded life
don't you feel our link should be re-oiled?
Dirt, cobwebs, rusts should be washed clean
to make the remaining years run smooth!

Let us recycle our relationship
based on our long experience—
where were we right
and where we went wrong.
What would have happened
had we loved a little more
or a little less? Is not the forty
long years together any insurance
that the rest twenty or so
too would be okay?

Shouldn't we polish
the rough edges of our relationship
to make them softer for a better paddling
through the rigmarole of life left,

lest the weakness of growing age
irritate our bond so much
suddenly snapping it into two?

Would we survive separation
after such a long togetherness?
Or, after walking alone for a mile or two
wouldn't we rush back to each other
with a smile of recognition
that all alone, both of us are weaklings
not fit to survive any further?

The buffets of life
have taught this hard-soft lesson to us:
together we live
and alone we die a loveless death.

- * **Prof. Pashupati Jha**, Department of HSS, IIT Roorkee, Uttarakhand.

Oh Master! My Master!

**Sony Dalia*

Tell me honestly master
whether Avon made you famous or
you made it well known.
Four hundred years span —
not easy to connect or sustain oneself
yet, we remember you
recite your passages passionately,
enact episodes emotionally involved.
Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Macbeth
not my kinsmen
but visible around me all these years.
Iago, Cassius, Casa threaten
every moment all over the 'globe'.

Who taught you script tragedies, comedies,
hilarious dialogue, laced with lyrics?
A quibble was to you like golden apple to

Atlanta.

I did not say so, sir! Johnson did.
 When Shylock raved and confronted
 was it not Portia who saved life and honour?
 When I was Caesared no Antony spoke
 Brutus chases like a shadow relentlessly.
 Quintessential human psyche captured,
 preserved in priceless treasure trove.
 Little Latin, less Greek hindered not
 the sonnets unlock your heart
 can there be another in your mould?

* **Sony Dalia**, Hyderabad, Telangana.

For M M Kalburgi

**C.L. Khatri*

Patronage of a deity, favour of a god-father
 a short cut to climb the ladder of a shrine
 draws the crowd clamouring for crown
 as flies are drawn to polluted puddle.

Should I then take shelter
 in an overwhelming temple taxed with
 buzzing flies and chattering monkeys
 ready to protect all under its canopy?

Everyone cannot set one's home on fire
 and bask one's hands in it
 or walk away in tyrant sun or torrent rain.
 The ghost of fear gets into the vein.

Does it mean I can't walk without an
 umbrella?

Can't I be an atheist, a non-believer
 yet believe in myself and speak like a bird
 without inviting a Kalburgi's fate?

Worlds within a world
yet not a world you live in.
You have bullets for every dissenting
alphabet.
Not a bullet for invisible wings I live by.
Should I make a habit of shelled peanut
or brave sun and rain like naked grains?

* **Prof. C.L. Khatri**, Editor, *Cyber Literature*, Patna.

A Road's Anguish

**Sagar Mal Gupta*

Day and night
every hour and every minute
twenty four hours of the day
three hundred sixty five
days of the year.
Vehicles of all shapes and sizes
trample on me very cruelly
causing wounds, fissures
in my body
not applying any balm
to my injured limbs.
The drivers are the cruellest
people on earth
piercing my ears
with the loudest decibels
emitting carbon monoxide
causing permanent damage
to my limbs through pollution .
The anomaly is:
They have no regret
for their inhuman action.
The only persons who show

mercy and pity to me
 are the physically challenged
 people who very gently cycle
 their wheelchairs
 with hands and see to it
 that no injury is
 caused to my limbs.

- * **Prof. Sagar Mal Gupta**, Retired Professor of English,
 Mansarovar, Jaipur, Rajasthan.

Un holiness

* *S.L.Peeran*

In the darkness of the still night
 When the moons and the stars are hidden
 When the silence roams the dark streets
 When the mischief is locked indoor
 When the 'khaki' is not watching
 When the angels on the shoulders are
 asleep
 When none are present to capture our
 moments
 When our consciousness is oblivious
 When the good sense has flown away
 When all cautions are thrown to winds
 What a moment it is to steal a kiss
 From the waiting seductress.
 For releasing the fountains of passions.
 To drown in the unholy mess of life.

- * **S.L.Peeran**, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

A Crooked Self

**Susanta Kumar Bardhan*

A crooked self,
Standing at a distance
Looking at the revelry
Being conducted
With envy, jealousy and competition
Challenging others.
Lamenting for the loss
Of what was desired
For the earthly Paradise.
Tottering on the flames of
Torn papers spread around.
Listening to the sounds,
Cacophonous beating the sick man
With a cudgel and
Making others blunt
Diverting the attention
Of Man from the waiting
Of the Self desired to be
Seated in every soul,
Not to be crooked and forsaken.

- * **Dr. Susanta Kumar Bardhan**, Associate Professor,
Department of English, Suri Vidyasagar College, West
Bengal.

BOOK REVIEWS

Singh, Charu Sheel. *Ten Mahavidyas: Goddess-Scripts of Greater Wisdom*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers 2016. Pp. 291.

Ten Mahavidyas is Charu Sheel Singh's major poetry collection, the preceding major ones being *Tapascharanam*, *Creation Cocktail*, *Born Accross Millenniums: Incarnations of Vishnu* – all of which carry an epic stature. The collection under review celebrates the female power of resistance, evoke as it does, the best of the female traditions narrated in the *Mahabharata*, *Shrimad Bhagvatgita*, *Devi Bhagvat*, among others. The resistance is against the supreme cosmic power known as Shiva who forbids Parvati going to her father's *Yajna* because she had not been invited. She insists and multiplies into her ten forms which are known as *Mahavidyas* – *Kali*, *Chinnamasta*, *Tara*, *Baglamukhi*, *Bhuvaneshwari*, *Dhumavati*, *Shodashi*, *Matangi*, *Kamla*, and *Bhaivari*.

Charu Sheel Singh's *Ten Mahavidyas*, like his previous collections has Indian mythological characters in its background. It offers a fresh reading of Indian poetic tradition and culture, that seem to have been lost in the whirlwind of alien aping and cheap popularity. Indian English Poetic tradition has not been able to relate itself to the native traditions of philosophy, religion and metaphysics in recent times. The City School Poets wrote their poetry against the tradition established by Shri Aurobindo and Rabindra Nath Tagore. It has now come to notice that such poetry lacks in Arnoldian high seriousness which Alfred Alvarez lamented in the case of the Movement Poets of the 1950s in England. Charu Sheel Singh not only goes back to the thousand years of Indian tradition but also re-lives Aurobindo and Tagore in the twenty first century with a highly post modernist idiom at his command. This establishes Singh as a unique poet in contemporary times, who has at his fingertips not only the philosophical traditions of India but also the Western traditions originating from Plato to Descartes, Kant, Hegel,

Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Karl Jaspers, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Camus, Sartre, among the rest. Singh's poetry is for the initiated, difficult though it is for the common reader of poetry. It is high time, therefore, that we reoriented ourselves in a way that poetry becomes a means of spiritual self-enlightenment.

The poet Charu Sheel has been able to achieve his thirst for creation as aspired for in Foreword: "The poems might also fill a gap in the history of Indian English poetry where foreign fashions are often borrowed and native fashions often remain denativized." Written in blank verse though, the poems of this collection create melodies often unheard of through subtle narrative that can captivate serious readers. Through his word play, the poet or the creator in Charu Sheel commingles contraries to create the desired poetic effect, as in the following:

Time becomes a mendicant as
 Budhha begs with his bowl garnering only emptiness
 In a jungle of ghosts and witches who juggle and
 Chuckle needing another spoonful of lively fire....
 —————Fire and water are
 contrapuntal syllables
 Of a continent Being who wakes or sleep as
 The curvatures down and heave.

Charu Sheel Singh's *Ten Mahavidyas* is a welcome and meaningful addition not only to the libraries of colleges and universities but a must read for bibliophiles.

Reviewer: *Binod Mishra*, Department of HSS, IIT Roorkee, Uttarakhand.

Jha, Pashupati. *Taking on Tough Times*. New Delhi: Authors Press, 2016, Price: Rs.250 (Hard Cover).

It is a unique and emotionally enriching collection of fifty-six poems by Pashupati Jha. Like his four earlier poetry collections, Jha's multiple thematic concern is quite visible in *Taking on Tough Times* too. His Muse takes up almost all prevailing scenario of present times—consistent exploitation and humiliation of women, corrupt social and political order

degenerating further each day, hypocrisy of the worst type, viral infection of self-indulgent modernity, and devastating exploitation of environment for ever-growing material greed. In-between, there are many enlightening poems on love and the process of poetic creations too. Jha's poetry has been acclaimed for its clarity, idiomatic expression, conversational tone, wide appeal, and a razor-sharp effect. In the first three poems of the present collection, Jha depicts respectively the precarious predicament of woman as wife, woman in general, and woman as mother. In "Woman," which is in the mode of a dramatic monologue spoken by a tortured wife, the speaker blames God, who gives her beautiful shape but ugly fate, traumatized all the time by her husband, who, like most men, equates brutality with male virility. The wife laments her plight in moving words:

Morning to night
my fate a ceaseless drudgery
with no 'thank you' ever flung at me;
he says it is my holy duty to serve him so. (11)

But she reminds her husband of the one stark reality of his birth and those of all men:

I was his mother long before
I became his woman. Does he know this
while battering my body and soul? (*Ibid.*)

The fate of this wife is almost universal, despite a little change here and there. This is brought to women in general in the second poem, "Outside, Inside," where it is pointed out how the soul-killing, constant domestic drudgery has no place in history, which is created out of outside events, "wars, murders and mayhems." Although women's selfless sacrifice does not create history, they are the worst sufferers of its wars:

Women, who become widows, de-sonned, and de-
brothered
are only insignificant passives, can't be
good and grand enough for history;
they're history's victims alone. (*Ibid.*)

So, the hard experiences of women in the above two poems

are sufficient to conclude for the poet that the outward growth of several centuries has not really changed the mindset of men:

Civilization has brought only cosmetic change
inside it all is the same story—
a monolith of mountain
existing since ages
with occasional wear and tear. (12)

In the third poem, woman is presented with a slight change in the situation; she is a mother with intense Indian association of honour attached to her. It is significant here that there are many moving pictures of mother in Jha's earlier poetry collections too. In this poem, "Wait for the Mother and Son," the son has many cherished memories of the countless affectionate actions of his mother, constantly and selflessly caring for his food, clothes, hair, and looking after him day and night when he has been sick. But, in return, he could not do anything except "I fed her only once—/ the burning flame in her mouth" (14) pointing to the last rites of his mother. Thereafter, the wait of the son to meet her mother begins till "she allows me again/ to burst out of her womb/ as an infant kicking for new life" (15). A strong believer in Indian ethos, the poet here refers to the Indian belief in rebirth, giving second chance to the son to repay his debt to his mother.

Although respecting women a lot, the poet is not immune to a few selfish socialites for whom ambition and its fulfillment at any cost is everything. In "Cinderella: New Version," Jha compares the mythical girl of yore with the ultra modernites of today, hell bent on enjoying comfort and status at whatsoever price. To that aim, they have forgotten the myth for the lure of the present:

Now the smell of wine and cigarette smoke
floats in my life, fills my dreams
and not the prince charming in shining armour
racing to me on a winged Pegasus;
one, after all, has to be a realist someday. (68)

In the midst of a woman who suffers and woman who enjoys,

there is a rustic young woman forced to sell her body for the sake of her destitute family, with leaking roof and drunk husband. Her stoic attitude is akin to bravery, tolerating a lecher; utterly indifferent to what he does to her:

He explores her body confidently
as a butcher does a goat before buying it;
she averts her eyes.
Then, with owner's pride
he undresses her body;
she tightly shuts her soul (20).

The caption of the poem, "Contrasting Concerns," is very apt and symbolic here. An imaginative reader may find the echo of Eliot's *The Wasteland* where the office clerk mechanically makes love with a reluctant woman. To quote Eliot:

Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.

The socio-political situation today has degenerated to such an extent that no sensitive poet can avert his eyes from its pervasive presence. What Jha emphasizes in this collection is the nefarious nexus between corrupt politicians and policemen for the moral degradation in society. The title of the poem, "A Sordid Day in the Jungle," tells it all. Here is an orphan forced to pick pockets for his bare survival. When caught, he is beaten badly; but he thanks his tormentors for not reporting him to the police: "thus saving/ him from the nightmare of sodomy/ by the sadist brutes in the lock-up of law" (27). In the next part of this poem, a politician picks up a young woman with the promise of a party post, and then sexually exploits her over the night with all his henchmen. Yet:

No gang rape was reported in the morning
for everything was done by an apparent consent;
the dewdrops glistened on the grass
only a few could feel
someone weeping from above. (28)

The absence of sincerity and seriousness with an all-

enjoying attitude of the modern politician is forcefully presented in "High Class Hedonist." Most of the politicians declare themselves dedicated to national service, but are solely guided by the sheer philosophy of hedonism. For them lust for money, wine and women is the real aim of life. Their public and private face are diametrically opposite. They are the travesty of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals:

We are high-class hedonists
born to enjoy life to the hilt
absolutely unmindful of others;
let the Mahatma's monkeys
close-shut their eyes, ears and mouths
for many more years to come. (78)

But such dark scenario is enlightened by poems of pure passion and true love. In "Tonight" the poet refers to the spiritual and archetypal love of Radha and Krishna. The speaker 'she' in the poem is Radha, who is going to wholeheartedly surrender herself to the love of Krishna that night. The entire poem is imbued with the selfless sincerity of pure passion when the body, mind, and spirit mingle and become one; the beloved and the lover melt into one entity:

Tonight would be a different night....
she is going to do as she has never done
going to speak as she has never spoken
going to bare as she has never bared
herself, her words, her body, her soul
before the elusive dance god of her dreams. (66)

This is a wonderfully brief but effective poem on the totality of love where it involves entire consciousness—mental, physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual. It is only this type of wholeness of love that Jha has celebrated in his poems. Superfluity in love is anathema to him. Inspired by Indian ethos and tradition, he believes in the purity and continuity of love.

The beautifully conceived blurb of this collection depicts a dejected man bent down on a cracked and parched earth. But the presence of a small, strikingly green sapling transforms the scenario to one of hope, and not of despair.

Poetry, for Jha, is a medium to suggestively celebrate the values of life, and not to negate them. So, in "Poetry Speaks," he concludes: "One day, we will win the earth/back to its pristine glory." (76) Such sanguine lines of optimism are scattered all over this volume amid the stark reality of disorder and doom. The result of this die-hard attitude of the collection finally brings out not only aesthetic enjoyment, but also elation of hope in the days to come. Poetic diction adopted by the poet looks lucid, always with an undercurrent of profound meaning underneath, supplemented by the subtle use of myth and imagery. So, the thematic concern of the collection looks apparently temporal, but it has universal implication. This collection should be read by all who, despite the dark tunnel of time, is dauntless enough to see the glimmer of light at the end of it.

Reviewer: *Binod Mishra, Department of HSS, IIT Roorkee, Uttarakhand.*

Singh, Vijay Prakash. *A Day in the Life of Ghulam Sarwar and Other Stories.* Kolkata: Writers Workshop. 2014. Pp.104, ISBN 978-93-5045-089-5

While Indian novels have made their mark in Indian writing in English, short story books are also being written with the same gusto, though less in number. Vijay Prakash Singh is a promising short story writer, who started with travelogues, namely *Mountain Travelogues on the Himalayas and Tibet*, prior to his maiden collection of short stories entitled *A Day in the Life of Ghulam Sarwar and other Stories*. This collection, comprising 14 short stories, records the immense panorama of the human inner and outer life. It contains fourteen stories which remind readers of the golden days' beauty stirring the memory and imagination of the human mind. While on the one hand, the collection delineates loneliness and artificiality of the modern world, on the other hand, it shows human willpower and the strength that loneliness generates, as in the story of "Shireen".

The collection presents the changing world in an ironical

manner. Modernity is as hollow as a bamboo; scattering beauty outwardly only. The power of time in shaping out the thinking and culture of people is the prime content of majority of stories. The old human and non-human, which used to be the centre of beauty and attraction, seem neglected in the present time. The hidden pain of the narrator evaporates to find the generation gap enabling the old as lonely and the youth as money minded. The loss of human emotions and togetherness, distancing with the natural world sounds to be the everyday fashion. The description of the real architecture with its emotions and intellect in the form of Golconda Fort, Lal Baradari, Chand Manzil and others are out of the context in the modern world because it is worthless to them. People from different places still flock to experience the real enjoyment of old culture including Mushaira, an integral part of culture and entertainment rather a means of sociality and love.

Characters like Ghulam Sarwar, Sufia Begum and Begum Sahiba are the one proudly holding on to their past for making their lives worth living. They ignore the harsh reality of the modern day world which is actually making them deserted. The writer creates a panorama of clash between past and the present, the real and artificial and between love and need in most of the stories. The opening story expresses the loneliness of two human and non-human subjects: Ghulam Sarwar and Golconda Fort—both standing as apostles of their existence, now outdated in the whirlwind of city culture. Sarwar is able to identify himself with the stones of this fort because they have lived together and still are living together; just with the changing time and attitude of the people towards them. He says, "I try to breathe life into them (stones) but instead they breathe life into me. I give them a voice but it is their voices- a hundred voices- that speak to me...I touch them and they seem to vibrate with a pulse that is far more melodic than music" (9). The writer's penchant for the valuable past becomes prominent in expressions like "Na wo zamana raha. Na us zamane ki sargoshiyan". (37) Singh raises the issues like population rise,

blind imitation of Bollywood songs, consumerist culture, which seem to threaten the glories of the past and put on the Mushaira and other nawabi grandeur of the city of Lucknow and Hyderabad on the back burner. The writer rues the loss of the dignity and aura of the *kothas and tawaifs*, degraded merely to bodily pleasures, instead of the haunted places of poets, writers and aristocrats. No material gain can fulfil the emptiness of the soul, no artificiality can replace the natural and real existence of things as Begum Sahiba expresses in the story "A Shawl for My Daughter", "All these clothes that he had piled up could never embellish the desolation of my soul, now cold and bereft?" (72)

Singh's collection also presents a critique of female condition in the pre-modern times. Women, as an emblem of beauty, love and compassion is found to be the tormented humans who are destined to beget children. Their beauty and love appeal to men only when they are capable of fulfilling the expectations of men irrespective of their caste, class or social cadre. Three females, namely Sufia Begum, Phulmati and Kausar Jehan from different background suffer from the persecution of males' over expectation and torture. While the first one is a prostitute, the second one is a victim of early marriage; the last one is the queen of Nawab Nooruddin Haider, king of Awadh. But all three suffer the same fate since neither the high status nor money or poverty can bring any vicissitude in in the life of woman. Other female characters in the text like Kamla and Zohra are also confined only to the four walls of a home and are the prey of the same expectation.

Singh has his eye not only for historical concerns but also for environmental issues. He highlights his concern over the environmental problems especially the attitude of the modern people towards Nature through his story "Life in the Metro" and "Rain". The narrator's love for the trees and his anguish for the human attitude are apparent;

There is something human about trees, but thank god trees are not human. Their silence has a gravity that our chatter lacks and their

movements have a fluidity that our rigid, purposeful motions wonder at. After all, trees sway in the breeze without any intention. Their recurring blossoming of foliage and inevitable disrobing seem to cheat the finality of human aging. (57)

The bond between man and nature seems amiss in modern world and his indifference is a note of concern for the coming generation. The damage to the trees is irreparable and it haunts the mind of the narrator when he finds his two trees being felled in his absence.

I squinted hard in the glaring sun to see two stumps that looked like lepers' hands amidst a stretch of emptiness. My first feeling was that a sacrilege had been committed, like raping a girl in public or committing cold blooded murder. (59)

The stories of *A Day in the Life of Ghulam Sarwar and other Stories* are, thus, a compilation, written in simple and effective language. The use of Hindi and Urdu words provide a rhythmic meaningful attribution to the story and makes it distinct. The literary rendering of such prevalent issues makes Singh's collection more interesting and touching, which appeal to the human heart. The emotional relationship of human and non-human world is revived and also conveyed with a charm which is the need of the present day. The collection *A Day in the Life of Ghulam Sarwar* deserves to get due place among the story books overflowing among book lovers and creative writers.

Reviewer: *Parul Rani*, Research Scholar, Department of HSS, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, Uttarakhand.

Chhote Lal Khatri, ed. *Prison Literature: A Global Perspective*, New Delhi: Authorspress, Pp.- 213, Price Rs. 850/-

A book on prison literature is twice welcome as it ventilates the woes of the prisoners and their thoughts create valuable literature. In India though there have been prison diaries and memoirs, prison literature as a genre is yet to

come into being. The book is one such early bird to catch the literary stuff from the prison.

The book has 17 papers from well-known writers from India as well as abroad on different aspects of prison life together with the inmate's personal, political, humanitarian and philosophical thoughts. The writers include the prominent ones like Malory, Defoe, Oscar Wilde, Chekov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Alex La Gama, Soyinka, J.P., Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. The broad introduction by C.L. Khatri first classifies the prisoners chiefly as criminals and political dissenters. In his view physical detention does not lead to mental detention or mental slavery. It is such people who rebel against political subjugation and seek freedom from political, cultural, linguistic and historical colonization. Some such people express themselves in poetry, short stories, novels and memoirs. There are also a few who entertain metaphysical thoughts, Tilak's *Geeta Rahasya* is a case in point. The book presents examples of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte-d' Arthur*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim Progress*, Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Conversations with Myself*, Alex La Guma's *The Stone Country*, Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died*, J P's *My Prison Diary*, Gandhi's *My Experiments with Truth* and so on.

In 'Colonialism and Prison Poetry' Dr. Shaileshwar Sati Prasad has drawn both from Indian and African sources the voice of protest against colonial hegemony and social arrogance. Dennis Brutus in his 'Letters to Martha' has poignantly described the human degradation of prisoners and sexual crimes committed in the prison. Though a condemned zone, prison has also been a fertile setting for writers and poets. Thus, Martin Luther translated *The New Testament* into German at Wartburg Castle, O. Henry wrote most of his stories in prison. The book has papers on *The Stone Country* by Dr. Sitaram Singh, on *The Discovery of India* by NDR Chandra, on *The Pilgrim's Progress* by Gurpreet Kaur, on *Wide Sargasso Sea* by S. Priyadarshini, on S.H. Jhabvala's *Poems Written in Prison* by Dr. Sudhir K. Arora, on the poems of C'esar Vallejo, on D.M. Zwelonke's novel *Robben Island*.

Dr. N.S. Kullur's paper 'Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak's the Geeta Rahasya. Magnum opus of Prison opens with Richard Lovelace's immortal lines:

Stone walls do not a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage....
The spotless mind and innocent
Calls a hermitage.

By citing the original lines from *The Geeta*, Kullur has dwelt at length on the significance of those precepts given to Arjuna by Lord Krishna.

In one volume Dr. Khatri has incorporated practically all the major writers from prison. The papers on individual writers and their works are more than informative; they are illuminating and inspiring. They present both the demoralising and creative aspects of prison life. They are a proof that creative soul can't help pouring out their innermost feelings in whatever way possible to them. The book establishes prison literature as an exclusive genre. It will serve as a valuable book for researchers, teachers and those interested in marginal and cultural studies. A prize enterprise on the part of the editor and the publisher.

Reviewer: *Ram Bhagwan Singh, Retd. Professor of English, Ranchi University Ranchi, Jharkhand.*

Khatri, C.L. *For You to Decide*. New Delhi: Authors Press, 2016. Pp. 82, Price: Rs. 250, ISBN 9789352074068. Print.

For You to Decide is C.L. Khatri's fourth poetry collection in English. A Professor of English and a bi-lingual poet of English and Hindi, Khatri is the recipient of Michael Madhusudan Academy Award. In a very short span of time, he has made a good name among Indian English poets. *For You to Decide* comprises 51 poems and is beautifully produced. Apart from poems, the book towards the end contains a short section about critics views on the preceding poetry collection; *Two-Minute Silence* (2014) in two pages itself. What makes the book remarkable is an apt comment by another significant Indian English poet, Professor Pashupati Jha who remarks;

"His poems give the taste of lived experience with raw but lively smell of the place and people that he portrays with keen observation."

The opening poem of this collection is "Mask", which unfolds the worldly mysteries humans are bound by through materialistic masks. It is an analogy with the holy Gita's lesson: "Soul is eternal. The opening lines are: I was tired of wearing you/changing you as I changed clothes/for different days and ways." (13) Further, he wishes to become free by burning all the masks of fake identities. "I am happy today/ They burnt all the masks/on the funeral pyre." (13). The poet takes a dig at the material possession and artificiality that humans wear throughout their lives. The last stanza of the same poem offers a positive relief to the worldly fetters that compel us to skip the reality. The poet says with solace; 'Now no layer of mask/can hide you from me.' (13) The title poem " For You to Decide" expresses the poet's grief at the loss of our ancient traditions in the whirlwind of blind race and scientific novelties that distance and deviate us from our cherished identities requiring proof and patenting. The poet is having a vision of 'dream' (21) to 'wonder' (19). In this wonder he puts all the issues and the questions, in front of his readers and asks "This is for you to decide" (20). The poet remarks very caustically:

You want umbilical cord or warranty cord?

This is for you to decide,

For me it's time to retire. (20)

The poet, like a common man, feels proud at various man-made discoveries but at the same time expresses his ire at the unending quest of knowledge, which surely will boomerang like the forbidden fruit that brought mortality in human world. Poems like 'Mission Mars', 'Deluge of Development', 'Fertile Farming', 'E God', etc. hint at Man's intervention with divine world that tends to breed boredom and hate. The ambitious quest of man is not going to stop the various ills and diseases as a sequel. The poem 'Mission Mars' testifies to the truth that scientific discoveries are not devoid of the drudgery that 'you have made of the Galaxy'

(17). The poet in Khatri presents the panoramic view of the hungry generations but seeing them agog in their 'Three Cheers!' asks: Who cares for tomorrow? /who cares for what's not there?/ Three Cheers for the victory of the king.(61)

The blind race of mankind can find relief only in Nature, which has always been a giver in all times. Comparing Nature to Dadhichi, the poet sides with it and says; "In it lies my fulfilment." (25) Mankind may mostly be unkind and cruel yet his retreat to Nature is not out of question. Man's forward move may be full of innovations and ideologies yet he cannot be segregated from his past and his roots. The sheer joy of cherishing can be felt only in things that have been inherited by mankind. The access to power and pelf appear quite temporary to the poet and his belief in his spirit alone can give him satisfaction for his 'frail frame' (72) alone can make him 'the richest person in the world' unlike 'begging in a beggars' land. (48) His faith in Almighty makes him realize;

I don't have godfather;
I have God; I haven't seen.
I will go wherever He takes
Or bank on my dwarf to carve
a path through hillocks of life. (30)

One comes across multiple issues that Khatri has used most as poetic tools to depict the real global and universal questions. He makes it clear with the help of Indian Aesthetics as well as the Western school of thoughts in his collection of poems. The collection implicitly hints at Michel Foucault's power-knowledge relationship in a good number of poems.

While majority of poems in this collection are soaked in human feelings, the poet shows profound regards to various religions by referring to incidents from the Bible to the Bhagwadgita, Quran to Tripitak (72) and also from Adam (71) to e Allah (70). The poem "E God refers to all the futuristic neo-technological elements from within. It is an e-cash demand of the world, like the virtual money, Bitcoin for the cashless globe. The poet catches the nerves of the world and hopes that the future is for the invisible, omnipotent and omnipresent where E God seems to have all the solutions.

Khatri writes;

om e all pervasive power namo namah!
Hail 'e' invisible, omniscient, omnipotent
power! (FYD 70)

The last pages of the Khatri's book contain 25 *Haikus* and add additional charm to this collection of insightful and thought provoking poems. Khatri has written many beautiful *haiku*. *Haiku* as per Merriam-Webster's dictionary: is "an unrhymed verse from the Japanese origin having a seasonal reference". It shows linguistic beauty of the poetry and the best creation of the poet. It ends, like: Ocean of white clouds/
Floats under my playful feet/ Ecstasy of rain. (80)

This volume of poetry will make an important addition both to public as well as to personal libraries and to connoisseurs of fine verse. While the poems in the said collection are short, they are subtle and beautiful words in the best order. The collection, of course, can be a welcome addition to libraries of higher educational institutions. However, the price seems a bit higher as paperback edition for lovers of poetry in general.

**Reviewer: Lal Veer Aditya, Senior Research Fellow,
Department of HSS, IIT Roorkee (UK)**