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Murali Sivaramakrishnan

From Surprise to *Satori* : Fantasy, Fiction and Faction

There was a certain nobleman who fell out of favour with a Prince, and a very powerful one at that. They had been the best of friends but once the Prince's fury was roused he condemned the nobleman outright to be beheaded. The poor man pleaded with his erstwhile friend that at least his end might be decreed less painful. The Prince obliged and wine and wild celebrations were called for. The condemned got so wildly drunk and at the peak of his inebriated state pleaded that the sentence might be now carried out, whereupon he was informed that he was already beheaded.

I came across the above story in a narrative entitled, *The Silver Pilgrimage* by M Anantanarayanan. K R Srinivas Iyengar, in his *Indian Writing in English* says of this amazing work: "...M Anantanarayanan's *The Silver Pilgrimage* (1961) is...compounded of fantasy and actuality, poetry and prophecy, and is equally—and defiantly—autochthonous." (Iyengar , 486)

Strangely enough, this work does not *merit* to be considered as science fiction, although it has *all the requirements* of a truly science

fantasy. Science fiction is a separate genre with its own conventions and regulations. A definition of the genre could perhaps be that this type of fiction focuses on the fantastic aspects of science, the liberated scientific imagination, a vast and unending voyage to the frontiers of human imaginative capability, in short, a true journey of self discovery. One could easily trace its growth and development to the 19th century, when science itself was in its infancy and the general excitement of its nascent discoveries and future possibilities were being revealed. Fiction has always flourished in conducive atmosphere and here was a fitting enough one that did not curtail the versatile human imagination on the one hand and on the other triggered it towards newer Utopias and Atlantis.

It is a point worth noticing that this form of fiction flourished forth in increasing significance in all industrialized countries alike. Literary experiments in science fiction were first conducted in French and English, where in the typical elements of modern science found literary expression. Jules Verne (1828 -1905) and H G Wells were its forerunners and in their inimitable style they explored the marvelous frontiers of science fiction. We could formulate the general characteristics of science fiction in the following manner :

1. The extraordinary and marvellous voyage: This is present from the earliest narratives like Homer's *Odyssey*, including such imaginative fictions of sea voyages and ship wrecks as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) Edgar Allen Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851)
2. The Utopia or the portrayal of an Ideal State: Plato's *The Republic*, Thomas More's *Utopia*(1516), Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1626)

3. The Eighteenth Century philosophical tale, *conte philosophique*, : often a satirical account of a journey through unfamiliar lands, such as Swift's *Guilliver's Travels* (1726) and Voltaire's *Candide*
4. The Gothic Novel of Horror and Fantasy: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)—in which horror results from a scientist's all too successful attempt to construct a living creature in the laboratory.
5. The catastrophic Novel: a realistic narrative of social disaster. Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), reaching out to the fantastic works of George Orwell: *The Animal Farm* and *1984*

In all these wide spread conventions and techniques we could see that the writer of science fiction often turned to the limits of contemporary scientific know-how, and transported his characters there by means of new machines and gadgets such as submarines and space rockets. On the whole, the fiction of the science writer is fantasy visualized with the aid of the science of the times. However, as the form of the narrative itself matured, science fiction broadened to include a philosophical vision of mankind and the fate of the world at large (it reached its pinnacle in this direction through the dystopic imagination of Alduous Huxley and George Orwell).

However, it is now time to stretch this conventional definition of science fiction further to include the techno fiction of the contemporary times. We live in troubled times. The age of Information, where virtual reality pervades everything, and truth itself needs *its* revalidation for *its* existence and furtherance. The cinema, television,

computer and the multimedia have started interpreting our sense of reality. The fiction of science has come to create a faction where in fact and fantasy merge into each other. It is in this context that my presentation takes shape. Surprise and wonder are certainly unavoidable elements of scientific fantasies. Whether it be journeys beyond the borders of the known universe like in Arthur C Clarke or sojourns into the deeps of the mindscape as in the narratives of *Don Juan* as represented by Carlos Casteneda, the element of surprise and wonder the *atbhuta rasa*—is certainly that which holds up the narrative. Now when the narrative rises to levels beyond that of human wonder it would reach the levels of satori—or illumination or spiritual revelation—as considered by the Zen masters. It is in the near holocaust experience of science-fiction-cinema that this reaches its extremes. With the amazing development of technology—the handmaiden of science—cinema has appropriated the uncharted domains of fantasy fiction that culminates in Satori. "Star Wars", "Star Trek", "Alien", "Black Hole", "Meteor", "Independence Day", "ET or Extraterrestrial" and "Jurassic Park"—the list is almost unending. It all began in the early seventies when the cinema rediscovered science fiction. Of course earlier to that Stanley Kubric's 2001 Space Odyssey had attempted what was then impossible. But Steven Spielberg brought the excitement of scientific fiction back on to the silver screen. It was indeed the Second Coming. Of course the great impact of the small screen cannot be underrated—X Files is a case in point.

As Geology, Biology and Astronomy developed further, new narratives in fiction followed suit. But often it was the other way round too—fiction discovered the uncharted territories that science later confirmed existed. Thus the interface of the real and the unreal or fantasized, became the territory of science fiction. Archeology and ancient history also contributed to the growth of science narratives.

Films like SSSnake, The Day of the Animals, Jurassic Park and The Mummy excellent instances of this species of science fiction fantasy. However it is in The Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1978) that this genre reaches its pinnacle of achievement.

Looking up into the deep blue sky for a relatively long period would set any thinking individual on to a reverie. Is there life out there? If so, what would it be like? Will it be more highly evolved than ours or less evolved? Can we ever know? Can we ever reach them, or they us? Will there be a contact? Science fiction has always fantasized about these issues. And when technology was sufficiently developed it paved the way for such extraterrestrial adventures. Now that not much more remained for us to seek out and discover on earth and in the sea, the skies were naturally the next target. The growth and development of rocketry and ballistics also gave enough incentive to the direction of these reveries. It was in 1969 that the US government for some reason or other, suddenly stopped their scientific search for the presence of life out there. Prior to that there were many reports of encounters and sightings of UFOs or Unidentified Flying Objects. There were sufficient evidence drawn from the reports by the Air Force and the Radar and Optical Data Analysis. The sudden stoppage of research in this direction also instigated much doubts in the minds of the inquisitive. Were the FBI and the CIA involved in these? Was there a reason to call into query the operations of the espionage? The much later produced Television series the X Files foregrounds these complex issues through mind baffling visual experiences. However, Stephen Spielberg created an extraordinary cinematic experience through his The Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Through his presentation of the incidents that are set into motion with the dramatic encounter with life from outer space Spielberg transformed a genre into a climatic experience of satori.

There are only a few significant characters in his film although it involves the entire humanity and life on this planet. And it is to his credit and success that he is able to manipulate these, a mere handful of people into creating a drama of resonance and dhvani that leads the audience in a spell-bound manner on to another experience of a different scale. This I believe science fiction at its most extreme level. It holds all the requirements that the conventional definition would call for. There is this journey through the extraordinary and miraculous, a voyage that leads towards a discovery and an encounter of the third kind. The first kind being reports and the second mere sightings. The third, or the final kind is physical, corporeal encounter and the experience of what is called the touch! Through out the two and half hour long experience the audience is kept on tender-hooks as to what would happen next. The mysterious and the miraculous are so often not spelt out too clearly. There is more enterprise in postponing the climax. Surprise leads to satori. At one point, Roy Neary, the hero, played by the Oscar winner Richard Dreyfuss, says of the sighting experience: *it was even better than those pictures of the aurora borealis in the National Geographic...*

This is the story of ordinary people confronting the extraordinary. That adds to its fictional and extraordinary character. When the uncommon and unfamiliar is encountered by the common and the ordinary people the element of surprise and wonder are manifold. It is the unexpected that obviously ushers in the most bewilderment and amazement. And when fiction appears in the form of matter-of-fact, the element of surprise and astonishment are doubled. The distance then from surprise to the near-spiritual satori is not too far. On a moonlit night in a place near Indiana in the United States, two strangers witness the inexplicable—unidentified flying objects in the clear night sky above them! From that moment on, their lives are

irrevocably entwined and forever changed. Their desperate efforts to understand what they have experienced, pulls them completely away from the life as they knew it, and plunges them into the strange world of governmental cover-ups and state-intrigues, and draws them to the one place that will perhaps hold the answers to the ultimate encounter! This in a gist, is what the film is all about. However, the visual experience is of a different order of experience. Steven Spielberg has resorted to the full measure of film technology in order to create the fantastic experience of science fiction in a factual mould.

The film opens in the Sonora Desert, Mexico, and some men are about obviously on the look out for something or the other, and the howling sandstorm makes their dialogues and actions almost invisible and inaudible. What comes to light slowly is the fact they are all drawn from two different parts of the world and intent on a common project. The Americans, English and French men are all equally excited about some strange experience. They come to locate some flying machines which were so long held lost—those second world war fighter planes they discover are still intact but dusty. Fired with great hope of unraveling the mystery, they finally locate a man supposed to have witnessed some inexplicable sight the last night. The old man turns out to be a native Indian and they manage to persuade him to speak. Through wild tears of joy the man murmurs: *The sun came out last night and sang to me...* Lacombe, the French scientist then leads the entire team into blinding light... The scene then shifts rapidly to the Air Traffic control office. The place is all agog with tremendous excitement and activity. Obviously something of momentous consequence is going to take place. UFOs are sighted. Not far away a little kid wakes up in the middle of the night and witness strange paranormal activity in his room. Now, as if led on by some strange voice the little fellow turns to look outside and is suffused with an inner

radiance. The next moment the mother wakes up to sight her son running off into the distance.

In another part, a power company technician, Roy Neary, responding to an emergency call drives off in his truck in the dark. He has an extraordinary experience: at a railway crossing he finds himself hit by a violent array of blinding light. In many ways this is the climatic scene of the film: There is a close-up shot of the mail boxes and rail tracks shivering and shuddering as light and dark crisscross from above. The visual effect that Spielberg has created is really dramatic. It is aimed at creating a profound dhvani in the hearts of the spectator. From this point onwards there is no looking back for Neary and the spectator alike. What remains is only to follow the light and seek the harmony. Of course the musical scores of the film play a remarkable role in creating an ambience of mystery and amazement that is maintained throughout.

Neary follows the trajectory of his heart. There is an unrecognizable pressure that builds up within him when he encounters anything that would resemble a mountain or a peak. Finally he reaches the predetermined spot for the encounter and runs into a series of adventures with the government machinery. Almost till the very end no one seems to know exactly what is happening. There is an air of strangeness yet an expectancy that something recognizable is going to take place. The story moves from the United States to India where the chants of another civilization are echoed. The musical chords are later identified as the notations that would site a certain geographic location for the encounter. The rest of the film is all about the preparation for the landing and the long awaited contact.

Finally it takes place. The huge space vessel of the aliens lands. There is the harmonious experience of the blending of space and time. The effect is one of staggering beauty. Both Neary and the scientist Lacombe undergo the sub molecular vibration of the encounter. The communication takes place through a giant synthesizer that vibrates in harmony with the aliens' dancing lights. The rest is a silent understanding while humans and aliens stand facing each other. For some one like the little boy who walks out of their space ship there is a strange peace that passes all understanding. Within moments it is all over and the aliens withdraw into silent space. Neary had decided to join them in an intergalactic adventure. More than anything, the film-experience is hinged on the visual and the auditory. The extraordinary brilliance of the space ship and the harmonizing experience of the musical interchange leaves a lot of space for the human imagination to connect. In the final analysis, *Close Encounters* is a film that connects science, fantasy and fact. One wonders whether one has actually undergone these extraordinary adventure of vision and touch. It is fiction.

Science fiction has fantasized about almost all human possibilities by now. The fantastic has reached into the fourth and nth dimension with the geometric progression of technology. Multimedia and virtual reality are the natural extensions of what started off as a sub genre of literary fiction. Incredible voyages of discovery and encounter of the amazing other, be it occurring on our earth or on other planets, or stars or even other galaxies in another space-time, reveal but the even more incredible prowess of the human imagination. There is certainly no boundary for that. Travellers have journeyed through outer space, almost everywhere on earth, in deep jungles, under the sea, into the depths of solid earth, even through the micro-cellular spaces of the human body! Encountering the strange and the sublime has been the motivating force behind these journeys. However,

in all these journeys, there is the implicit world view that centers on the earth. We search for the other *vis a vis* us.

Carl Sagan, in *Cosmos*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1980, one of his finest books, tracing the knowledge and method of twentieth century science, writes:

A standard motive in science fiction and UFO literature assumes extraterrestrials roughly as capable as we. Perhaps they have a different sort of space ship or ray gun, but in battle—and science fiction loves to portray battles between civilizations—they and we are rather evenly matched. In fact, there is almost no chance that two galactic civilizations will interact at the same level. In any confrontation, one will always utterly dominate the other. A million years is a great many. If an advanced civilization were to arrive in our solar system, there would be nothing whatever we could do about it. Their science and technology would be far beyond ours. It is pointless to worry about the possible malevolent intentions of an advanced civilization with whom we might make contact. It is more likely that the mere fact they have survived so long means they have learned to live with themselves and others. Perhaps our fears about extraterrestrial contact are merely a projection of our own backwardness, an expression of our guilty conscience about our past history: the ravages that have been visited on civilizations only slightly more backward than we. We remember Columbus and the Arawaks, Cortes and the Aztecs, even the fate of the Tlingit in the generations after La Perouse. We remember and we worry. But if an interstellar armada appears in our skies, I predict we will be very accommodating. (Sagan:1980,258)

This is a point worth reiterating. Any other life we are likely to encounter would either be inferior or superior to our civilizations. And if they travel into our world no doubt they would be far superior to us. In the reworkings of the holocaust motif that surfaced at the turn of the last millennium the most spectacular production was certainly the cinematic experience of Independence Day. Life forms resembling insects but endowed with far superior intellectual abilities sweep down the earth's atmosphere prepared for a final battle of annihilation. This could be seen as *the projection of our own backwardness* as Carl Sagan has pointed out. However, it is to the credit of Steven Spielberg that *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* brings forth a different message: a more holistic and ethical one. The encounter through the sense of sight and touch sparks off a sense of the sublime. Fantasy here borders on the spiritual. The movement is from surprise to Satori, as the character of Neary reveals. *Close Encounters* has all the elements of science fiction and fantasy built in. It is perhaps the peculiar idiom of the cinema that allows the spectator/reader to visualize the entire experience as a factual account—something that happens here and now. This aspect adds to its sense of amazement. This is where fantasy and fiction becomes faction—a profound mixture of fact and human imagination. And if one were to believe in the super possibilities of science and technology one could even visualize the merging of the spiritual and the scientific. Or is it the other way round? When Neary takes the plunge into the brilliance of the space ship, his heart vibrates like a tuning fork suffused with a calm hitherto unknown. This is the moment of transformation from surprise into satori. The experience is transferred to the spectator/reader.

Shahram Afrougheh & Masoud Ahmadi

**The Axis of Power / Knowledge in *Endgame*:
A Foucaultain Reading**

Abstract

Foucault's analyses focus on three axes, namely (I) the formation and transformation of systems of knowledge, and the constitution of regimes of truth; (II) technologies of the self, and (III) the constitution of forms of subjectivity. For Foucault, power implies knowledge, and vice versa. However, power is causal, it is constitutive of knowledge, even while knowledge is, concomitantly, constitutive of power: knowledge gives one power, but one has the power in given circumstances to constitute bodies of knowledge, discourses and so on as valid or invalid, truthful or untruthful. Power serves in making the world both knowable and controllable. Yet the nature of power, as Foucault suggests, is essentially proscriptive, concerned more with imposing limits on its subjects. Undoubtedly, Samuel Beckett is one of the most brilliant figures of postmodern theater. With pain, wit, humor, and postmodern strategy of language, the art of Samuel Beckett variously embodies this particular form of drama in *Endgame*. In Beckettian dramas (esp. *Endgame*), the postmodern notion of power is interwoven with language.

Postmodernism suggests that “power”¹ is a fundamental and unavoidable dimension of social life. The postmodern analysis of the scientific standpoint is also related to the issue of power. Structuralism did not regard cultural and social structures as products of power, but rather as results of social bonds, human demands, and a transcendental collective unconscious. In its Marxian forms, as supported by Althusser, cultural structures could be conceived of as outcome of an objective and underlying capitalist system. Poststructuralists can be understood as constructing on the Marxist view of culture as a product of power, but also as refusing the metanarrative of Marxism as a credible narrative of history and society. Instead of deciphering unified, class-based ideological systems, as Althusser does, they indicate the growth and bilateral interaction of discourses and power/knowledge structures. These may have been characterized by race and gender, by colonialism or by conflicts attracting the attention of professionals and experts. Again an important concept here has stemmed from Nietzsche and his notion that social life is directed by a “will to power.”

The postmodern view of power can be outlined as:

- I. It is distributed network.
- II. It is delocalized (virtual).
- III. It is decentered, signifying that no subject is a power center,”
every “one” divided and distributed in the different area.
- IV. It is rhizomatic (versus rooted).
- V. It is sometimes disorganized as “swarm” or pack.
- VI. It is sometimes leaderless or with temporary leader.

The postmodern notion of power is an evolutionary idea of power. Because it deals with ideas that reconstructed and propagated through

media, images that propagated in order to absorb the public attention (publicity, advertising, movies, tunes).

The concept of “authority”²² is of great importance in that it provides a key way of thinking about power. The postmodern approach towards authority is described by the questioning of all endeavors to base authority on any absolute foundation, whether that of religion or reason. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean-François Lyotard characterized postmodernism as an “incredulity” toward metanarratives, a rejection of having faith in modernism’s encompassing narratives of truth, progress and freedom ground on the autonomy of human reason. One aftermath of postmodern incredulity is what Jürgen Habermas called “legitimation crisis.” According to modernism, the logical justification of authority creates the legitimate situation in which the task to obey authority is necessary. The modernist discourse of legitimacy, however, gives consideration to a collective and constant chain of cognitivist paradigms in order to dictate the process of legitimation itself. The postmodern crisis of the delegitimation of authority accords with the weariness of these cognitivist models. The narrative function is losing its strength by autocracy, genocide, and technological destruction of the environment throughout the course of the twentieth century. Michel Foucault depicts the analysis of legitimation as not only skepticism about Enlightenment paradigms but as perception that reason and power are not basically different. An important aspect of postmodernism is its uncovering of the questionable modernist belief that legitimate authority is essentially hostile to domination and autocracy. Foucault is still meticulous to mention that this does not mean there is no difference between authority and domination. Here, what must be understood clearly is that there are different and heterogeneous paradigms of exercising power which is essential quality of authority as well as of liberation

and domination. Therefore, authority cannot be considered either as a form of action against power or as an institution that only exercises power. But it can be seen as a mechanism of political management that is formed by the unstable exercise of power of all over society. There is no justifiable grounds for authority to outrank power thoroughly, and no certainty for the fact that the exercise of authority will be controlled by the force of a universal rationality. The general urge of postmodernism, then, is not the effacement of authority, because it would be thought of as the effacement of power. More truly, it is the perception that authority is formed through the unstable and contextual use of power. As such, we can say that its legitimacy does not simply stem from either natural right or rational consensus.

The title of *Endgame*, mimicking the last few moves of a hopeless chess match, proposes a vigorous sense of waiting as reality and as a metaphor for infinity. Beckett's own lead, here, seems to be of a great importance:

Hamm is a king in this chess game lost from the start. From the start he knows he is making loud senseless moves. That he will make no progress at all with the gaff. Now at the last he makes a few senseless moves as only a bad player would. A good one would have given up long ago. He is only trying to delay the inevitable end. Each of his gestures is one of the last useless moves which put off the end. He is a bad player.
(Cohn: 1973,152)

All Beckettian characters try to postpone the end and are "bad players," but it is necessary to regard Hamm as a king in a chess game. When two kings are put on the chess board (it happens only when two bad players are playing!), They can never put an end to the

game but only become involved in an infinite chain of movements on the chess board. Beckett's metaphor indirectly indicates that Clov is a king, as well as a pawn. This presumption presents the fact that their relationship is one of master and slave / servant. Such relationships have absorbed the attention of thinkers as diverse as Aristotle, Hobbes, Hegel and Nietzsche. The best reason is that these relationships are ambiguous. Although the master enjoys social supremacy, the servant is really more powerful, because his master is more dependent on him than vice versa. Hence we can say that Clov is stronger than Hamm, since he makes Hamm's existence possible, exactly in the same way that Lucky is stronger than Pozzo because his outward obedience and weakness provide the support on which Pozzo continuously bases his sense of authority. All of Beckett's pairs are yoked in friendships which are necessarily power-relationships. Most importantly, each partner has to know that the other is there: the partners produce proof that they actually exist by answering to each other.

In Beckettian dramas, the postmodern notion of power is interwoven with language. Beckett's first two published plays form a central stage in the growth of modern Western theater. They repudiate both the psychological realism of Chekhov, Ibsen and Strindberg and the pure theatricality of the body supported by Artaud. The pivotal issue, put forward by them, centers around what language can and cannot do. Language does not appear as a means of direct communication any more or as a screen through which we can observe vaguely the psychic actions of a character. Strictly speaking, it is put to use in all its grammatical, syntactical, and particularly intertextual force in order to aware the reader/audience of the fact that how much we rely on language and how much we have to be careful of the codifications that language sets upon us.

Language as the game of power

Endgame depicts four characters confined in a room; two of them, Nagg and Nell, are in ashbins; Hamm their blind and invalid son, sits in a wheelchair and is taken care of by Clov, a servant. These characters are not performing anything in particular; they are only there, living in isolation, old age and weariness. Hamm attempts to sustain his authority over his servant Clov and his parents, Nagg and Nell. Like all Beckett's characters, Nagg, Nell, Hamm, and Clov talk to each other; and making utterances is their main activity.

A remarkable feature of the pattern of dialogue in Beckettian drama is the gap between what is said and what is meant. In *Endgame* what is uttered and what is conveyed together constitute the meaning of the utterance in its context.

According to Cavell, the play demonstrates three levels of meaning emerged from a single text through the characters' utterance. They can be outlined as:

- I. The referential level of the play, namely, what the characters talk about.
- II. The strategies applied by the characters in their dialogue and the effects of these strategies.
- III. The diverse manipulations and delicate arrangements happening in the characters' speech, which are the constituents by which three levels of meaning are constructed.

Beckett has the power critically to view human anxieties through his characters, the situations he creates, and the language he uses. We can infer from the humorous exchanges of the play the bitter censures

of a zealous thinker on modern man's plight in the universe, created by his drive to recuperate a transcendent principle which he feels will give meaning to his life and his speech, thereby legitimating his society. Dialogue in *Endgame* is visualized as sharp criticism of modern man's situation in the world, while simultaneously being comical.

The characters are mostly engaged in constructing statements, asking and answering questions, commanding, adding insult to injury, and uttering exclamations all of which do not devote to a story or to a plot, but rather mark and make tense their daily modernist routine.

The following typical utterances of the play are good instances of the irksome modernist everydayness: "Is it not time for my pain-killer? (Beckett:1986, 95) "What's the weather like?,(Beckett:1986, 105) "Is it night already then?" (Beckett:1986, 107) Paralyzed Hamm breathlessly seeks information on what is going on outside, the time, and the weather; and Clove is the one to answer. Clov also questions Hamm from time to time: "I never refuse. Why?(Beckett:1986, 113) Nell and Nagg, in their sawbins, also speak to each other and make interrogatives: "Our sight has failed" (Beckett:1986, 99) said Nagg to Nell, "Do you want to go in?"(Beckett:1986, 100) asked Nagg. These trivial exchanges of shallow information generate the referential level of the play. But this level reveals something more significant and tantalizing, the characters imitate what people in non-theatrical real modern life are involved in saying all day long.

Dialogue, at the referential level, plays a vital role in this play because it conveys the artful imitation of the modern rituals of everyday interactions, and betrays the banality of these routine exchanges, the modern language games, "Why this farce, day after day?" (Beckett:1986, 99) "All life long the same inanities." (Beckett:1986, 114)

The characters on stage signify by their talk, by their wretched condition, by what really they are, and the play as a whole has been seen as a metaphor of modern man's miserable situation in the world, made by an explicit appeal to some metaphysical system:

HAMM: We're not beginning to... to... mean something?

CLOV: Mean something! You and I, mean something! [*Brief laugh.*]

Ah that's a good one! HAMM: I wonder. [*Pause.*] I imagine if a rational being came back to earth, wouldn't he be liable to get ideas into his head if he observed us long enough. (Beckett:1986, 108)

A Beckettian postmodern approach to language can be seen as a rejection of language as a transparent means of communication. This strategy regards language as a means of passing the time. Hamm and Clov, locked in a closed room, display a firm linguistic game in which utterance signifies more than it says. Hamm and Clov: the two companions rely on each other to establish conversation, to keep each other's partnership.

Hamm reflects, "We are getting on" (Beckett:1986, 111) Several times in the course of the play, when Clov has left the room for his kitchen. The repetition of this monologue illustrates that he is so obsessed with "getting on." He engages in verbal activities because he needs to occupy time. His questions may not be replied, his orders may not be executed; this does not matter. What is important for him is to make time go by, by talking. When Clov asks Hamm: "What is there to keep me here?" (Beckett:1986, 120) Hamm answers: "The dialogue." (Beckett:1986, 121) Talking for Hamm, then, is a means

to go on, to make time go by. So he needs Clov as a person needed to talk with.

Another postmodern strategy of language, used by Beckett, deals with language as a means of refuge.

Paralyzed Hamm, in his wheelchair, terribly needs Clov in order to be in touch with the outside world. If Clov deserts him, he will be alone, and his situation will be intolerable. So another reason why Hamm literally attacks Clov with interrogatives, orders, and statements is that he needs company. As a matter of fact, Hamm takes enjoyment out of his own story-telling, or rather, his reciting, as he meditates: "Nicely put, that," (Beckett: 1986, 117) "There's English for you." (Beckett: 1986, 117) But reciting is also another alternative to Hamm to keep someone in his company. And when Clov abandons listening to him Hamm bribes his father:

CLOV: He doesn't want to listen to your story.

HAMM: I'll give him a bon bon. (Beckett: 1986, 116)

Hamm cannot tolerate being alone and idle in a room. So he constantly asks for the attention of Clov in order to prevent him from going into the kitchen:

CLOV: No. [*Pause.*] I'll leave you, I have things to do.

HAMM: In your kitchen?

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: What, I'd like to know.

CLOV: I look at the wall.

HAMM: The wall! And what do you see on your wall?

Mene, mene? Naked bodies? (Beckett: 1986, 97-98)

Even Nagg takes refuge to the same strategy:

NELL: Are you quite sure? *[Pause.]* Then I'll leave you.

NAGG: Do you not want your biscuit? *[Pause.]* I'll keep it for you. *[Pause.]* (Beckett: 1986, 101)

Hamm tries to escape from panic and loneliness by talking alone, to himself. In a significant monologue, Hamm sheds light on his situation:

HAMM: There I'll be, in the old refuge, alone against the silence and... *[he hesitates]*... the stillness.... Then babble, babble, words, like the solitary child who turns himself into children, two, three, so as to be together, and whisper together, in the dark. (Beckett: 1986, 126)

Talking, namely, asking questions, commanding, and reciting is then the strategy to keep somebody in one's company and elude loneliness and anguish.

Hamm is obviously man of command. And he imposes his authority and dominance upon Clov by asking questions, giving orders; and he bothers Clov. In order to challenge Hamm's superiority, Clov makes use of linguistic manoeuvre without announcing it so clearly. It is actually a fierce verbal chess-game that is going on between them. Talking is already a game of power, a strategy in real life, so that the metaphor of chess suggested by the title reinforces what is going on in the play.

When Hamm makes a question, Clov gives a spontaneous answer, even if his reply is irrelevant to the question:

HAMM: Why don't you kill me?

CLOV: I don't know the combination of the larder.
(Beckett:1986, 96) [*Pause.*]

Clov may also give a tautological reply that is a problem of logic, so that Hamm is not informed:

HAMM: A flea! Are there still fleas?

CLOV: On me there's one. Unless It's a crablouse.
(Beckett:1986, 108)

The dialogue may also fall into paradox. Although Clov's information apparently relevant, in no way a real one:

HAMM: That's right.

CLOV: If I don't kill that rat he'll die. (Beckett:1986, 125)

In order to jeer at his master, Clov draws on another verbal manoeuvre: he iterates Hamm's word for word sentences:

HAMM: I'm obliged to you, Clov. For your services.

CLOV: Ah pardon, it's I am obliged to you. (Beckett:1986, 132)

Every utterance in the play should thought of as a "move" in chess-game: to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing. Clov, when a "move" connecting with him is made, undergoes a "countermove." So each "move" basically stimulates a peculiar "countermove." Hamm knows that a countermove that is only reactional is not a "good" move. Hamm's reactional countermoves are no more than programmed effects in Clov's strategy; they play into Clov's hands and thus have

no effect on the balance of power. That is why it is important for Hamm to increase countermove in the game, and even to disorient it, in such a way as to make an unexpected move. This does not necessarily mean that Hamm, and even Clov, plays in order to win. The result is nothing but the agonistic aspect of society:

CLOV: *[Imploringly.]* Let's stop playing!

HAMM: Never! *[Pause.]* Put me in my coffin.

CLOV: There are no more coffins. (Beckett: 1986, 130)

The game turns out to be dog-eat-dog confrontation when Clov frequently makes sadistic remarks:

HAMM: Kiss me. *[Pause.]* will you not kiss me?

CLOV: No.

HAMM: On the forehead.

CLOV: I won't kiss you anywhere. *[Pause.]*

HAMM: *[Holding out his hand.]* Give me your hand at least.

[Pause.] Will you not give me your hand?

CLOV: I won't touch you. *[Pause.]* (Beckett: 1986, 125)

By adopting a chess-game like verbal assault, the characters tease each other. Here language is stripped of referentiality, reduced to pure exchange in a brutal struggle for power. So in this level of language, *Endgame* reflexes what is going on in real life, an unstable game of power.

The characters simultaneously pester each other, ask or answer questions, involve in triviality and toy with language, that is to say, they utilize varied kinds of artful arrangements in their speech in order to produce inconstancy, differentiation, and chaos.

Such artful arrangements give the dullness and the sharpness of wit, and at the other times the dullness and logic of non-sense. They do not simply offer us the other side of the dialectic of reason, but moves at and beyond the margins of the dialectic, beyond the limits that have been placed on language. Clov's answer to Hamm's question about his nourishment is a good instance:

HAMM: I'll give you nothing more to eat.
CLOV: Then we'll die. (Beckett:1986, 94)

It is quite true that Clov and Hamm were not involved together, but one would expect to hear Clov say, "Then I'll die." Since the singular pronoun "you" and the plural pronoun "we" do not construct an integrated unit.

Hamm presents a zeal for an act which is not harnessed by zeal, but takes place naturally:

HAMM: Every man his speciality. *[Pause.]* No phone calls?
[Pause.]
Don't we laugh?
CLOV: *[After reflection.]* I don't feel like it. (Beckett: 1986, 97)

"Don't we laugh" is an invitation to ponder on an act that is natural and therefore cannot be pondered.

In the constituents of the dialogues, non-sensical and mechanical constructing codes are dominant. Antonyms, for instance, bestow toughness and a computer-like tone:

HAMM: Wait! *[Clov halts.]* How are your eyes?
CLOV: Bad

HAMM: But you can see.

CLOV: All I want. (Beckett:1986, 109)

A playing of two words and repetition of sounds create the similar quality:

NAGG: It's lower down. In the hollow.

NELL: What hollow?

NAGG: The hollow! [*Pause.*]

Could you not? [*Pause.*]

Yesterday you scratched me there.

NELL: [*Elegiac.*] Ah yesterday. (Beckett:1986, 101)

Such arrangements of the characters' utterances do not enhance any semantic information, but they point to basic problems of living, such as boredom, and repetition, which affect everybody. It is fair to say that they contribute a great deal to the creation of the inertia caused by universal principle.

Endgame's focus is on modern man's hapless plight in universe, on characters' menacing postmodern game of power, and on language as well. Language in *Endgame* demonstrates a perpetual sense of chaos. Dialogues empower the characters to exceed behind narrative, and behind linearity. The Beckettian language generates a multi-dimension atmosphere in which three levels incorporate to indicate that dialogues are the only acts that by means of which the characters can sustain their postmodern social bond and then legitimate their society.

Through apparent meaningless dialogues, Beckett is the master of showing modern corruption: "The whole place stinks of corpses,

the whole universe.” (Beckett:1986, 114). Hamm’s significant monologue echoes the modern man’s miserable hollowness:

In my house. [*Pause. With prophetic relish.*] One day you’ll be blind, like me.... You’ll be sitting there, a peak in the void, in the dark, for ever,Infinite emptiness will be all around you, all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn’t fill it,... because you won’t have had pity on anyone and because there won’t be anyone left to have pity on. (Beckett:1986, 109-10)

In the history of twentieth century theater, Beckett’s first dramas characterize the shift from Modernism with its concentration on self-reflection to Postmodernism with its emphasis on pastiche, parody and fragmentation. Beckett’s plays repudiate the tradition of drama, insisting on the idea that a play should have an exposition, a climax and a d enouement. Instead, they enjoy a labyrinthine structure. They depict images of disorder in which the world and the people populated it are slowly and unavoidably losing their power. In this Beckettian labyrinth with no way out, the characters seek refuge in repetition, repeating their own acts and utterances and often those of others to pass the time. We can take as a central premise the idea that repetition plays a vital role in the formation of certain radical instabilities.

Notes

¹ Power is being-able; in the first place, being to exist. According to Deleuze power can be defined as an englobing field or as a multiplicity of nomadically distributed differential elements.

² Authority is the legitimate capacity to implement and enforce rules governing political institutions.

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Nikhilesh Yadav

Regression as Creative Metaphor in A.K.Ramanujan

The idea of the growth of the subject has recently been enriched from diverse angles. Soon after enlightenment the systematic removal of God has resulted in debates about the subject shorn of divinity. What began as protest against institutionalised rigidities led to the growth of individualism(s). And then in the late 17th century attitudes towards nature began to change. In place of 'nature' humans looked at 'natural resources' and in order to tap they began to dig deep the bowels of earth. Protestant individualism led to 'possessive individualism' (Macpherson 1962). Almost in a similar fashion a trajectory could be traced where the understanding of 'human' was discarded and 'human resources' was preferred and brought in currency. And then we locate a growing interest in the splitting of the human subject in the west. Right from Descartes, Hegel, Kant, Nietzsche, Freud and down to the recent adventures by Derrida, Foucault in human thought, to name just a few, have engaged with the dispersal of the subject. Nietzsche, however, charts a genealogy of suffering through the well known five stages of making a memory through pain :

Whenever man considered it necessary to make a memory for himself it was never done without blood, torment, sacrifice; the most gruesome sacrifices and pledges (to which sacrifices of firstborn belong), the most repulsive mutilations (castration, for example), the cruellest ritual forms of all religious cults (and all religions are in the deepest foundations systems of cruelties) – all of this has its origin in that instinct that intuited in pain the most powerful aid of mnemonics (Nietzsche 38).

After Nietzsche, Freud too speaks of moving beyond the ‘pleasure principle’, but he acknowledges lack of clarity in envisioning a path beyond pleasure. And certainly it just cannot be the binary opposite of pleasure; pain or suffering, championed by Nietzsche.

The present paper intends to focus on A.K.Ramanujan’s poetry and read it for the presence of regression for the actualization of the poetic subject. If suffering is the path predicted to unfold in future for the human subject in Nietzsche, regression is the way to draw on creative resources in A.K. Ramanujan. Both in a way use temporal resources available to them as human subjects exploring future or past.

Writing in a particular language was not a matter of choice for Ramanujan and it was inner compulsion that urged the poet to seek expression in some language. If English is considered to be a foreign language, the language of colonizer, then alone it becomes second language to A. K. Ramanujan, otherwise, “he was raised in a trilingual environment”. So his linguistic split has a peculiarity of its own. To keep alive the absent parts of his being Ramanujan used to “read Tamil constantly in the Kannada area, Kannada in the Tamil area,

studied and taught English in India, and India and Indian languages in the US".¹ Ramanujan the poet had two mother tongues - the childhood languages in addition to English. In fact from childhood he was exposed to more than one culture. He thought that it is in the dialogue of these three cultures, referred to as downstairs, upstairs and outside the house, and in the conflict between these that he was made; "I have literally lived my life in three different cultures".²

He confessed that linguistic split is disastrous for a poet. It not only dislocates the poet but also keeps oneself away from one's childhood. In his view childhood experience with a language is the source of man's sensibility. In *Folktales from India*, Ramanujan writes on the significance of childhood: "The aesthetics, ethos, and the worldview of a person are shaped in childhood and throughout early life, and reinforced later, by these verbal and non verbal environments".³ And he as a child was shaped by the dialogue of Kannada, Tamil and English cultures. As we read through poems we find a child occupies centre stage and a child's presence offers a fresh insight in the poems. A K Ramanujan once hinted at the idea of a linguistic split which an Indian writer has to experience - "the language one is writing is not a matter of choice". Even though Ramanujan believes it to be very much Indian to write in a second language, he nevertheless admits that writing in a second language one may effectively cut oneself off from one's childhood. And therein lays the danger of severing one's ties with one's perceptions and sensibility shaped through language right from childhood.

A. K. Ramanujan engaged himself with comprehending the exact nature of linguistic split. Indians who write in English do so in a language considered to be a second language by them. He called English language 'father-tongue'. And this father-tongue took him to a

foreign country where he discovered the poems written in ancient Tamil, which he later translated. In his poetry one finds a determined resolve to find a place in the tradition. Though the English tradition alienates him, it helps him in discovering his own tradition. Among modern Indian poets writing in English, his poetry is viewed as “the first indisputable evidence of the validity of Indian English verse”.⁴ For an Indian writing English verse, Parthasarthy outlines the responsibility that Ramanujan fulfils as he “repossessed the past, in fact made it available, in the English language”.⁵ Tracing the history of Indian English verse Parthasarthy views Ramanujan’s poetic achievement unique for Ramanujan “successfully conveyed in English what, at its subtlest and most incantational, is locked up in another linguistic tradition”.⁶

And A. K. Ramanujan was exposed to tri-lingual atmosphere as a child experiencing its advantages and disadvantages. He described the consequences and impossibility of learning second language in childhood that one may use to write: “While writing in second language, it superimposes on a first, one may effectively cut oneself off from one’s childhood”.⁷ Thus the problem of linguistic split one encounters as a child lingers on:

swirling around one absurdly alive and well,
walking familiar streets, talking to himself
as always with gesture, grimace and head-shakes
as if to an idiot child full of linguistic questions.

(The Black Hen, p. 235)

The linguistic questions a child engages with are crucial in our understanding of constitution of the subject. Ramanujan believes that the experience of linguistic split has stayed etched on the Indian psyche from time immemorial. So he does not see any difference between his

attempts to write in English language, a second language and those who wrote in Sanskrit, not their mother tongue, in distant past. Thus he brushed aside the question of disadvantages of writing in a foreign language. He attended to the charge of difficulty of conveying a certain native sensibility in English language suggesting that, “a lot of controversy about Indian writing in English is mistaken.”⁸ In his opinion linguistic split is quite common and it manifests itself in so many ways that it is almost inescapable condition of all writers.

It appears that the penchant for locating childhood perceptions in his poetry a result of ‘regression’. Regression is understood to be a defence mechanism in psychoanalysis where an individual responds to stress – fear, frustration, isolation etc., by behaving like a less adult. It is either due to an earlier state of libidinal interest and sexual organization manifested by adult’s interest in pre-genital i.e., oral or anal sexual interests or due to an earlier stage of ego development where the person deal with a danger that threatens him by behaving in a more child like and dependent manner. Ramanujan recalls his childhood in poem after poem to recapture childhood innocence and to overcome power relations. In “Looking for a Cousin on a Swing” (CP, p.19) the innocent sensation a little girl felt “in the lunging pits/ of her feeling” with her six or seven years old cousin on a village swing is no longer available because grown up adults can at best try “to be innocent about it”. Innocence becomes the first casualty in growing up as an adult and if it cannot be experienced in present, poetry offers hope of chancing it now and then in the memory of past where childhood survives drenched in innocence. Innocence in Ramanujan’s poetry is ignorance and its craving becomes memory and mystery, available only in distant past where linguistic-split had not yet occurred.

If a liar can make use of truth, and a physically fit person may use illness for an excuse, Ramanujan argues for “an amnesiac use of

memory” in “A Lapse of Memory” (CP, p.76). Here again regression can explain amnesiac’s “groping for mother and absences”. And the impossibility of recovery from the state of amnesia is beyond the reach of medicine, friends and doctors and childhood alone could rescue:

Maybe all it takes

is the smell of a woman’s perfume
in a childhood latrine, a peanut seller’s
raucous cry, or three obscene lines

mating white and black lizards
in schoolbook Sanskrit. Or a slant
of rain on the sunshine and the Papaya tree.

(“A Lapse of Memory”, CP , 76)

More interested in relying on the ‘mythic’, A. K. Ramanujan here finds an opportunity to challenge master narratives. Writing on the role of myths in an individual’s life, Sudhir Kakar says: “Myths in India are not part of a bygone era. They are not “retained fragments from the infantile psychic life of the race’ as Karl Abraham called them or “vestiges of the infantile fantasies of whole nations, secular dreams of youthful humanity” in Freud’s words. Vibrantly alive, their symbolic power intact, Indian myths constitute a cultural idiom which aids the individual in the construction and integration of his inner world”.⁹ In order to integrate his inner world Ramanujan relies on the mythic. His interest in myths and folktales could be traced to his childhood when they were told to children in a group. These were the tales that were “free of power relation”, as grand mother or some elderly woman used to relate.¹⁰ A.K. Ramanujan recalls with fondness the hypnotic effect of these tales and how formative they were in shaping a child

and to make them feel important. To him “folklore was a rich but neglected source of indigenous models and metaphors”¹¹. His childhood indulgence became an adult preoccupation as he began to celebrate folktales against the privileged epics, like The Ramayana, for not merely “repositories of cultural content but aesthetic form that enact their meaning in speech”.¹² Thus a lifetime of preoccupation with the aesthetic, the past and the worldview made him a poet who tried to overcome linguistic split that remained inscribed on his self right from his childhood. The real crisis Ramanujan faced, as a child passing in and out of a certain language experience was much more real than what he recreates through his poetry. The past he invokes has a great deal to do with the real childhood where childhood becomes, take shapes and evaporates only to become an uneasy refrain in many of his poems. The mythological, historical or literary past that features in his poetry is only incidental and is there to illuminate childhood perceptions. The worldview, however, seems to emerge from a child’s unconscious indulgence and appreciation of folklore which is now explained in terms of absence of power relations in the act of relating folktales. These situations provide the figure of child to Ramanujan to mirror an image, which he earnestly cherishes far away from the restraining powers. His poetry is nothing but “an expression to his need for food, sleep and love”.¹³

In his essay “Food for Thought”, Ramanujan uses *abhidhā*, *lakṣaṇā*³, and *vyājan*³ denotation, connotation, and suggestion to discuss food and goes on to suggest that “in matters of food, the three orders of meaning would be the utilitarian, the symbolic, and the expressive”.¹⁴ The importance of sensibility in the construction of a subject was also believed to be rooted in formative years as he remarked - “A great deal of what we are in life and in writing goes back to that period when language was being formed inside, forming

us, forming the world of concepts, the style of our perceptions. No man can deny or insulate that source of his sensibility without peril".¹⁵ This is another articulation of the poet that asserts the importance of childhood so crucial in making and unmaking of an individual. His poetry lingers on childhood experience and tries to fill in the absences - 'food, sleep and love', by invoking them in the experience of a poem. To begin with food one needs when one is exhausted and needs nutrients to replenish the vitality of body. But for a child the experience of food is differently structured right within and outside of the womb of the mother. Food in the womb is for health but out of the womb, over health and convenience, for flavour or taste. Inside it is fluid and so smooth and continuous. After severing of the umbilical bond the child looks for that fluidity s/he has enjoyed. The absence of continual supply of food is one of the lack child has to encounter as s/he grows out of the womb of mother. And sleep a state of rest available to a child in the womb of the mother is not available now. Similarly love present as continual touch with the mother is absent in the world of the father. Thus in the womb of the mother 'food, sleep, and love' are continual existence and absence of the three in unison in the patriarchal world account for the lack. The loss a child suffers due to linguistic-split is structured in the image of the loss of 'food, sleep, and love'.

To overcome one sort of lack is to overcome the other too. And since staging of these two different kinds of lack occurs in childhood, Ramanujan focuses his attention on childhood. Ramanujan's poetry is an articulation of the desire to relive as a child where the possibilities to overcome the feeling of lack are numerous. Food and granny's tales allow him to experience a state of triumph over his lack. A. K. Ramanujan's upbringing right from being an infant had love dissolved in it. He received love from granny, mother, father, cooks, aunts others close to him but had an uneasy relationship with

wife. In “Lines to a Granny”, recalling the tale she used to tell, the poet squarely asks:

But tell me now: was it for some irony
 you have waited in death
 to let me learn again what once you learnt in youth,
 that this no tale, but truth?

(“Lines to a Granny”, CP, 17)

Since sleep is vital for self and poetry, “waking is a blow of light” acquires a new dimension in his poetry. The poet would love to wake to the possibilities of celebrating infantile or childhood impressions but the presence of light makes it impossible.

Waking is a blow
 of light;
 and walking, a sleet
 of faceless acquaintances.

(“Images”, CP, 44)

Seeing is a significant activity for A.K.Ramanujan.¹⁶ It is the lived past that offers him an opportunity to fall asleep or dream. And whenever he recollects his past through dream it still remains a state in sleep. In “Smalltown, South India” (CP, 100), past is invoked to express inadequacy of sleep: “I bed down with long finless slipper fish./ the ceiling has weeds, the sleep is brackish.” In a “Routine Day Sonnet” (CP, 68) the male poetic voice suddenly says “I wake with a start”.

Love is one of his preoccupations as he considers it to be the ideal expression of the inner world. “Love in all its varieties- love in

separation and in union, before and after marriage, in chastity and in betrayal – this is the theme of inner world”.¹⁷ He believed that every man carries within him a world, to which he constantly returns, composed of all that he has “seen and loved”.¹⁸ In Ramanujan’s world there is no scope for satisfying/ contented adult relations as a result children prefigure and map the possibilities of interaction in masculine world. The poem “Love Poem for a Wife I” attributes the failure of marriage to “unshared childhood”:

Really what keeps us apart
at the end of years is unshared
childhood. You cannot, for instance,
meet my father. He is some years
dead. Neither can I meet yours:
he has lately lost his temper
and mellowed.

(“Love Poem for a Wife I”, CP, 65)

And in order to rescue the failed marriage Ramanujan ransacks Egyptian and Hindu civilizations for certain cues that promise a future for marriage:

Probably

only the Egyptians had it right:
their kings had sisters for queens
to continue the incests
of childhood into marriage.
Or we should do as well-meaning
Hindus did,

betroth us before birth,
 forestalling separate horoscopes
 and mother's first periods,
 and wed us in the oral cradle
 and carry marriage back into
 the namelessness of childhoods.

(“Love Poem for a Wife I”, CP 67)

In the poem “unshared childhood” and “the namelessness of childhoods” figure to focus attention on pre-oedipal where the Other is not posited. If unshared childhood is held to be responsible for marital discord the solution is found in the namelessness of childhood. Ramanujan is not sure of what comes from where; he believes that languages he translates and writes in are continuous with each other. This search for a personal and a live language appears to be responsible for the “pacts in their own backyard”. Ramanujan makes his pact with childhood and Hindu past.

Even wife who is not a mother keeps the poetic persona anxiety ridden because he has now several roles to perform. And the most difficult being her presence that reminds of the difference that precludes the poetic persona to play a son:

You remind me of the difference
 especially
 on panic's zenith, on the unattended
 Ferris wheel rickety in the wind,
 lest I collapse
 into a son, ...

(“Love Poem for a Wife and Her Trees”, CP, 180)

Patriarchy offers a son an opportunity to indulge in eccentricities without any consequence of being subjected to rigours of some punishment. It is an institution authenticating only the experience of the mother and the son; positing male only as the son in the father and female only as the mother in the daughter. Patriarchy leaves no scope for any possible growth in the son to be a father. So the male persona in the poem would love to romance with the idea of being in the company of wife as a mother but due to the difference that adult wife generates, he has to live the compulsion of being a husband.

Creativity seems impossible if one does not locate oneself as a child and rightly so because a child is unburdened by the fixities of linguistic structure. And if Ramanujan grounds himself there he does so in order to celebrate his creativity struggling against three different languages. Had Ramanujan not made regression to serve as creative metaphor his poetic accomplishments may almost be impossible.

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⁵ R. Parthasarthy, 5.

⁶ R. Parthasarthy, 5.

⁷ Ramanujan, *Uncollected Poems and Prose: A. K. Ramanujan*, 43.

⁸ Ramanujan,, 42.

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¹⁰ Ramanujan, *Uncollected Poems and Prose: A. K. Ramanujan*, 56.

¹¹ Vinay Dharwadker, *The Collected Essays of A.K.Ramanujan* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 348.

¹² Vinay Dharwadker, 351.

¹³ Ramanujan, *Uncollected Poems and Prose: A. K. Ramanujan*, 56.

¹⁴ A. K. Ramanujan, “Food for Thought.” in ed. Dharwadker, Vinay. *The Collected Essays of A.K.Ramanujan* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 86.

¹⁵ Ramanujan, *Uncollected Poems and Prose: A. K. Ramanujan*, 43.

¹⁶ M.K Naik, *Perspectives on Indian Poetry in English* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1984) 116.

¹⁷ Ramanujan, *Uncollected Poems and Prose: A. K. Ramanujan*, 74.

¹⁸ Ramanujan,, 74.

S.D. Sharma & Suruchi Kalra Choudhary

**City as a Metaphor in Vikram Chandra's
*Love & Longing in Bombay***

ABSTRACT

City as a metaphor has been employed by various writers since the inception of literature. Some fictional works are embedded in imaginary cities like Thomas Hardy's Wessex, Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, R.K.Narayan's Malgudi. City forms a backdrop to project characters and their consciousness in some fictional works like Anita Desai's *Voices in the city*, *Baumgartner's Bombay*, Kamla Markandya's *Pleasure City*. But for some writers city is a living entity. It also becomes a synonym of its inhabitants—their conflicts, tensions, struggles, joys, et al. In the case of Vikram Chandra, Bombay has been used as a very powerful tool to explore the timeless questions of human spirit. *Love and Longing in Bombay* has five interlocked stories set in Bombay filled with humour, love, pain, longing and loss. They capture the richness, the essence of human life, making the city Bombay into an unspoken character. The present paper proposes to bring out Vikram Chandra's fine nuances as a master story teller which reveals all facets of Bombay—timeless as well as contemporary. How minutely and precisely he feels the pulse

of Bombay (now Mumbai) and Bombayites is critically examined in this paper.

The word 'city' is derived from 'civitas' which means an aggregation of civies—citizens. In common parlance, city is a society of individuals who subscribe to an ideal of rational order. A city is a physical, conceptual and idealistic entity which encompasses the existing society and institutions within its boundaries. William Pater and Nietzsche attribute the development of Greek tragedy to the tension between Apollo, the God of security and Dionysus, the God of freedom. The Greek literature depicts the fruitful tension between the two principles: of security and of freedom, of order and of pursuing of joy. Monroe K Spears traces "the introduction of the city as principal subject of fiction in English."¹ City is a massive fact and a universally recognizable symbol. City connotes a large town created by charter with municipal powers (in ancient times within boundaries) while city in modern times denotes the hot bed of politics, intrigues, selfishness, personality-cult, lies, cheating, commercialism, communalism, casteism, tension, identity crisis. For a poet like Matthew Arnold, the city may denote "strange disease of modern life,/With its sick hurry, its divided aims,/ Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts,"²

City as a metaphor has been employed by various writers since the inception of literature. Some fictional works are embedded in imaginary cities like Thomas Hardy's Wessex, Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, R.K.Narayan's Malgudi. These imaginative cities have played a very vital role in determining the aesthetic structure of fiction as an art form. They, in fact, have become the creative and imaginative centers of the novelist's art. In the case of Hardy, Faulkner and Narayan, the imaginary city has been used as a powerful medium

to project the vision of the artist. City forms a backdrop to project characters and their consciousness in some fictional works like Anita Desai's *Voices in the city*, Baumgartner's *Bombay*, Kamla Markandya's *Pleasure City*. But for some writers city becomes a living entity. It must be pointed here at once that city is not a mere heap of bricks and stones, an architectural enterprise but a consciousness which formulates the personality of denizens. It also becomes a synonym of its inhabitants—their conflicts, tensions, struggles, joys, et al. Nissim Ezekiel rebels against the dehumanizing aspects of urbanization—squalor, slums, brutality, alienation, suffocation, confinement.³ Kamala Das finds the city a social void, a nagging discontent of unfulfilled desires, a masculine hierarchical power structure with utter disregard for human sentiments.⁴ Nayantara Sehgal's city is about people, characters, society and their personal problems. It may also symbolize a storm which has overpowered their lives. Anita Desai's *Calcutta* makes the citizens nihilistic, driving them to death. In the case of Vikram Chandra, *Bombay* has been used as a very powerful artistic tool to explore the timeless questions of the human spirit.

Vikram Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* deals with the contemporary socio-cultural milieu of Bombay. A bouquet of five vivid short stories set in contemporary Bombay, *Love and Longing in Bombay* is a telling and graphic portrait of Bombay. In its teeming history, secrecy, abundance and menace, the city becomes an image of the endlessly astonishing possibilities of human encounters between lovers, mothers and sons, policemen, computer programmers. Five ingeniously linked stories by Vikram Chandra depict his interest in supernatural elements (*Dharma*); nouveau rich and snobbish high society (*Shakti*); detectives/sleuths, policemen, corruption and deceit

(*Kama*); gangsters and fragile human relationships (*Artha*) and the concluding romantic confession (*Shanti*). Vikram Chandra's Bombay represents essence of hope and fear; it is linguistically multiplanar, authentic, and immaculately accurate. *Love and Longing in Bombay* has a freshness in narration with sparing allusions to contemporary events and evocative pictures of everyday life of ordinary people living in the world's most crowded, vibrant city—Bombay.

The narrator Ranjit Sharma's friend Ramani understands his loneliness in Bombay and makes an attempt to socialize in order to probe the exact meaning of freedom. The young narrator meets Subramaniam, a retired joint-secretary at Fisherman's Rest off Sasoon Dock. Subramaniam regales his bar audience with a story each evening. The five subsequent stories are about people from diverse fields of life and the city Bombay acts as a catalytic agent.

The first story titled *Dharma* is about Major General Jehangir Antia (nicknamed Jago at the academy) who returns to his ancestral home in prime residential land in Khar, Bombay and finds that it is haunted. A gold medalist at Kharakvasla, a distinguished soldier, Jago has had an exemplary life. He leads the Indian Para Brigade attack at Sylhet and accidentally steps on a mine, injuring his right leg. One look at the shapeless bulk of matter, the pool of blood, he orders the nursing assistant to hand him his *kukri* and in four bold strokes he snaps off his leg. He waved off the morphine. While Jung, the radio man was crying, Jago Antia's voice was steady. Even with his artificial limb he led an exemplary military life and put many a young officers to shame. The day he turned fifty, his missing leg began to ache, two inches under his plastic knee. He stumbled not out of agony but surprise. Twenty years had passed without a twinge. The look of sympathy in

the eyes of fellow officers and the fear of committing a mistake, Jago Antia asks the AMC Colonel to relieve him on medical grounds. On returning to his ancestral home in Bombay, he “felt as if he were pushing his way through something substantial and insidious, more clear than fog but as inescapable.”⁵ At night, a muffled voice beckoned him, “he sensed a rush of motion on the balcony. . . he heard the movement again, not distinct footsteps but the swish of feet on the ground. . . it was coming towards him. . . he saw on the floor the clearly outlined shape of shoes, one after another. . . coming towards him.” (12-13) Strength and courage drain his body and he had to crawl on hands and knees to descent. The shock in Thapa’s eyes raised Jago Antia from the stupor he had fallen for three days and he offers the house for sale. Todywalla bluntly refuses. “You may be rationalist. . . but I sell houses in Bombay. . . There’s something in that house.” (15) Thapa offers to call somebody to clean it up.

The next night Jago Antia and Thapa hear the voice again. “He could tell from moment to moment where it was on the balcony. It was not a trick of the wind, not a hallucination.” (16) The voice sobbed ‘Where shall I go?’ And Jago Antia “felt a sound in his own throat, a moan, something like pain, sympathy.” (17) He backed and fell down. The exorcist Thakker (not a slaving tribal magician but a sales manager from an electronics company) tries the religious ritual stuff and concludes “It is immovable. . . It is a child. . . It is looking for something. . . You must go. . . Help him.” (23) In spite of his irritation and disgust for letting this insanity gather around him, Jago Antia climbs up the stairs to help him. The poisonous seep of memory creeps up on him. His parents, brother Sohrab (Soli), his funeral and as he walked around the house he felt ‘it’ was walking beside him, in front of him, around him. Past events tumble down—Burjor Mama’s visit, the large

triangle kite, Soli's holding his hand far up and Jehangir reaching up trying to take the string, the solid impact of his body against Soli's leg, Soli's fall with Jehangir holding on, the impact of bricks through Soli's body. Jago Antia stirred weakly on the roof, it was dawn, he called out and saw on the parapet a very dim shape of a small boy looking down over the edge towards the ocean, wearing a uniform of olive green and asking, 'Where shall I go?' On his seventh birthday, Jago Antia had asked for a uniform as a present. Jago Antia looks at the boy "and he saw the small letters above the pocket, J.ANTIA, and the sun came up, and he saw the boy clearly, he saw the enormous dark eyes, and in the eyes he saw his vicious and ravenous strength, his courage and his devotion, his silence and his pain, his whole misshapen and magnificent life and Jago Antia said, "Jehangir, Jehangir you are already at home." (31) In the morning, he tells Thapa and Amir Khan, watching the sun move in and out of the clouds that 'it' has vanished. He was someone he didn't know before. Though he was at peace, he knew nothing had changed and he was still and forever Jago Antia, yet he felt free. The city Bombay emerges as a symbol of fear, hope and aspirations. Though Jehangir has traversed across the country, yet he comes home, to Bombay, for his liberation.

The framework of *Dharma* is given a particular shape by the city which in turn becomes an image of Jago Antia's reflections as an individual trying to confront the various socio-emotional pressures of the city life. It goes without saying that *Dharma* of Bombay brilliantly captures the nature of present *Dharma* which is quite complex and conveys an altogether different connotation. It also reminds the concept of *Dharma* in the past and its modern concept in the business capital of India—Bombay/Mumbai. In short, Vikram Chandra brilliantly captures the fine shades of the city life in a convincing manner to

highlight the sense of fear, hope and the feeling of ordinariness in contemporary Bombay. Bombay becomes an image of the endlessly astonishing possibilities of human encounter in different situations and unchanging traditions.

The second story *Shakti* portrays social underplay in the life of an urbanite Sheila Bijlani. Sheila's slow and steady rise in life—from a shopkeeper's daughter at Kemp Corner to an airhostess in Air France to marriage with electrical engineer Bijlani and an enormous flat on Malabar Hill. Sheila Bijlani is a true prototype of a Bombayite lost in the labyrinth of complex power structure and urban consciousness. Sheila's studied moves to travel up the social ladder are thwarted by Dolly Boatwalla. *Shakti* presents a fantastic imaginative picture of social rivalry between two Bombay socialites—Dolly Boatwalla, representing the old money, blue blooded, snobbish rich and Sheila Bijlani, representing the young nouveau rich who in a polite but calculated way yearns for leadership in the tight, snobbish exclusive circle. Sheila's longing and maneuverings for acceptance take a jolt when her son Sanjeev falls in love with Dolly's daughter Roxanne. Mother's love for her son reigns supreme. She is ready to bury their past hostility and consent to Sanjeev-Roxanne marriage. Sheila realizes that it "was a trap finely honed for her by the years of victory. Even now she had to appreciate the justice of its bitterness." (60) Her offer of truce is out rightly, rudely turned down. Before she left the Boatwalla mansion, her strategy was clear in her head, fully formed. "She was going to buy the mansion. She would buy them out complete: lock, stock, ship, and the house. Finally it came to this vulgarity—that they had the pride and she had the money." (62)

Bombay which comes alive in '*Shakti*' is Bombay where different classes collide, confront and coalesce. In Bombay, the power

of capital is palpable and money has its own dynamic. Vikram Chandra uncovers the longing for love in a child (Sanjeev) that can turn even the best laid plans of an astute mother (Sheila) upside down. At this juncture the lowest rung of the Bombay society—the working class is introduced. Ganga, their maid, represents the other picture of Bombay. She travels in the local train from Andheri, works in a dozen houses up and down the hill. She belongs to the class which migrates to a city in search of job opportunity. A hard working woman, she rises in life. Ganga had arrived in Bombay after marriage with her husband Ramesh who was a mill worker. After her husband's death she has worked hard and plans to build a *pukka kholi*. She takes a loan of fifteen thousand rupees from Sheila. What disturbs her life was her daughter, Asha's beauty. A local bootlegging *tapori* Girish fell in love with her. To avoid "the violent allure of the black glasses, the coiled stance that projected danger, the infinitely dark and attractive air of tragedy," (47) Ganga left her daughter with her grand father in the village Saswadi. Ganga marries Asha after she finishes her nurse training to a school teacher. While attending their marriage at Vivekanand School Hall, Andheri Ganga provides the elusive missing link to Sheila which culminates in the wedding of Sanjeev-Roxanne and formation of Bijlani-Boatwalla Bombay International Trading Group. "Apart from exposing the hollowness of the feud in upper-class society and the hypocrisy of high society people to whom 'the rest of the world is invisible', Chandra has re-created his characters in their own situation."⁶ Bombay emerges as a symbol of '*Shakti*'/force in its positive as well as negative terms. It is intended to be a bewitching tale of Bombay which is neither murky nor obtuse.

The third story in the collection, '*Kama*', dives deep into the intricacies of the life as lived upon in the city of Bombay. It also exposes

the hypocrisy of so-called sophisticated people. Vikram Chandra has been able to capture the familiar pleasures of the detective genre without descending into full circle. ‘*Kama*’ is a gripping tale of detection with a mix of insightful character detail. At the surface, inspector Sartaj Singh is searching for the murderer of Chetanbhai Ghanshyam Patel but deep down the story reflects his parallel journey into his own heart and soul as he is undergoing a messy divorce with Megha, at the same time doubts about his competence and honesty in his profession. Reflective, moral, cynical yet filled with hope Sartaj Singh develops into a character who instantly compels with his believability. Infact, Vikram Chandra’s *Sacred Games* is an extension of ‘*Kama*’, the protagonist Sartaj Singh along with Bombay—in all her foulness, filth and beauty.

A city is not known by the size, style, skyscrapers or modern amenities but by the life of its inhabitants. The contemporary Bombay city life is infected with tension, violence and fear. An average Bombayite has become immune to or blind to his fellow city dwellers. At the very onset ‘*Kama*’ introduces multi facets of Bombay—intermittent rain, murder, police. Chetanbhai Ghanshyam Patel has been robbed and murdered. A suspected pilferer, Shanker Ghorpade, is caught with the stolen Rolex wristwatch. He confesses robbery but denies murder. Inspector Sartaj Singh along with constable Katekar, meets Smt Asha Patel and Kshitij Patel. They interrogate the driver Sharma, neighbours Kaimals and it appears a mundane apparently open and shut murder case. Kshitij’s salutation ‘*Vande Mataram*’ and reference to ‘*Alaktaka*’ in Patel’s torn papers arouse the detective in Sartaj. Probe leads him to Jankidas Publishing Company and their ‘mutual communications’ and to the boarding house *Daman*. The owner, Mrs Khanna, is brusque. The story reveals another facet of

Bombay—the *Rakshak* brigade. Kshitij is a Rakshak and a tough nut to crack. He has sent away his mother to Samnagar. Sartaj follows her and Ashaben easily confesses. She cannot run away from the dirt and squalor of the city, Bombay.

In '*Kama*' the mysteries of the heart reign upon the mundane resolutions of the police investigator Sartaj Singh. Vikram Chandra employs telling images to highlight the dynamic nature of Bombay where the inner yearning of a man, the twinning of love and longing are lost in the tumultuous world of social climbing. Sartaj and Megha had been the talk of the campus. But their marriage fails to hold. Megha has sent the divorce papers. Sartaj finds his heart engulfed in a huge and feral loneliness. Divorce was to be found in *Society* magazine and not in real life. Rahul, Megha's brother, is still friendly with Sartaj and he informs Megha plans to marry Raj Sanghi, a family friend. Sartaj's boss Parulkar tells him he has received a call from home minister Shantilal Nayak, an MLA from Goregaon for papers. Sartaj felt a hatred for the rich, "for their confidence, their calm, how they thought everything could be *managed*." (111) There's another reminder from Nayak which leaves Sartaj weary and he even contemplates death. At the very moment Megha comes to invite Sartaj. He breaks down and Megha comforts him. His past comes alive and after her departure, Sartaj "felt very empty, his mind like a hole, a black yawning in space... Outside the night came." (125) The story ends with Sartaj handing over divorce papers and a telephonic conversation with his mother, with a smile Sartaj plunges in the Bombay traffic. He finds solace in the Bombay rush. The city seems to engulf him and his personal grief.

The fourth story, '*Artha*' presents a compelling, intriguing picture of Bombay. Vikram Chandra's Bombay emerges as a vibrant city haunted by gangsterism, simmering communal violence, riven with distinctions of religion, ethnicity, class disparity. A co-passenger in Rajdhani Express told this story to Subramanian. Two stories are intertwined—one about Sandhya, which shows the hollowness of the world of art and second about Iqbal Akbar, which shows the shady side of society and the Bombay underworld. For Sandhya, the city, Bombay, symbolizes cultural values and Indian sensibilities, while for Iqbal, Bombay is a city caught in the rhythm of perforced change.

Sandhya runs Mega Computers Ltd. Her husband Vasant has divorced her but continues to bully her. She lives with her mother and son Lalit. She is having an affair with a painter, Anubhav Rajadhakshya. In fact, Anubhav is sopping on her. She buys him paints, books, and liquor. Iqbal is a compuer programmer and Sandhya's man-Friday. He is very friendly with Rajesh Pawar, a postal clerk. Sandhya, Iqbal along with Rajesh, go to attend an art exhibition at Pushkar Gallery. Mr Ratnani of Ratnani Constructions, who is supposed to have built half the big buildings in Bombay, also comes to the party. Rajesh says he works for Ratnani and offers to introduce Anubhav. Ratnani refuses to recognize Rajesh. Minutes later Rajesh is missing. In his search for his lost friend, Iqbal encounters Bombay's *bhai log*, *Akhara Pratap Singh*, Guruji, Govardhan *bhai*, and finally Ratnani. There's a reference to communal violence, a riot. Iqbal is attacked and threatened. He is informed Rajesh is dead, just incidental.

Two minor characters, Manishiji and Ranaukji, also provide a valuable insight into human psyche. In their struggle for survival in a metropolis, people stoop to all kinds of treachery. They have been

working together for almost twenty nine years and in a bid to fail Sandhya's computers, they have stuck tiny magnets at the back. All the revelations come out simultaneously. Sandhya and Iqbal are equipped to stabilize the systems and plug the ledger disappearances, Anubhav-Viveka affair makes Sandhya see-through Anubhav's aesthetic completeness and she calls him "a whore, a leech and a liar."(227) She throws Anubhav out bag and baggage and plans to begin her life afresh with dreams of expansion. Iqbal goes to sleep, reconciled at the loss. "There is that glow. I know what it is. It is the absence in my heart."(228) Vikram Chandra's Bombay fails to insulate its characters from the short circuit of external reality. The city, Bombay, is certainly hostile to its characters.

The fifth story, '*Shanti*' is written in a unique genre and stands apart. Ranjit Sharma, the narrator is loitering near Haji Ali on a boring Sunday evening and Subramaniam, invites him home. He tells a story which turns out to be his own story, how he met his wife Shanti. The storyteller enters his story and the stories merge with the frame narrative. Vikram Chandra presents a clever and utterly convincing conclusion to a superbly crafted collection. Five stories, loosely connected in theme, set in Bombay, in an odd, unclassifiable form, are built into a unified whole through a personal touch of '*Shanti*'.

Shiv has lost his twin Hari in the communal riots. He presently lives with his sister Anuradha and her station-master husband Rajan in a large bungalow in Leharla. He is friendly with the assistant station master, Frankie Furtado, who is always lost in dreams about Bombay. A beautiful young lady Mrs Shanti Chauhan, frequents the railway station. Earlier Shiv used to be lost in his own morbid thoughts, he even contemplates suicide. But the lady catches his attention. "Who

was she? Where was she going? Why did she return?” (240) On enquiring he learns she is looking for her husband. He was a fighter pilot in the RIAF and went missing while flying a Hurricane over Burma in 1942. So, she enquires from men who come back from the prison, from the INA etc. Mrs. Shanti Chauhan tells Shiv Subramaniam the story of the most evil man in the world. On her next trip she tells another story about a woman who ran backwards into future. Shanti comes to Leharia often and every time she tells Shiv plenty of stories apart from news about her husband. But the day Dhillon, Sahgal and Shah Nawaz were acquitted in Delhi, she has nothing to say. So, Shiv tells her a story about an old lady and her curse. Meanwhile they have fallen in love with each other. Shiv proposes, Shanti accepts and two months, three days later, with Frankie’s help, they elope to Bombay. Now, many years later, Shiv and Shanti are at peace with themselves. They are happy. “We’ve had our life, our Bombay life.” (267) The story ends on a promissory note. Ranjit shrugs off his pessimism and comes to term with life.

I am walking in my city... I can feel the jostling of its dreams... I have music in my head... I can hear the steady, eternal beat of the sea, and I am filled with a terrible longing. I know I am walking to Bandra, and I know I am looking for Ayesha... I might ask her to marry me. If we search together, I think, we may find... perhaps not heaven, or its opposite, but only life itself. (267-8)

Bombay boasts of the concept of cultural assimilation. Vikram Chandra successfully recreates the Bombay characters with consummate skill by using typical Bombay terminology by way of code mixing. Words like *bhajiya*s, *sahayak*, *rakshak*, *regada-patis*,

bhai log, bewda, musalta, kattu, kholi, etc evoke an atmosphere in which the characters live. The city, Bombay, controls, regulates the habits, behaviour, customs, traditions, and way of life of its inhabitants. The city, Bombay, acquires its own entity, identity, individual character affecting the lives of the individuals living in it. Vikram Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* takes his readers on a virtual 'Bombay (Mumbai) Darshan' through—Andheri, Colaba, Bhuleshwar, Mahalaxmi, Mazagaon, Umerkhadi, Pydhuni, Marine Drive, Wadala, Matunga, Koliwadi, Sakinaka, Bandra et al.

Like in Shashi Tharoor's *Show Business*, Bollywood i.e. India's Tinseltown forms an integral part of *Love and Longing in Bombay* and Hindi movie songs run in the veins of Vikram Chandra's character and spill over in these stories. In 'Dharma', Soli is an avid fan of Binaca Geet Mala and love singing *Maine shayad tumhein pahle bhi kahin dekha hai*. In 'Shakti', as an air hostess, Sheila loves singing songs and Sanjeev-Roxanne affair is termed as "atrocious Hindi-movie taste". (58) In 'Kama', Rahul asks Sartaj, "Why do you dress like a Hindi movie?" (94) Chetanbhai Patel likes to listen to ghazals. He has every new cassette. Mehdi Hassan is his favourite—*Voh jo hum me tum me karaar tha, tumhe yaad ho ke ya na yaad hoo...* In 'Artha', Rajesh and Iqbal dance to the song *Choli ke peechay kya hai* on their first meeting. In 'Shanti', Frankie is a die hard movie fan and dreams of becoming a hero. He has a song on his lips always especially *Kahan gaya ranchor? Duniya ke rahane valon bolo, chcheen ke dil mera, kahan gaya ranchor?* Moreover, Vikram Chandra belongs to a family associated with Hindi movies and inadvertently Bollywood forms an integral part of his framework. Like Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Chandra also is an ardent Amitabh Bachchan fan and there is a frequent reference to his films—*Coolie, Muqaddar ka Sikander, Zanjeer, Deewar*.

The Bombay Vikram Chandra portrays in *Love and Longing in Bombay* is a city which is vivid, vainglorious, and kaleidoscopic and exudes a great charm. The sense builds up throughout *Love and Longing in Bombay* of a chaotic city, laden with stories, waiting for Vikram Chandra's art, to be unraveled. While talking about what gave *Love and Longing in Bombay* an edge over other books for winning the Best Book Award of Commonwealth Writers Prize for the Eurasia Region, Malashri Lal says that the stories are "completely unforced, lyrical, and humane. The tales deal with life and death, love and grief, envy and corruption. It is so local, yet so global."⁷ A critical reading of the text shows that all the five stories are intended to be a telling comment on the tumultuous world of modern day Bombay which has a glorious past, disturbing and highly ambitious present and a radiant future. The eclectic and humane nature of Bombay makes it larger than life and confirms its profound power to celebrate a maelstrom of romance and desire with all its beauty. Bombay is not only a city for Vikram Chandra, it is timeless and real whose charm will always remain young and fresh. Time will not be able to write wrinkles on its face. Bombay will always make Mumbaikars decipher sense out of chaotic life.

Bombay has a vibrant spirit and its vibrant nature always beckons those who are living in this world to be extra ordinary. The city itself is a motivating factor both in the right as well as in the wrong direction. The text is jam-packed with its negative as well as positive effects. Vikram Chandra's generously narrated frame as well as richly developed stories draw the reader into the thoroughly convincing world in which these stories are told—Bombay. Both frame and stories present Bombay as it is. Vikram Chandra's brilliantly sculpted quintet not only make the reader feel the physical crush of contemporary

Bombay—a fusion of the beautiful and dangerous, the mythical and mundane, the ghosts and gangsters, but also gives an insight into its infrastructure, caste, finance, religion. While Bombay breathes and flourishes, a reader has every reason to wait for more from Vikram Chandra.

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³ Z. F. Molvi “Nissim Ezekiel: Serving in the City” in *Indian Writing in English Vol III* Ed M. K. Bhatnagar (Delhi: Atlantic, 1999)152.

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⁵ Vikram Chandra *Love and Longing in Bombay* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1997)1. The Subsequent references are from the same text and mentioned parenthetically.

⁶ Bijay Kumar Das “The Art of Story Telling: A Study of *Love and Longing in Bombay*” in *Critical Essays on Post-Colonial Literature* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 1999)104.

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Sohila Faghfori & Zahra Hosseini

Melville's Burtonian "Bartleby"

I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician's, which is fantastical; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious; nor the lawyer's, which is politic; nor the lady's, which is nice; nor the lover's, which is all these; _ but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed, the sundry contemplation of my travels, which, by often rumination, wraps in a most humorous sadness. (Shakespeare IV, i, 10-19)

Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is the first systematic study of psycho-analysis in heretofore known pathological term in the Western treatises. To write it Burton uses myriad sources from classical mythology to medieval scholastic philosophy. Despite its infirmity of logical force evident from its contradictions, *The Anatomy* has captivated the attention of several readers with different tastes and aptitudes since its publication. The renowned American novelist, Herman Melville had a keen interest in the dark recesses of the human psyche, and on account of this, he sought inspirations from Burton's

Anatomy as manifested through allusions to this book, traced from the bulk of Melville's fiction and correspondence

"Bartleby, the Scrivener" is one of Melville's works which is clearly Burtonian in "theme and form", though Burton's name is never mentioned in the text of the story; Nathalia Wright posits (5). She further brings forward the thesis that, "Bartleby" represents Melville's "most concentrated study of melancholy... which... owes most to Burton's work"(5). But how and to what end Melville employs a Burtonian concept of the human temperament in "Bartleby" has always remained controversial. Nathalia Wright identifies all the characters of the story with specific humours, and believes that they are all melancholic in one or the other way. In terms of medical metaphor, the term melancholy etymologically means in Greek derivation melan _ black and cholera _ bile juice; the indication is that melancholic temper arises when the bile juice, instead of being healthy yellow is degenerated into black. Wright argues that in "Bartleby," Melville is mostly indebted to Burton's discussion of the symptoms of melancholy, meaning that the influence of Burton on Melville's *Bartleby* is mainly in the signs of melancholy which the characters exhibit. The argument of Thomas Bugler that Burton presents melancholy in positive and negative forms, the positive form being as a "prominent ingredient of the creative temperament"(1), and the negative being as a disease, shows Melville's indebtedness to Burton's positive form of melancholy through the character of the Lawyer, making use of the power of imagination; it becomes a desideratum premium for the metamorphosis of a tale into a story. Burton's influence on "Bartleby" on the theory of the excretions or limiting it to the creative imagination of the narrator, having been set aside the hypothesis established is that the inspiration Melville gets from *The Anatomy* is far beyond the range of surface observation.

For, Melville uses extensively from Burton's discussions of both the signs of and the cures for melancholy in the characterizations of Bartleby and the Lawyer. Melville's Bartleby and the Lawyer both have the symptoms of melancholy, but their behaviors towards their melancholic conditions are different, as the former acts upon Burton's advices for curing melancholy while the latter does not; this leads them to dissimilar ends, one dying at the base of a prison wall, and the other surviving and narrating the story in black and white.

Nathalia Wright convincingly argues that Melville employs a Burtonian concept of the human temperament in "Bartleby"; that all the five characters of the story have melancholic behaviors; and that "the part of Burton's work to which "Bartleby" seems most indebted is his discussion of the causes of melancholy. But the fact that the two main characters of the story come to different ends in the story can be an indication that Melville is indebted to Burton's discussion of the cures and remedies of melancholy as well. Wright's theory holds water when she argues that the characters of the story have symptoms of melancholy, but this will not suffice, for the inspiration Melville gets from Burton travels far beyond this tether.

The essential and magnanimous significance about Bartleby and the Lawyer is that although both of them have melancholic symptoms, their types of melancholy (based upon Burton's *Anatomy*) are distinct, "Melancholy is either in Disposition or in Habit," Burton states (118). Defining "Melancholy in Disposition" (which, however, Burton says is improperly so called, since it is not a disease), he posits that it is, that transitory melancholy which goes and comes upon every small occasion of sorrow, need, sickness, trouble, fear, grief, passion, or perturbation of the mind, any manner of care, discontent, or thought,

which causeth anguish, dullness, heaviness and vexation of spirit, any ways opposite to pleasure, mirth, joy, delight, causing forwardness in us, or a dislike. . . . And from these melancholy dispositions, no man living is free, no stoic, none so wise, none so happy, none so patient, so generous, so godly, so divine, that can vindicate himself; so well composed, but more or less, some time or other he feels the smart of it. Melancholy in this sense is the character of mortality. (118)

On the basis of this definition, and the information the Lawyer gives us about himself at the outset of the story, it may be safely construed that this man, if ever troubled by melancholy, would be troubled by "Melancholy in Disposition", from which "no man living is free"(118). The Lawyer is a man who has managed quite successfully to lead a life of tranquility, a man who "from his youth upward, [has] been filled with a conviction that the easiest way of life is the best." He is a person considered by all who know him as "an eminently *safe* man", and who "seldom lose[s his] temper; much more seldom indulge[s] in dangerous indignation at wrongs and outrages." As a man of singular attitude and existence, he is the one who "The late John Jacob Astor, a personage little given to poetic enthusiasm, had no hesitation in pronouncing [his] first grand point to be prudence;[his] next, method" (Melville 93).

As an instance of psycho-analytical characterization, the Lawyer introduces himself as a "safe" and prudent man. But even this man of prudence, who never indulges in indignations, gets sometimes troubled with passions and "perturbations of the mind"(Burton 411). He is infuriated when Bartleby refuses to examine his copies, he is possessed with a gloom of melancholy when he understands how solitary and friendless Bartleby is, and he gets frightened and suspicious

when he discovers that Bartleby has tenanted his office and suspects that he may harm him. These distresses come upon him, as they come upon every “man living”. Though these distresses, in Burton’s opinion, can make some people melancholic, they have no evident impact upon the Lawyer. They are all transitory, or better to say, his will power and prudence make them transitory. The Lawyer doesn’t let them creep into his heart and destroy his soul.

In *The Anatomy*, after defining “Melancholy in Disposition”, and explaining that how many trivial things can cause it, Burton concludes in an imperative manner:

Now go and brag of thy present happiness, whosoever thou art, brag of thy temperature, of thy good parts, insult, triumph, and boast; thou seest in what a brittle state thou art, how soon thou mayest be dejected, how many several ways, by bad diet, bad air, a small loss, a little sorrow or discontent, an argue, &c.; how many sudden accidents may procure thy ruin, what a small tenure of happiness, thou hast in this life, how weak and silly a creature thou art. (292)

In Burton’s view there are so many causes for melancholy that no one can claim to be safe from it. Hence, no human being can be sure about the continuity and eternity of his happiness. Then, if human beings are so infirm before melancholy, why wouldn’t the Lawyer get ruined with it despite all his “perplexity and distress of mind” (Melville 107). The suggestive reply is self-evident that the Lawyer knows how to protect himself against the destructive and disastrous consequences of melancholy. He knows its cures and remedies, and acts upon them.

In Burton's view "the chiefest cure" to melancholy is that "whosoever he is that shall hope to cure this melancholy in himself or any other, must first rectify these passions and perturbations of the mind" (411). And one way to do this is to "resist them to the utmost" (412). The first instance of the Lawyer's resistance to his passions is in his relationship to his employee, Turkey. The Lawyer describes Turkey as a "short, porsy Englishman of about" sixty, who has a very special temperament which causes trouble at work (95). Turkey's problem is that:

He was apt to be altogether too energetic. There was a strange, inflamed, flurried, flighty recklessness of activity about him. He would be incautious in dipping his pen into his inkstand. All his blots upon my documents, were dropped there after twelve o'clock, meridian. Indeed, not only would he be reckless and sadly given to making blots in the afternoon, but some days he went further, and was rather noisy. At such times, too, his face flamed with augmented blazonry, as if cannel coal had been heaped on anthracite. He made an unpleasant racket with his chair; spilled his sand-box; in mending his pens, impatiently split them all to pieces, and threw them on the floor in a sudden passion; stood up and leaned over his table, boxing his papers about in a most indecorous manner, very sad to behold in an elderly man like him (95).

Placed amid this situation, the Lawyer, instead of getting angry and kicking Turkey out, solves the problem in a logical and convincing manner. Though Turkey's recklessness in the afternoons makes him angry, the Lawyer controls his anger. As he says: "Occasionally, I remonstrated with him. I did this very gently, however" (95). He reasons

to himself that Turkey is “a most valuable person” to him, and in this way calms himself down. Finally, he resolves the problem. He decides “to see to it, that during the afternoon he had to do with my less important papers” (96). This is the first instance of the Lawyer’s resistance to his passions. He shows his mastery at self-control.

The next time the kaleidoscope of observation reveals the Lawyer’s mastery at self-control is when he faces with Bartleby’s passive and unreasonable refusals to examine the copies. As he describes it, “nothing so aggravates an earnest person as a passive resistance” (106). Here again he gets angry, but he calms himself down by these words: “I regarded Bartleby and his ways. Poor fellow! Thought I, he means no mischief; it is plain he intends no insolence; his aspect sufficiently evinces that his eccentricities are involuntary” (106). And in this way, the Lawyer “resists [his anger] to the utmost.”

The other time the Lawyer manages to control himself is when he, for a moment, becomes suspicious of Bartleby. This happens when he arrives, quite accidentally, at his office on a Sunday morning, and, much to his surprise, finds Bartleby there. This is the Lawyer’s description of his feelings and thoughts at the moment:

I was full of uneasiness as to what Bartleby could possibly be doing in my office in his shirt sleeves, and in an otherwise dismantled condition of a Sunday morning. Was anything amiss going on? Nay, that was out of the question. It was not to be thought of for a moment that Bartleby was an immoral person. But what could he be doing there?—copying? Nay again, whatever might be his eccentricities, Bartleby was an eminently decorous person. He would be the last man to sit down to his

desk in any state approaching to nudity. Besides, it was Sunday; and there was something about Bartleby that forbade the supposition that he would be any secular occupation violates the proprieties of the day (110).

So he manages to pacify his mind to some degrees. He doesn't let mortifying thoughts of suspicion about Bartleby (regarded by Burton as one of the causes of melancholy) affect his mind. As such, at another instance, the Lawyer protects himself against melancholy.

The next time the Lawyer shows his knowledge about how to deal with melancholy is when he faces with Bartleby's strange behavior. Bartleby's early days of work are very busy days and he does "an extraordinary quantity of writing. As if long famishing for something to copy"(101). So, in Burton's words he does "immoderate exercise", which is a cause of melancholy (145). But later, by refusing to examine his copies, and later, by not doing any copying at all, Bartleby becomes increasingly idle. In Burton's view, idleness is another cause for melancholy. When the lawyer observes these symptoms in Bartleby, he advises him to take "wholesome exercise in the open air", as Burton advises moderate exercise and a change of air by travel as cures for melancholy (509).

Bartleby rejects the Lawyer's remedial offers, but the Lawyer himself acts upon them when he decides to move his chambers, alleging that "the air is unwholesome" there. Certainly their situation, facing walls at both ends and on the side -on Wall Street- can hardly allow for control of air, which Burton advocates as a cure for melancholy (126).

Of course the “unwholesome air” is not the only reason that the Lawyer moves his office. He has some more pertinent reasons to do that; he moves his office because he wants to get rid of Bartleby; but, he, in a prudent manner, considers the matter of unhealthy air in the expectation of cathartic impacts, too.

Most important of all these is the Lawyer’s final act of leaving Bartleby. In fact the relationship between Bartleby and the Lawyer has always been the subject of much conjecture and controversy among critics and reviewers. The predominantly accepted interpretation is that “the Lawyer’s outreach to Bartleby is one of genuine and sincere pity”(Marowitz 1). But there are critics who reject this idea. Their main reason for this judgment is that the Lawyer finally leaves Bartleby to save his business and reputation. But the Lawyer’s apparent selfishness should be considered in the light of his attempts to protect him from melancholy. One of Burton’s advices for curing melancholy is that “. . . vain terror, bad objects are to be removed and such persons in whose companies they be not well pleased”(411). And this is the sound and solid reason for the Lawyer to try to get rid of Bartleby, because some time after the advent of Bartleby he senses that this newcomer’s strange behavior is a threat to his health. The Lawyer arrives at this conclusion when he notices Bartleby’s constant use of the sentence “I would prefer not to” is influencing his and his employee’s language. As such, he decides to free himself of Bartleby’s destructive effects. This is part of the Lawyer’s description of the situation:

“I would prefer to be left alone here,” said Bartleby, as if offended at being mobbed in his privacy.

“_That’s the word, Turkey,” said I—”that’s it.”

"Oh, _prefer_? oh yes—queer word. I never use it myself. But, sir, as I was saying, if he would but prefer—"

"Turkey," interrupted I, "you will please withdraw."

"Oh certainly, sir, if you prefer that I should."

As he opened the folding-door to retire, Nippers at his desk caught a glimpse of me, and asked whether I would prefer to have a certain paper copied on blue paper or white. He did not in the least roguishly accent the word prefer. It was plain that it involuntarily rolled from his tongue. I thought to myself, surely I must get rid of a demented man, who already has in some degree turned the tongues, if not the heads of myself and clerks (116).

So when the Lawyer feels he and his employees are in danger of becoming melancholic under the influence of Bartleby, he quite wisely removes the danger.

The semiotic dimension of the Lawyer's awareness of the cures for melancholy is that he decides to "relate a few passages in the life of Bartleby" (92). The Lawyer's act of writing the story of Bartleby is related to that part of Burton's *Anatomy* in which he advises those suffering from melancholy to "impart" their miseries to a friend. Burton believes that to cure melancholy, the sufferers should pacify their disturbed minds by any means available, from getting help from God, to listening to music. He states that the best way for easing the mind "is to impart our misery to some friend, not to smother it up in our own breast." Burton is of the opinion that when someone talks about his misery to a "trusty, loving friend, it is instantly removed" (415).

The Lawyer acts upon this advice of Burton to pacify his mind, all passions spent; but, rather, there is a slight difference between Burton's advice and what the Lawyer does to alleviate his miseries in that he decides to impart his sorrows, not to a friend, but to the entire humanity, when stricken with grief and possessed with a sense of guilt. So, he writes the story of Bartleby. Something of this kind can be noticed about Burton himself, too, when he states that he writes a book about melancholy, to save himself from melancholy.

Thomas Dilworth, the writer of "The Narrative of Bartleby" is of the opinion that the story of Bartleby is brought up as the Lawyer's way of "conducting his own defense, and, as with any defense, it is a response to an accusation of guilt" (49). He further comments, but this guilt "may not be blameworthy", since Bartleby's unique plight is "unsolvable" and that the Lawyer has done anything he could do to save Bartleby. Another critic, Stephen Marowitz is of the same opinion with Dilworth when he states that "the Lawyer must be guilty of some moral transgression that fails in the end, to 'save' Bartleby... [he] earns instead Bartleby's rejection and scorn" (3). But Marowitz considers the Lawyer blameworthy for Bartleby's demise.

Blameworthy, or not, the Lawyer is conscience-stricken for Bartleby's death. He seeks a way to pacify his remorseful conscience. Hence, under the counseling personal of Burton's *Anatomy*, he decides to write the story of Bartleby, so that in this way he can share his misery with others. The Lawyer, his special type of melancholy, and his remarkable battle with melancholy which keeps him safe from its destructive effects having been discussed so far, Bartleby lies ahead. Bartleby's case is different. From what the Lawyer tells us about him, it becomes clear that his melancholy is not simply "that transitory

Melancholy, which goes and comes upon every small occasion of sorrow ..." (118). The signs and symptoms which we observe in Bartleby, not only are not transitory, but also aggravate with the passage of time. For example, at the beginning, he just refuses to examine his copies, but later abandons all copying, just standing by the window and staring at the wall outside. So, day by day, he becomes an idler; idleness being one of the symptoms of melancholy in Burton's view. Another instance of Bartleby's deteriorating condition is his diet. Bartleby's diet is not a healthful one. The Lawyer observes that Bartleby "never went to dinner..." he just "lives on ginger nuts" (105). Later Bartleby abandons eating completely, so that he dies of starvation. Bartleby's melancholic signs are continual and aggravating, causing dyspepsia. So, it can be concluded that the melancholy which has afflicted Bartleby is, in Burton's words, "Melancholy in Habit."

The Lawyer and Bartleby suffer from two different types of melancholy, one "Melancholy in Disposition", and the other "Melancholy in Habit." The doubt as to what makes the Lawyer's melancholy to be transitory, while that of Bartleby lethal is reserved. Burton's remarks in his *Anatomy* are interesting considering this doubt:

from the patient himself the first and chiefest remedy must be had; for if he be averse, peevish, waspish, give way wholly to his passions, will not seek to be helped, or be ruled by his friends, how is it possible he should be cured? But if he be willing at least, gentle, tractable, and desire his own good, no doubt but he may magnam morbi deponere partem, be eased at least, if not cured. He himself must do his utmost endeavour to resist and withstand the beginnings (412).

Here Burton forcefully argues that the main remedy for melancholy is the patient himself. The patient must desire recovery and health; otherwise, no one else can help him. This is the main difference between the Lawyer and Bartleby. The Lawyer is aware of the cures for melancholy, and acts upon them to improve his condition. But Bartleby is unwilling to change his condition. Day by day his condition becomes more critical. Not only doesn't he try to help himself, but also he rejects the Lawyer's offers for help.

Some may claim that Bartleby's condition is from the beginning more critical than that of the Lawyer. And, hence, he can't deal with it and overcome it as successfully as does the Lawyer. In response, one paragraph from Burton's *Anatomy* will suffice. Burton states:

I may not deny but our passions are violent, and tyrannise of us, yet there be means to curb them; though they be headstrong, they may be tamed, they may be qualified, if he himself or his friends will but use their honest endeavours, or make use of such ordinary helps as are commonly prescribed (412).

Finally, by analyzing the characters of Bartleby and the Lawyer we arrive at the conclusion that Melville uses extensively from Burton's *The Anatomy*. He is indebted to both Burton's discussion of the signs and symptoms of melancholy, and his advices to remedy melancholy. This can best be noticed in the characters' distinctive behaviors towards their melancholic conditions, and their arriving at different ends in the story. "Bartleby, the Scrivener" is the best sign of Melville's profound indebtedness to Burton. However, the nature of melancholy in Melville's range of fiction is scholarly and philosophical:

Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
 Be seen in some high lonely tow'r,
 Where I may oft out-watch the Bear,
 With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
 The spirit of Plato to unfold
 What worlds, or what vast regions, hold
 The immortal mind that hath forsook
 The mansion in this fleshly nook.

(Milton, 85-92)

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Sunita Siroha

**Question of Diasporic Identity in
Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust***

India has always been a land of fascination, awe, magic and religious congregation for the west. Many important novelists like Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster and R.P. Jhabvala to name only the few have tried to absorb the tantalizing nature of India and through their works presented their varied responses to this great country. Their attempts, at one level, can be considered to be a case of what Salman Rushdie has called the empire writing back to the centre. On the one hand R.P. Jhabvala belongs to the illustrious company of such Anglo Indian writers as Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster and Paul Scott while on the other hand she occupies a place with writers like R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Kamla Markandaya. It has been time and again pointed out by critics that she is an outsider – insider and her work is deeply rooted in the diasporic tradition as it illustrates some of the basic features of the ontology and ecology of diaspora. Complex socio cultural and ideological practices, interests and metaphors, questions pertaining to cultural identity of an author surrounded her creative imagination and she uses a highly experimental and innovative narrative strategy to project the alienated consciousness of a writer who tries to deal with the questions of miscommunication and misplaced ambitions of her protagonists.

The fact remains that the diasporic writing makes an attempt to give verbal formulation to the teeming mass of reality and the imagined worlds, as Rushdie has pointed out in *Imaginary Homelands* that diasporic writing “is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been lost”¹ This writing also smacks of the ‘desh-pardesh’ syndrome. Let it be emphasized here that like Joseph Conrad she confesses “being a displaced person . . . I have often felt I am in between not quite one thing or another”² Her German and British moorings determined the contours of her critical imagination. And her marriage to an Indian brought her into contact with India. Nirad Chaudhari, in his autobiographical work, *The Continent of Circe* has described their marriage as “the case of a modern Persian liberating a modern Jewish maiden from her Babylonian exile in London”³. The question of liberation from exile may be true from Nirad Babu’s angle but the fact remains that Jhabvala’s experiences as an exile multiplied as a result of her encounter with India. She herself says that England gave her a rich inheritance and she immersed herself in the novel of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy etc. But she didn’t know her future course of action : “My baggage for the journey I didn’t know I had to make : the journey to India”⁴. This confession is of particular interest because of the special nature of her case as a writer who is struggling to establish a kinship with Indian traditions, its virtues and its failings. Jhabvala herself portrays the subtle nature of her dilemma in *An Experience of India*:

So I am back again alone in my room with the blinds down, and the air conditioner on. Some times, when I think of my life, it seems to have contracted to this one point and to be concentrated in this one room, and it is always a very hot, very long afternoon when the air conditioner has failed. I cannot describe the oppression of such afternoons. It is a physical

oppression – heat pressing down on me and pressing in the walls and the ceiling and congealing together with me which has stood still and will never move again. And it is not only those two-heat and time – that are laying their weight on me but behind them, or hold within them, there is something more which I can describe as the whole of India. This is hyperbole to express my feelings about those countless afternoons spent over what now seems to me countless years in a country for which I was not born.⁵

In the light of what Jhabvala says it becomes extremely important to understand the complete and serious question of her treatment of Indian psyche vis a vis western psyche which is used as verbal formulation to embody her visionary quest for India.

It goes without saying that Jhabvala faces a peculiar dilemma while writing about Indian themes. Her urgency to create female communities, the issue of race and racial discrimination, her uneasy existence with peculiar Indian identities do point out her constant struggle for adopting strategies of assimilation. Klaues Steinvorth has aptly summarized the dilemma of Indo-Anglian writers which also can well be applied to Jhabvala; “The position of Indo-English novelists is on the periphery of their own society, they are partly even separated from it by emigration or expatriation, which does not mean they are sufficiently integrated in their new society . . . Almost everyone of them feels, or is considered, an outsider standing between India and the West, often led to believe that these two complex and abstract ideas can be reduced to a pair of simple opposites”⁶.

It would be pertinent to point out what Jhabvala herself confessed in an interview with Ram Lal Aggarwal when asked if she

would like to be known as an Indian writer:

No, how could I be? I'm not, am I? There's no getting away from the fact. I write differently from Indian writers because my birth, background, ancestry, and traditions are different. If I must be considered anything then let it be as one of those European writers who have written about India.⁷

She has further asserted:

The central fact of all my work, as I see it, is that I am a European living permanently in India. I have lived here for most of my adult life and having an Indian family. This makes me not quite an outsider either. I feel my position to be at a point in space where I have quite a good view of both side but am myself left stranded in the middle. My work is an attempt to charter this unchartered territory for myself . . . My books may appear to be objective but really I think they are the opposite, for I describe the Indian scene not for its own sake but for mine . . . My work is only one individual European's attempt to compound the puzzling process of living in India⁸.

A critical examination of Jhabvala's views clearly suggests that there is a strong diasporic tendency in her works which makes her a different writer trying to overpower the forces of a shallow overtransnationalism. An engaging perspective on such questions can be found in her fiction. An observation of Indian city life is always accompanied by a certain detachment and a European irony. What she calls "the puzzling process of living in India" is fully dramatized in *Heat and Dust*.

Heat and Dust (1975) is an exploration of the writer's tussle with India. It is a complex work of art dealing with the theme of destructive sexual passion and a fate of the two expatriate women in India. The predicament of European woman who is alienated from her own culture serves as a trigger to Jhabvala's creative imagination. The narrator in this novel is a very young educated girl. She is completely disenchanted with European culture. As a result she comes to India because she feels fascinated by her step grandmother who eloped with an Indian prince fifty years earlier. There are two distinct lines of narrative in the novel : one deeply rooted in British India of 1920s, dealing with Olivia, the wife of an Indian Civil Servant and the other situated in free India. In other words, it can be said that Jhabvala deals with two phases of Indian history : Pre independent India and post independent India. In both the narratives the central position is occupied by India but at the same time the climate has changed considerably. Another important aspect of the issue is that through this novel Jhabvala makes an attempt to understand the meaning of India, the nature of India and its impact on Europeans.. The very title of the novel *Heat and Dust* projects two negative values. However, inspite of these two strong negative values, the dirt and dross, the Europeans have a strong fascination for India. Olivia's passionate involvement with the Nawab enables her to become an active participant in the life of the Indian community. The fact that she shares her destiny with the Nawab, and her failure to have a satisfying relationship with Douglas are indicators of her psychic turmoil.

Olivia also hides important information from Douglas:

Olivia never told Douglas about the Nawab's picnic. She had meant to as soon as she got home, but it so happened that he had been hold up by a stabbing incident in the bazaar that day

and was even later than usual. She asked him many questions, and as he loved talking about his work (she wasn't always all that interested), the time just went and she never did get round to telling him about her day. And when he left next morning, she was still asleep. So instead she wrote the first of her long letters to Marcia, I wonder that Marcia can have made of these letters, she was living in France at the time – she had married a Frenchman but they had separated and Marcia was on her own, living in a series of hotel rooms and getting involved with some rather difficult people. Olivia's life in India must have seemed strange and far-off⁹.

The peculiar nature of relationship between Olivia and Douglas, and Olivia and the Nawab are projected as two diametrically opposite pillars of British India. Moreover the dichotomy between materialism and spiritualism is also made an integral part of the structure:

I tell him that many of us tired of the materialism of the West and even if we have no particular attraction towards the spiritual message of the East, we come here in the hope of finding a similar and more natural way of life. This explanation hurts him. He feels it to be a mockery. He says why should people have everything – motorcars, refrigerators – come here to such a place where there is nothing? He says he often feels ashamed before me because of the way he is living. When I try to protest, he works himself up more. He says he is perfectly well aware that, by Western standards, his house as well as his and his way of eating it would be considered primitive, inadequate – indeed, he himself would be considered so because of his unscientific mind and ignorance of the modern world (95).

At the same time the British understanding of India has its own limitations full of distortions and aberrations. It is true that the colonizer does not trust the native and regards him as a cunning fellow while the native can never accept the authority of the colonizer. Dr. Saunders feels the same way about India. On the other hand the Nawab, by prompting the doctor to express his opinion about India and the Indians, want to have fun at Saunders. Narrating the story of a fellow whose ears Dr. “smartly boxed” he expresses his opinion about Indians by saying :

It’s the only way to deal with them, Nawab Sahib. It’s no use arguing with them they are not amenable to reason. They haven’t got it here, you see, up here, the way we have.

Moreover, it has been emphasized time and again that Indians are primitive people with strange customs and rituals. Moreover the incident of Suttee is used as a very powerful and authentic point of departure for the discussion on Dr. Saunders, the Minnie, the Crawfords, Olivia and Douglas. The reference to the Suttee is used to highlight the uncivilized nature of Indians who are fond of committing grave crimes in the name of religion. That is why Dr. Saunders concludes that Suttee is savagery “like everything else in this country, plain savagery and barbarism”.

The fact remains that savage rituals and customs like that the Suttee constitute a serious blemish on the face of India but it must be emphasized that these savage rituals and heat and dust do not constitute the whole of India. It will not be an exaggeration to say that *Heat and Dust* may serve as a telling comment on the ugly aspects of Indian society but these aspects do not matter much when considered in the light of overall projection of India as a nation striving hard to touch the

new heights of glory in the twenty first century. The picture of India presented in *Heat and Dust* is a picture of disillusionment or is simply one of the footnotes emanating fragrance, magnanimity sympathy and the will to survive even in adverse circumstances.

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² Bernard D. Nossiter, "Enjoying the Fruits of Detachment," *Washington Post*, 9 December 1975, C 2.

³ Nirad C. Chaudhari, *The Continent of Circe* (London: Chatto & Windus 1965), 17

⁴ The general biographical information is gathered from Ruth Praver Jhabvala's Neil Gunn Memorial Lecture, "Disinheritance" (published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, July 1979, 4-14)

⁵ R.P. Jhabvala, *An Experience of India* (New York : Norton, 1972) 16.

⁶ Klaus Steinvorth, *The Indo English Novel: The Impact of Weston Literature in a Developing Country* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1975) 55.

⁷ Ramlal Agarwal, "An Interview with Ruth Praver Jhabvala," *Quest* 91 (September – October 1974) 36. ""

⁸ Quoted in *Contemporary Novelists* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1976) 270.

⁹ Ruth Praver Jhabvala, *Heat and Dust* (London : John Murray, 1975) 48. (Subsequent references are to the same edition and page numbers have been indicated in parenthesis).

Kalpana Purohit

**Interrogating Space and Cultural Displacement in
*The Inheritance of Loss***

Kiran Desai writes of post-colonial India of its poor as well as its privileged, with a cold and a warm heart. She explores with minute observation about every contemporary international issue identified as globalization, multi-culturalism, and economic inequality, fundamental and terrorist violence. Leafing through her debut novel *Hullabaloo*, in the Guava Orchard is like cool, tangy lemonade in the sweltering summer sun and very refreshing. Next to this creation stands her second acquaintance acknowledged as *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), which remarkably zips back and forth between Kalimpong, a tiny Himalaya berg and the streets of New York city; throwing light on biggest challenge that haunt the immigrant: Who am I? Where do I belong?

The Inheritance of Loss is exquisite novel mature, significant and a first rate read. . .” (Binnie Kirshen Baum, 2006, 2) It is ambitious work not so much in matter of form, where it still echoes other Indian writers but in its portrayal of social canvas that focuses at the fate of a few powerless individuals. Though set in a small hill town in India of the mid-eighties the story is not confined by narrow sense of time or

place. The story is wittingly told about India's classes their struggles and the tenacious hope of those who do not have stable income or identities.

Invariably, Kiran Desai herself a product of multiculturalism and post colonialism an immigrant, navigates the disparate worlds of her characters with sensitivity and she travels their bleak lines with deep insight and with a flavor of gentle comedy. Her narrative is compelling and her prose fluid and magnificent like this opening paragraph: "All day the colours had been those of dusk mist moving like a water creature across the great flanks of mountains possessed of ocean shadows and depths. Briefly visibly above the vapour Kanchanjunga was a far peak whittled out of ice, gathering the last of light, a plume of snow blown by the storms at its summits." (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 1)

Characteristically, Desai touches upon many different issues throughout the novels such as, globalization, multiculturalism, inequality and the different forms of love. The action of the concerned masterpiece focuses on the few lines of characters by Kiran Desai. As with the Judge, his orphaned granddaughter, his cook and grand daughter's lover Gyan. Life of the cook's son, Biju is also depicted efficiently. He is noted to have experienced the negative aspects of living as an illegal alien in New York. From the start of the novel, it is hard to engage with the characters as Desai chooses not to "formally" introduce them to the reader and therewith it has been marked that the reader may struggle to engage.

Desai draws different character's stories by employing poly temporal technique sometimes going back in time and then bringing

the reader back to the present day of the book. It demands the reader's full attention, as it can be easy to lose details of the character. In parallel to this note, Desai raises the contemporary issues: "There was a report of new dissatisfaction in the hills, gathering insurgency, men and guns. It was the Indian Nepalese this time fed up with being treated like the minority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state in which to manage their own affairs." (IOL,9)

Although the story is against the background of the Gorkhaland movement, the book doesn't take political sides. The story is more about the impact of this movement on the people of Kalimpong and how they react to it and how it changed their lives. It's about the victims and the survivors. Many books and movies have been made on other Indian separatist movements, (Khalistan or the Kashmir separatist movement), but this is the book which seems to talk about Gorkhaland. Remarkably, this Gorkhaland movement is proved as a catalyst in the novel. The Nepalese Gorkha and Lepcha local people in the hills of eastern Himalayas to protest against decades of negligence, poverty and illiteracy kicked off the movement. Interestingly, Indian media has been glorifying the Kashmir and Punjab movements to talk about the decade long revolution in the north east.

Meanwhile in the story Gyan is provoked by his friends to rise against the injustice done to their race by rich people from the plains: "It was masculine atmosphere and Gyan felt a moment of shame remembering his tea parties with Sai on the veranda, the cheese toast, queen cakes from the baker, and even worse the small warm space they inhabited together, the nursery talk. It was suddenly against the requirements of his adulthood. He voiced an adamant opinion that the Gorkha movement takes the harshest route possible." (IOL, 161)

Further terrorist ransacked the judge's house, father booty is packed off from the region because he did not have proper documents to prove his credentials. Lola and Noni's beautiful property is taken over the locals who build a slum right in front of their house. And Biju, worried for his father's safety, returned back to India only to be robbed by the terrorist.

Desai presents a minute perception of the post Independent India, with its roots dug in colonialism. Though, people were embracing Americanism where the class of people still speak only English and squirm at the mention of their mother tongue, where a mother feels proud because her daughter has chosen to marry an Englishman, where a foreigner is still eyed with suspicion and thousands of Indians entered America as illegal immigrants, in the eyes of the families they were news but reality is far from what they project back home.

Corresponding with a note of efficiency, Desai highlights the ambiguities and dilemmas of these Indians who adopt western ways yet they want to stick to their values and traditions. She brings out the notion of racism inherent in the Indian Society. "Two parallel stories form the substance of Kiran Desai's novel which is a wise, compassionate and often hilarious to look at the contradictions of the first and third world." (Shahbano Bilgraim, *Asian Review of Books*, an interview with CNN News,1)

The pace of the novel encompasses the shift from the slum areas of New York's illegal immigrants to the lush unyielding landscapes of the Himalayas. She captures a wide spectrum of experiences colonial/ post colonial, east/west, Europe/ America, India/ Pakistan, rich/ poor being all together with satire and irony as corner-stones of *The Inheritance of Loss*.

From the Holistic point of view, Kiran Desai in this novel reveals the pangs of displacement, homelessness, unbelongingness and nostalgia for home and homeland suffered by most of the diaspora in the trans national land. Commenting on this trait of diaspora existence Nite Featherstone observes that “the difficulty of handling increasing levels of cultural complexity and doubts and anxieties... often engender the feeling of ‘localism’ in the hearts and the desire to return home becomes an important theme in their psyche regardless of whether the home is real or imaginary, temporary or whether it is manifest in fascination with the sense of belonging affiliation and community attributed to the home of others” (Featherstone, 47)

While living on the new lands of relocations, the hatred and prejudice for other communities and religions nurtured in their homelands too and therefore considerably remains a part of the complex formation of their psyche. With due consideration some of them want to return to their homeland, and they wish to expire their last breath on their alien land with memories of their home and family lurking in their minds. “If he continued his life in New York, he (Biju) might never see his pitaji again. It happened all the time... they forget or they became accustomed to its absence. They return and found just the façade it had been eaten from inside....” (IOL, 233)

Referring to the concept of “homeness” in diaspora psyche Vijay Mishra remarks that “diaspora connect themselves with the ideas of home and the homeland or ‘desh’” against which other lands are foreign or ‘videsh’ and carry their homelands in the series of objects and fragments of narratives and memories in their head or in their suitcases and struggle hard to preserve them in other lands and culture. (Harish Trivedi, Meenakshi Makeja & Vijay Mishra, 68)

Some of the migrant characters in the novel create home in their physical and psyche sphere with religious 'icons' such as "chunky Ganesh brought all the way despite its height, for decoration plus luck in money and exams." In addition to this, some Muslims are portrayed preserving Qurans and cuckoo clock watches waking them in the morning with the *kalma* of "Allah hoo Akbar."

The novel shuttles between first and third world's illuminating the pain of exile, the ambiguities of post colonialism and blending desire for a better life. It deals with problem of alienation, cultural in-betweenness and crisis of identity. Her characters have to face diasporic movement voluntarily, involuntarily, struggle with their own self dazed by western world and feeling homesick and alienated. She employed the technique of multiple voices (and left gaps and silences for the readers to fill them) to portray the complex experience of characters in various situations both in United States and in India, Desai problematizes the issue of home, homelands, Diaspora and belongingness treating them not as the fixed but as fluid concepts ever shifting with the changing positionalities of the subject, positions of the individuals and communities with changes in the historical-political scenarios both in home(s) and abroad. Marry Whipple very rightly commented in this regard that "caught up in the mythic battles of past and present, justice and injustice"

As in the book, "The young girls held their noses and giggled Phew! He (Jemu bhai) stinks of curry!.... Jemu bhai's mind began to wrap, found his own skin odd coloured, his own accent, peculiar. In fact, he could barely let anyone of himself peep out of his clothes for fear of giving offence. He began to wash obsessively; concerned he would be accused of smelling."

Retired Indian Civil Service Judge Jemu Jemu Bhai Popat Lal Patel has been living in a quiet life in Kalimpong, a picaresque rural town nestled at the base of Himalayas, secluded in his ramshackled compound with only his dog Mutt and his cook for company, Jemu ponders his past spending his days staring at his chess board “burning the memory of his beginnings” (IOL, 61) When Jemu hears the Sai his orphaned sixteen year old granddaughter, will be coming to stay with him, he treats her arrival as God send. Sai is westernized Indian brought up by English nuns. She’s a type of “estranged Indian living in India” (IOL, 140)

Jemu’s position of power as a district judge is long gone frittered away in the years of misanthropy and cynicism. His hopes of redemption however are with Gyan, her math’s tutor. Gyan born of poverty- his house still made of thatch and reed was intimidated by Jemu’s very English ways. His heart burns at the way “Indian Nepalese are treated like the minority in a place where they are majority.” (IOL,9) As a consequence, he rejects Sai’s privileged life, intends to scream victory over oppression and he raises his fist at authority eventually connecting with rebel Nepalese.

The young Biju, the son of Jemu’s cook, lives out as an undocumented worker in New York; stumbling from one low paid restaurant job to another, living in the locale crowded with the group of immigrant men. There on Biju imagined what life would be like with “sofa, TV and Bank account.” (IOL, 149) but the hardcore facet of reality is different. It’s “a whole world of basement kitchens”, living so intensely that most of them land up leaving for other jobs, towns or are deported and escorts to return home or change their names. On one hand, Jemu’s is clung to the past memories of his best friend in

England, facing the “endless racial taunts of classmates.” (IOL, 83) On the other hand, Sai and Gyan have difficulty in negotiating the complications of love, friendship and their polarizing political principles. Gyan ends up judging Sai for her convenience and her loyalty to the social class, “She has accidently been born into.” (IOL, 230)

Desai’s novel is a cautionary tale of the effects of globalization on individual and on communities while efficiently illustrating the indissoluble bonds of love and family. It is indeed a love story between a boy and a girl, between a father and his son and a grandfather and his granddaughter, where empathy and compassion often define the quality of family and relationships. Emphatically she injects the notions of comic sense and buffoonery against the prescribed strong emotions. As for instance, the conversation between cook and the chemist reflects, “evil taste in the mouth, a thun thun in the legs and arms and sometimes a chun chun. What’s a chun chun and what is a thun thun?” (IOL, 72)

Her poetic style, similar to that of her mother Anita Desai draws inspiration from nature and animal world which is richly descriptive and evocative too. In consideration with this statement it would be worthwhile to quote the extract which says: “Lola was in the garden picking caterpillars off the English broccoli. The caterpillars were mottled green and white, with fake blue eyes, ridiculous fat feet, a tail and an elephant nose. Magnificent creatures. . .” (IOL, 66)

Very interestingly, Desai highlights the encounter of “West of the first and second generation migrants in the novel. For instance, Harish- Harry, who owned Gandhi Café, who made a move to America for realizing “American Dream” who has westernized his name, his

accent but is notified to have struggled to save his daughter (next generation) from imitating the western trend. Being an Indian father he still wants his daughter to abide by Indian traditions but apprehensively he finds things slipping out of his hands. “Harish- Harry blamed his daughter for rattling his commitment. The girl was becoming American. Nose ring she found compatible with boots and clothes in camouflage print from the army-navy surplus.” His wife said, “All this nonsense, what is this, give her two tight slaps that’s what. . . .” but slaps does not work. She said, “I didn’t ask to be born, you had me for your own selfish reasons, wanted a servant didn’t you? But in this country, dad nobody’s going to wipe your ass for free.” (IOL, 148-9) Biju also felt himself caught in the dichotomy of “in between culture.” His country of origin (India) prompted him to leave and on migrating to America, experiencing racism, hostility, a sense of rootlessness, develops a longing to go back home. Imperatively, this occasions as the result of displacement and cultural diversity.

Therefore all characters experience the vast economic inequality in the society whether it was India or it was America. In this regard Kiran herself expressed her concern in an interview:

In a world, where power imbalance is still intact, a world of huge power imbalance so, sort of went back to my grandfather’s time to try to trace his journey. And I wanted to talk about this huge class divide that exists across the world and its very interesting to see how the same people are poor on both sides of world. I mean when you start drawing the lines between places, it’s frightening how closely you can draw the lines. You think of people being poor in a very far away, but when you actually do the work of following the journey, poverty is so close to us. (Kiran Desai’s interview CNN.com)

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Arvind Singh Adhikari

**“Timshel”:
Freedom of Choice in Steinbeck’s *East of Eden***

Steinbeck in *East of Eden* takes up the question of moral and spiritual death from a totally new angle. In his opinion, man can overcome evil. He simply does not condemn man and the society but on the other hand he gives man a unique status with the gods and shows him as a powerful being, who can choose the path of good and thereby overcome evil.

Peter Lisca and Joseph Fontenrose point out that *East of Eden* is based on the theme of rejection and they draw parallels between the Biblical story of Cain and Abel and that of Charles and Adam in the first generation and Caleb and Aron in the second generation. Cain presented God “a gift of his farm produce” (*The Living Bible* 4). Abel presented God the “fatty cuts of meat from his best lambs” (*The Living Bible* 4). The Lord accepted Abel’s offering, but not Cain’s. This made Cain feel both rejected and angry. He killed his brother. This theme of rejection is repeated in the two generations in *East of Eden*. Charles and Caleb are representatives of Cain. Adam and Aron are representatives of Abel. Charles presented his father a knife, which is accepted but not preferred over Adam’s gift of

a puppy, which is as good as a rejection of his gift. In a fit of anger Charles tells Adam:

‘Look at his birthday!’ Charles shouted. ‘I took six bits and I bought him a knife made in Germany – three blades and a corkscrew, pearl-handled. Where’s that knife? Do you ever see him use it? Did he give it to you? I never even saw him hone it. Have you got that knife in your pocket? What did he do with it? “Thanks”, he said, like that. And that’s the last I heard of a pearl-handled, German knife that cost six bits’ ‘What did you do on his birthday? You think I didn’t see? Did you spend six bits or even four bits. You brought him a mongrel pup you had picked up in the wood-lot. You laughed like a fool and said it would make a good bird dog. That dog sleeps in his room. He plays with it while he’s reading. He’s got it all trained. And where’s the knife? “Thanks”, he said, just “Thanks”. (Steinbeck *East of Eden* 32-33)

This haunts him throughout his life. He recalls it and tells Adam of it when he comes home from the army:

He liked everything you brought him. He didn’t like me. He didn’t like anything I gave him. Remember the present I gave him, the pocket knife? I cut and sold a load of wood to get that knife. Well, he didn’t even take it to Washington with him. It’s right in his bureau right now. And you gave him that pup. It didn’t cost you a thing. Well, I’ll show you a picture of that pup. It was at his funeral. A colonel was holding it – it was blind, couldn’t walk. (65)

Charles tries to kill his brother. This is “fighting for [his] love” (71). In the second generation, Caleb is rejected by Adam. Adam favours Aron. He decides to give his father a present to get his favour. He thinks:

Why am I giving the money to my father? Is it for his good? No. It's for my good. Will Hamilton said it – I'm trying to buy him. There's not one decent thing about it. There's not one decent thing about me. I sit here wallowing in jealousy of my brother. Why not call things by their names? (505)

Adam rejects Caleb's gift of \$15,000. Once again, rejection puts Caleb on the path of evil. He turns wild and takes revenge by hurting Aron.. He deliberately takes Aron to Kate's whorehouse, to give him first hand knowledge of their mother about whom he always wanted to know. Unable to bear this shock, Aron joins the army and is killed in action. This is how Caleb takes revenge on his Brother.

The theme of rejection raises a pertinent question. Is rejection responsible for turning Cain, Charles and Caleb into evil beings? And that too, evil in the sense of jealousy – the desire to kill one's favoured brother. The answer is – yes. Steinbeck writes in the novel:

The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with crime guilt - and there is the story of mankind. I think that if rejection could be amputated, the human would not be what he is. Maybe there would be fewer crazy

people. I am sure in myself there would not be many jails. It is all there – the start, the beginning. One child, refused the love he craves, kicks the cat and hides his secret guilt; and another steals so that money will make him loved; and a third conquers the world – and always the guilt and revenge and more guilt. The human is the only guilty animal. Now wait! Therefore I think this old and terrible story is important because it is a chart of the soul – the secret, rejected, guilty soul. (257-258)

Again, the novelist writes:

And once a boy has suffered rejection, he will find rejection even where it does not exist – or, worse, will draw it forth from people simply by expecting it. (418)

An analysis of the novel makes it clear that Charles and Caleb are the victims of circumstances. They become evil because of circumstances. This can be analysed in the light of naturalism, according to which man is “a higher-order animal whose character and fortunes are determined by two kinds of natural forces, heredity and environment. He inherits his personal traits and his compulsive instincts, especially hunger and sex, and he is subject to the social and economic forces in the family, the class and the milieu into which he is born” (Abrams *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* 142). Again it “conceives of man as controlled by his instincts or his passions” (Hart *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* 525) and this is brought out by Steinbeck in the novel. Just as God, the father, on rejecting Cain puts him on the path of evil; similarly, Charles and Caleb turn evil on being rejected by their fathers. Besides environment and circumstances, heredity is also responsible for turning Cain evil. In *East of Eden*,

Charles also inherits the traits from his father, Cyrus who is evil and makes a fortune through dishonest means. Caleb too is aware of the evil he has inherited from his mother and thinks that he is drawn towards wickedness, sin and hatred because of this. Though Lee reminds him that he has Adam, too, in him and warns; “Whatever you do, it will be you who do it – not your mother” (423). But Lee is mistaken as Caleb has the blood of his uncle Charles in him not of his father, Adam. Steinbeck writes in one of his letters to Pascal Covici that Cathy is an important character of the book because she has “transmitted her blood to her sons and influenced the generations” (59).

But in the same novel, there is a character who is not influenced by environment and heredity traits and is evil personified, that is, Cathy Ames. Cathy is a victim of her instincts and passions. Cathy is the most evil and vicious character in Steinbeck’s novels. Steinbeck writes in one of his letters to Pascal Covici about her:

Cathy Ames is a monster – don’t think they do not exist. If one can be born with a twisted and deformed face or body, one can surely also come into the world with a malformed soul. (*Journal of a Novel* 58)

He writes in another letter:

And Cathy is a hustler perhaps born, perhaps caused by accident but Cathy is by nature a whore. She also is by profession a whore. (*Journal of a Novel* 75)

Cathy lacks human qualities. At the tender age of ten, she is a masterful liar and knows the power of sex. “At ten Cathy knew

something of the power of the sex impulse and began coldly to experiment with it” (75). Cathy deliberately sets the house on fire, which kills her parents and escapes with her father’s money. She becomes a whore working for Mr. Edwards. He however, contrary to his usual practice begins to take special interest in this new girl. She becomes his mistress. She does not reciprocate his love but cheats him by stealing money from him. Later, she meets Adam and Charles. Adam falls in love with her but Charles recognizes the evil in her. She accepts Adam’s proposal of marriage because she knew she could dominate and control him. One day she seduces Charles and becomes pregnant. Adam not knowing of this incest is happy on knowing that he would soon become a father. He takes her to California.

Cathy cannot see life, being evil and destructive she can only bring death. She even tries to abort but fails. Even the setting for her delivery is very befitting. Being evil, she demands complete darkness in the room, as she does not want to see life (she does not look at her sons when born) and this darkness symbolizes evil and the foreboding evil that she is going to bring into the world. Samuel, who attends her delivery, is bitten by her in pain and to him it seemed that not teeth but fangs had bitten into him and he even falls ill. She deserts her husband and children and joins a home of ill fame, run by a kind, sentimental woman, called Faye. Cathy now changes her name to Kate; she endears herself to Faye, who adopts her as a daughter. In her second role as daughter, she repeats her role of patricide. She slowly poisons Faye. Faye dies and she takes over the house of ill fame. After leading a lonely life, she commits suicide. Cathy, as pure evil gives birth to Caleb and Aron and her importance, therefore, lies in the light of naturalism (heredity) which has been highlighted in the novel.

Steinbeck, however, gives man the free will to choose between good and evil which makes man great. He makes an important change in the translation of the Bible. Whether a character is pure evil as Cathy, or evil because of circumstances, Steinbeck is of the opinion that man can overcome evil. In *East of Eden*, Lee translates the Bible, King James Version, differently from the accepted translation. He substitutes the word “Thou Shalt” (288) by “Thou Mayest” (288). The Hebrew word “Timshel” now acquires a new meaning which helps Steinbeck to project his philosophy of life in terms of good and evil. He writes in the novel:

The American Standard translation *orders* men to triumph over sin, and you can call sin ignorance. The King James translation makes a promise in “Thou shalt”, meaning that men will surely triumph over sin. But the Hebrew word, the word *timshel* – “Thou mayest” - that gives a choice. It might be the most important word in the world. That says the way is open. That throws it right back on a man. For if “Thou mayest” – it is also true that “Thou mayest not”. (288)

He writes in this connection in one of his letters to Pascal Covici:

The King James says of sin crouching at the door, ‘Thou shalt rule over it’. The American Standard says, ‘Do thou rule over it’. Now this new translation says. ‘Thou mayest rule over it’. This is the most vital difference. The first two are 1, A prophecy and 2, an order, but 3 is the offering of free will. Here is individual responsibility and the invention of conscience. You can if you will but it is up to you. (*Journal of a Novel* 136)

This is very much important as it gives man a free choice. It is not God who is responsible for man’s destiny but each man himself. And without free choice, man is just a puppet. It diminishes his stature and reduces him to an insignificant being. Critics such as John Clark Pratt, Joseph Fontenrose and L. J. Marks have also pointed out that Steinbeck gives man the choice between good and evil. However, Steinbeck with this option of choice gives man “stature with the gods” (289) but unlike the gods man is also a victim of circumstances, of his environment as Cain, Charles and Caleb are. This naturally entails that the struggle of the human soul is great. He requires great courage and great self-control over evil desires to move on the path of good. This makes man greater, who does not possess the power of the gods, to struggle and fight against evil. Steinbeck writes in *East of Eden*, “It is true that we are weak and sick and quarrelsome, but if that is all we were, we would millenniums ago, have disappeared from the face of the earth” (294). He has, therefore, great faith in human greatness.

In this way, Steinbeck moves from psychology and naturalism towards a moral struggle – in which man has the choice to overcome evil and emerge victorious. Though in *East of Eden* his characters do not emerge victorious but by giving man the stature of gods he tries to convince man that he is not weak, and he can come through victorious in his struggle of good over evil and he need not be Cain, Charles or Caleb. Evil, in a broader sense, based on the sense of rejection, heredity, and environment or simply as pure as evil that one is born with, can all be conquered. This is shown by giving man the status of the gods and reinterpreting the Bible to ensure this status in biblical terms. Steinbeck gives man free choice between good and evil. Man can overcome all forces to move on the path of good – so there is hope for man.

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Bindu Sharma

**Reversion to Primitivism in *Lord of the Flies*:
A Sociological Perspective**

Widely acclaimed as an apocalyptic novel, a Christian work, a philosophical document, an allegorical tale and so on, Nobel Laureate William Golding's debut novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) has undoubtedly been his most influential work of the post-war times. A great novel in the classical tradition, *Lord of the Flies* presents a gory picture of the modern civilization in the process of dissolution. Though inspired by R N Ballanyne's highly romantic novel *The Coral Island*, *Lord of the Flies*, is very different in its theme and vision. In it, Golding diffuses Ballanyne's conception of the civilized child and by extension, civilized man.

In his portrayal of a small world in a tropical island, Golding paints a broader portrait of the fundamental human struggle between the civilized instinct, the impulse to obey rules, behave morally and act lawfully on one side, and the savage instinct, the impulse to seek brutal power over others, act selfishly and indulge in violence, on the other. Although Golding's story is confined to the microcosm of a group of boys, it resounds with implications far beyond the bounds of the small island and explores problems and questions universal to the human

experience. In fact the world of these boys represents the society of the adults in an embryonic state.

Lord of the Flies is a tale of a group of British boys, ranging from six to twelve years, cast away on a virgin tropical island when the aircraft with a detachable passenger tube, carrying them away from the atomic explosion, is attacked. Far away from the adult supervision, these boys have to fend for themselves on this paradisaic island. What Golding endeavours to show is how, with the passage of time, their natural impulses rebel against discipline and rules, and they reveal their lust for authority, savagery and barbarity. In an environment free from the pressures of a controlling and reformatory adult authority, we witness these civilized, cultured English boys turning gradually into savages. Through the bloody conflict within this group of boys, Golding implies that civilization can mitigate, but never wipe out the innate evil that exists in all human beings. Social pressures can only check it, but if allowed to have its way, it can convert a paradise into hell as in *Lord of the Flies*. Arthur Marsden in his article 'The novels of William Golding' of the view that, "It is not the evolution of a primitive social pattern but the gradual fading of a civilized one, and the conflict between the two that is central in this novel" (qtd. in Kulkarni 4).

This paper is an endeavour to study the fall of these English boys from civilization to savagery, and trace how they invert Thomas Hobbes' concept of 'Social Contract' and regress to the 'State of Nature' leading to catastrophe and horror in the novel.

According to the Social Contract theory which throws light on the origin of the society, all men were born free and equal, and society came into existence because of an agreement entered into by

individuals. It states that the moral and political obligations of men are dependent on an agreement between them to form society. The chief representative of this philosophy, Thomas Hobbes believed that before the civil society came into being, man existed in a sort of pre-social state called the State of Nature wherein he lived in perpetual conflict with his neighbours on account of his essentially selfish nature. Being naturally and exclusively self-interested, man refused to co-operate with his fellow beings or to submit to another's supremacy. As such, he lived in constant fear of losing his life to another. Thus, it was a state of absolute distrust and a perpetual fear of an unavoidable war. According to Hobbes, in this hypothetical state, the life of man was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" as every man was enemy to every other man. In his philosophical masterpiece published in 1651 titled *Leviathan*, Hobbes remarked that man found nothing but grief in the company of his fellows, as every individual was equally "selfish, cunning, egoistic, brutal and aggressive" (Rao 156). In this regard, men in the State of Nature were like hungry wolves, each ready to pounce on the other. In the absence of law and justice, the conditions in the State of Nature were intolerable and men longed for peace.

However, Hobbes also believed that apart from being excessively selfish, man is also rational. Realizing that his existence in such a primitive state cannot last long, man felt the need to devise something for his own survival. He himself paved the way out of this brutal State of Nature by entering into a kind of social agreement with his fellow beings to ensure security and certainty of life and property. By mutual agreement men decided to surrender their natural individual rights into the hands of a few, or one with authority to command and mete out punishment for breaches of contract. The covenant was a social contract and a governmental contract which

became a binding on the whole community as a perpetual social bond. Thus, in order to protect himself against the evil consequence of his own irresponsible and egoistical nature, man organized himself in society to live in peace with all. The Social Contract, according to Hobbes, is the most fundamental source of all that is good and that we depend on so as to live well. What we see in the world created by Golding in *Lord of the Flies* is, how man can reverse this entire process and from an orderly and civilized life, sink into savagery, chaos and anarchy that characterized Hobbes' State of Nature. The novel showcases man's return to that state of darkness from which it took him thousands of years to emerge.

In the opening chapters of the novel, we find how the group of young English boys including Ralph, Jack, Simon, Roger, Piggy and others, come together to form a social set-up on the uninhabited virgin islands. They frame rules and divide responsibilities for the common good. Ralph, who appears to be the most capable, sensible and reasonable of all, is voted as the leader of the group even though Jack, being the chief chorister and head boy of his school, also stakes his claim. Moreover, Ralph has the Conch which emerges as a symbol of order and sanity, democracy and authority. Thus, the boys try to imitate the world of their adults and even try to preserve their past civilized lives. Together they carry out an adventurous exploration of the island and discover that it is uninhabited and abounds in fruits, flowers, fresh water and pigs. Led by their desire to be rescued, they even light a huge fire on the mountain top. Ralph, Jack, Simon, Roger, Maurice – all contribute for the cause, putting their differences behind them. "Together, joined in effort by the burden, they staged up last steep of the mountain. Together, they chanted One! Two! Three! and crashed the log to the great pile. They stepped back, laughing with

triumphant pleasure.(40) Following the norms of the civilized order of society, the boys divide their responsibilities and daily duties. Jack and his choir group take the assignment of hunting pigs and keeping the fire lit, while Ralph and Piggy employ themselves in making shelters for the littluns. Thus, when they shun their individual interests and join hands for a common good, they succeed in creating a harmonious, peaceful and secure world.

However, this orderliness does not survive for long. We soon realize that Jack and Ralph are vitally different in their natures, upbringing and attitudes. Golding calls them “two continents, of experience and feeling, unable to communicate”. Their worlds are essentially incompatible. Jack is arrogant, aggressive and domineering while Ralph is sensible disciplined and peace-loving. No wonder, therefore, that a breach appears in this society and a power struggle between Jack and Ralph begins. The authority of Ralph is challenged repeatedly by Jack and his voice of dissent grows louder. Noted sociologist Morris Janowitz is of the view that “social control is fundamental to all social life and it focuses on the capacity of a social organization to regulate itself” (Madhurima 128). Without social control even the best intentioned efforts at co-operative endeavour would quickly dissolve into un-coordinated separate actions by various participants.

This is exactly what happens when Jack and his hunters fail to maintain the fire and a ship passes them by without noticing them despite Ralph’s frantic efforts to capture its attention. Jack and his hunters are instead, busy celebrating their first kill to the wild chants of “Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood”(73), absolutely oblivious of having lost the opportunity of being rescued.

“We can light the fire again. You should have been with us, Ralph. We had a smashing time. The twins got knocked over—” “We hit the pig—” “—I fell on top—”

“I cut the pig’s throat,” said Jack proudly. The boys chattered and danced. The twins continued to grin. “There was lashings of blood,” said Jack, laughing and shuddering, “you should have seen it!”

“We’ll go hunting everyday—”(74-75).

A heated argument ensues and Ralph accuses Jack of carelessness, embittered by the loss of a golden chance to go back home.

“There was a ship. Out there. You said you would keep the fire going and you let it out!” He took a step towards Jack who turned and faced him.

“They might have seen us. We might have gone home—”(76).

As the two groups face each other the chasm between them widens and they begin to drift apart. From here on, we witness a gradual regression of Jack and his group into the primal state of human existence which is not very different from Hobbes’ State of Nature.

The transformation of these boys into hunting savages is symbolically conveyed when Jack smears his face with charcoal and coloured clay. Henceforth, he hides behind this mask, and once liberated from all shame and self consciousness, he executes his demonic designs freely. This transposition ominously signals a drift back to the era of primitivism. It shows clearly that these children are no longer playing simple games or having innocent fun on this paradisaal island.

In fact, games and fun seem to assume sinister proportions as some of these boys submit to their baser instincts, erode the facade of civilization and initiate a bloody power strife within the group.

In Hobbes' view, group life is possible only when the members of a group conform their behaviour to that group's objectives and expectations. If everybody is free to do whatever he likes to do, there can be no peace, no harmony, no group and no social life. In other words, a society can exist only when there are certain approved patterns of behaviour. But if it is non-cooperative, it can pose threat to both, peace and the safety of human life. This is perhaps what Ralph realizes when he sees Jack's objective shifting from being rescued to being in power and he laments, "Things are breaking up. I don't understand why. We began well; we were happy. And then—" (89). V V Subba Rao is of the opinion that "whereas Ralph with his slogan of signal fire and shelter may be taken as representing the 'enlightened self-interest' of Hobbes, Jack's doctrine of pig hunt is an expression of his lust for power" (12). It is this uncontrolled lust that leads to the degeneration of these boys.

Golding clarifies right in the beginning of the novel that the tropical island where these boys are cast away, is a safe haven for them. It abounds in fruits and fresh water which is enough to support them till they are rescued. Moreover, it faces no threat whatsoever from any beast, natives or any other external agency as the island is absolutely uninhabited. They just have to stay calm and disciplined to be saved, but they fail to do so and instead, submit to their baser impulses. Golding gives a clear glimpse of their gradual regression from civilization to savagery through a graphic description of a gruesome sow hunt, "The afternoon wore on, hazy and dreadful

with damp heat. The sow staggered her way ahead of them, bleeding and tired, and the hunters followed, wedded to her in lust, excited by the long chase and dropped blood.”(151-52) As the poor beast, full of sweat, blood and terror, ran for her life,

Roger ran round the heap prodding with his spear wherever pig flesh appeared. Jack was on top of the sow stabbing downward with his knife. Roger found a lodgment for his point and began to push till he was leaning with his, whole weight.... Then Jack found the throat and the hot blood spouted over his hands. The sow collapsed under them and they were happy and fulfilled upon her.(152)

The metamorphosis of the chapter chorister and his choir boys into savages is complete as the boys kill the sow mercilessly, revel in triumph, dip their hands in the sow’s blood, tear its skin apart in delight and impale its head upon a stake as an offering to the “beast” who becomes their totem God. Ironically, the beast is none other than a dead airman’s body entangled in a parachute, “fallen, rotten and corrupt”, a sad reminder of the sorry state of affairs prevailing in the world of adults. In this regard, there appears no essential difference between the boys’ world and the adults’ world. We find that there too, social order can be and has been over thrown.

It is only Simon, the unobserved witness to the sickening spectacle of the hunting of the sow, who discovers the reality of the beast and rushes back to share his knowledge with others only to find them dancing wildly and celebrating. Jack, painted and garlanded, sits in the middle on the log like an idol of the tribal chief with piles of meat, fruit and coconuts spread around him. At his order begins the

orgy of delirious dance and mock hunt with Roger acting as the pig and others jumping to the chants of a steady beat of “Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! Do him in!”(172). It is amid this rabid frenzy and unendurable din that Simon emerges from the darkness of the forest to inform his friends about the reality of the “beast” but is himself, quite ironically, mistaken for the beast. “At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws”(172). Thus, while wanting to protect themselves from the beast outside, these boys are gripped by the beast within and are transformed into hideous murderers as their pig-hunt degenerates into man-hunt.

At the base of any social order, believe sociologists, lie some very basic human needs which men are unable to fulfil by themselves. These include — the need for companionship, need for security and the need for a dependable and workable system for common benefit. What we see in the initial chapters of the novel is that to meet these basic needs, the boys, irrespective of their individual differences of nature, background and upbringing, join hands as social and civilized beings. However, they are unable to sustain this social fibre for long as egos clash and natural instincts for supremacy assert themselves. Jack, Roger and a few others, for example, rebel against and finally destroy the established system. What we see eventually, is that most of these boys have absolutely lost their identities of well brought up English lads and have instead turned into violent, brutal, blood thirsty savages who kill at will. They come to represent paganism and hedonism. It is highly ironic that Jack, once the head boy of his school, is now the self-proclaimed chief of a tribe and holds the power of life and death over others. He rules over those who aren't scared to attack, steal or

kill at his behest. Their regression from the state of being cultured English boys to the brutal and violent 'State of Nature' is complete.

As we witness the final confrontation between Ralph and Piggy, the representatives of social order and civilization on the one hand, and the forces of chaos represented by Jack and Roger on the other, we realize that there can be no return for them what-so-ever. Even though Piggy holds up the conch and appeals for order, the forces of anarchy and savagery vanquish him completely. He is mercilessly crushed under a boulder rolled from Jack's rock-castle and along with his wise head is shattered into a thousand white fragments the conch, their illusory talisman of order, discipline and civilized system. But to secure absolute power, Jack must eliminate Ralph also.

"See? See? That's what you'll get. I mean that! There isn't a Tribe for you anymore! The conch is gone—"

He ran forward, stooping.

I'm Chief!"

Viciously, with full intention, he hurled his spear at Ralph. The point tore the skin and flesh over Ralph's ribs, then sheared off and fell in the water (206).

As the latter runs for his life, the savages with their paint, spears and ululation pursue him frantically, blocking all possible ways of escape. The forest is now intentionally set on fire. We hear the drum roll as if announcing an execution. Roger sharpens a stick at both ends for a human sacrifice. There is no hope of rescue and Ralph falls down, crying for mercy. His cry is answered miraculously and there stands before him a naval officer in full uniform. The highly ironic ending of the novel is a masterly stroke of William Golding. Each word uttered by the naval officer is exposed to irony.

“I should have thought that a pack of British boys – you’re all British aren’t you? — would have been able to put up a better show than that.”(229)

“It was like that at first,” said Ralph, “before things —”

He stopped.

“We were together then —”(230).

Ralph’s answer aptly summarizes how, from a workable social order that they had created when they were together, they have annihilated everything; how they have transformed a tropical paradise into an inferno. Tears roll down his cheeks and sobs shake him. Ralph, says Golding, “weeps for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart and the fall of a true wise friend called Piggy”(230). Piggy here becomes a symbol of sanity, rationality and wisdom. His horrifying murder at the hands of the agents of violence and anarchy signifies the end of all civilized order created by these boys on the island. However, no one comprehends this truth except Ralph and that is why he cries. His tears for the loss of innocence are an ironic comment on the blindness of the adult world which is responsible for these boys’ plight. The naval officer himself is a representative of that civilized world of adults which is on the verge of devastation because of the World War. There too, social systems, democracy, rationality and order have been violated by the forces of anarchy, violence and disorder. In the world of adults too, man has ceased to be civilized and is no better than a brute. The only difference is that the savagery in the adult world is of more sophisticated kind where weapons like spears, knives and boulders have been replaced by nuclear bombs, missiles and guns. It is indeed ironic that the English naval officer who could not stem the slide of his own world from civilization to savagery accuses these boys of not behaving like English boys.

Thus, *Lord of the Flies* exhibits with a painful authority, the destructive potentiality of human beings. The experience of the boys on the island is certainly a paradigm of human situation that Golding witnessed during the World War II. In this regard, the novel is undoubtedly Golding's response to the horrors of that war as he himself confessed, "Before the World II I believed in the perfectibility of social man that a correct structure of society would produce goodwill and that therefore you could remove all social evil by a re-organization of society. But after the war I did not because I was unable to"(qtd. in Kulkarni 2).

The viciousness, violence and horror witnessed by Golding in the World War II shook his faith in humanity, in man as a social being, and in man's capacity to create a social order based on love, goodwill and goodness. It is not surprising that, with the backdrop of tyranny of dictators, inhuman atrocities of Nazis and deafening echo of the atomic explosion, *Lord of the Flies* emerged as Golding's heart felt response to the destruction of the social order is the world around him.

However, in the larger perspective, this novel can also be read as a work that projects the novelist's prophetic vision. What Golding endeavours to reveal is that good and evil both are inherent in man and are perpetually in conflict with each other, as represented through the symbolic characters of Ralph and Jack. While Thomas Hobbes reposed his faith in the rationality of man to pull him out of the vortex of violence that marked his primitive existence, Golding does not seem to have as much faith in man. He thinks that even in the 20th century, despite an enormous scientific, technological and industrial progress or may be because of it, man is servile to the dark forces of

pride, lust for power and fear. Unable to fathom and control the problematic of his nature, he has reached the brink of his own destruction. Thus, inverting the concept of evolution, he exhibits regression to what Hobbes calls the State of Nature. It is at the expense of reason and goodwill that anarchy, violence and war thrive even today. In Golding's apocalyptic vision that focuses on the fate of man on the earth, the only hope lies in his not only being aware of this unending conflict between good and evil within, but also in making the right choice, for on this vital choice rests the future of mankind.

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The Theism of the Bhagavadgita

The history of Indian thought illustrates the endless quest of spirit and mind. The spiritual motive dominates life in India. The ultimate truths are truths of spirit and in the light of them actual life has to be refined. The *Bhagavadgita* and the *Upanisads* are not remote from popular belief. They are the great literary classics of the country and at the same time vehicles of the great systems of thought. The *Bhagavadgita* is of profound relevance to understand the supreme ends of life. According to Radhakrishnan, “The *Bhagavadgita* is not an esoteric work designed for and understood by the specially initiated but a popular poem which helps even those who wander in the regions of the many variables. It gives utterance to the aspirations of the pilgrims of all sects who seek to tread the under way to the city of God.” (*Bhagavadgita* 11)

The *Bhagavadgita* which forms the part of the *Bhisma parva* of the *Mahabharata* is the most popular religious poem of Sanskrit literature. The *Bhagavadgita* is later than the great movement represented by the early *Upanisads* and earlier than the period of the development of the philosophic systems and their formation in the

Sutras. It is certainly a work of pre-Christian era written in the fifth century B.C.

The Gita, the most influential work in the Indian thought, conveying lessons of philosophy, religion and ethics, is not looked upon as a *sruti*, a revealed scripture, but is regarded as a *smṛti*, a tradition. Its message of deliverance is simple. It teaches a method which is within the reach of all, that of *bhakti*, or devotion to God. The poet makes the teacher the very God descended into humanity. He is supposed to address Arjuna, the representative of man, at a great crisis in his life. Arjuna typifies the struggling individual who feels the burden and the mystery of the world. *Kṛṣṇa* stands for the voice of God, delivering his message in thrilling notes, to Arjuna against dejection of spirit. The opening chapter shows great insight into the heart of man, its conflict of motives, the force of selfishness and the subtle whispering of the evil one. At the very outset the *Gita* raises the question of the problem of human action. How can one live in the highest self and yet continue to work in the world?

And I see evil omens, O Kesava (Kṛṣṇa)
 Nor do I foresee any good by slaying my own people in the
 fight.
 I do not long for victory, O Kṛṣṇa, nor kingdom,
 nor pleasures, of what use is kingdom to us, O Kṛṣṇa,
 enjoyment or even life.

(*Bhagavadgita* 90)

Arjuna's words compel us to think of the loneliness of man oppressed by doubt, dread of waste and emptiness. The distress of Arjuna is a dramatization of a perpetually recurring predicament of

man, who, on the threshold of higher life, feels disappointed with the glamour of the world. He forgets his divine ancestry and becomes attached to his personality and is *agitated* by the conflicting forces of the world. In order to realize the inner spirit, he has to fight the enemies of selfishness and overcome the ignorance of his self-centred ego. Man cut off from the spiritual nature has to be restored to it. This is the evolution of human soul which is portrayed here. As the dialogue proceeds the dramatic element disappears. The echoes of the battle field die away and we only have an interview between God and man. The chariot of war becomes the lonely cell of meditation and a corner of the battle field where the voices of the world are stilled, becomes a fit place for thoughts on the Supreme. Radhakrishnan states “The teacher is the favourite God of India, who is at once human and divine. He is the God of beauty and love, whom his devotees enthrone on the wings of birds, on the petals of flowers, on whatever they most delight in all that lives on earth”(Indian Philosophy 9). The poet vividly imagines how an incarnate God would speak of Himself:

Words do not bind him who has renounced all works by yoga,
 who has destroyed all doubt by wisdom and whoever
 possesses his soul. O winner of wealth (Arjuna)
 Therefore having cut asunder with the sword of wisdom this
 doubt in thy heart that is born of ignorance, resort to yoga and
 stand up O Bharata (Arjuna). (*Bhagavadgita* 173)

An *avatar* is descent of God into man and not ascent of man into God. Krsna of the *Gita* stands for the infinite in the finite, the God in man concealed within the folds of flesh and the powers of sense. The divine comes down to the earthly place to raise it to a higher status. The purpose of the *avatar* is to open gateways to a new world,

by His teachings and examples; He shows how a being can raise himself to a higher goal of life.

The message of the *Gita* is universal in its scope. The main spirit of the *Gita* is that of the *Upanisads*; but here, there is a greater emphasis on the religious side. The traditional account of the relation between the two is summed up as – ‘the *Upanisads* are the cows, Krsna is the milker Arjuna the calf and the nectar like *Gita* is the excellent milk.’

The *Gita* also reflects the ethical principles of Buddhism. The psychology and the order of the creation of the *Samkhya* are accepted by the *Gita*. It also refers to the yoga practices. When Arjuna asks Krsna as to how mind, which is admittedly fickle and boisterous, can be brought under control, *Krsna* answers by saying that *abhyas* or practice and *vairagya* or indifference to the worldly objects, should be acquired : “When one does not get attached to the objects of sense or to works, and has renounced all purposes, then he is said to have attained to yoga.” (*Bhagavadgita* 188)

We must give up our likes and dislikes, forget ourselves. Mortification of the ego and total surrender to the will of the Supreme are needed.

At the time of the *Gita* many different views about the Ultimate Reality and the man’s destiny prevailed. There were the *Upanisad* traditions based on the intuition of the soul, the *Samkhya* that liberation can be obtained by freeing oneself from contact with nature, the *Karma Mimansa* view that by fulfilling our duties we attain perfection and the *Yoga* system which declares that man is free when the quiet life of the

soul takes the place of the vary- closed light of the world. The Supreme Spirit is viewed either as an impersonal absolute or a personal lord. The *Gita* synthesizes all the heterogeneous elements and fuses them all into a single whole. The context in which the *Gita* is delivered exhibits its central purpose which is to solve the problem of life and stimulate right conduct.

The problem of the Ultimate Reality is also addressed in the *Gita*. It believes in the reality of an infinite being underlying and animating all finite existences. The *Gita* finds out the element of the knower that remains constant behind all the changes, which is the eternal, immutable, timeless, self-manifested. The individual self is divided into three component parts of body, mind and soul, the *Gita* brings to light the element which is permanent i.e. soul.

This body, O son of Kunti (Arjuna),
is called the field and him who knows this,
those who know thereof call the knower of the field.
(Bhagavadgita 300)

Prakrti is unconscious activity and *purusa* is inactive consciousness. The body is called the field in which events happen; all growth, decline and death take place in it. The conscious principle, inactive and detached, which lies behind all active states as witness is the knower of the field. The body is not the permanent subject for it has an end, being only a fleeting frame. The empirical mind is ever changing. All these are only objects for a subject, the instrument through which the soul works. The *Gita* gives eloquent description of this underlying element; it is the lord of the body.

He who thinks that this slays and he who thinks that this is slain both of them fail to perceive the truth. This one neither slays nor is slain.

He is never born, nor does he die, at any time, nor having (once) come to be will he again cease to be. He is unborn eternal, permanent and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain. (*Bhagavadgita* 107)

The individual form may change, but the essence is not destroyed. There is however no attempt in the *Gita* to prove that the absolute discerned by intuition lays the logical foundation of the world, though this is implied. The *Gita* reiterates the *Upanisad* principle that the real is his immutable self existence behind the cosmic world with its space time and causality. The metaphysical idealism of the *Upanisads* is transformed in the *Gita* into a theistic religion, providing room for love, faith, prayer and devotion. The Supreme Soul is the origin and cause of the world, the indivisible energy pervading all life. The Supreme God puts forth His active nature or *Suamprakrtim* and creates the *jivas*, who work out their own nature – while all this is done by the Supreme through his native power exercised in the perishable world; He has another aspect untouched by it all. He is the impersonal absolute as well as the immanent will. He is the causeless cause, the unmoved mover.

By me all this universe is pervaded through.
My unmanifested form. All beings abide in Me
but I do not abide in them. (*Bhagavadgita* 238)

The whole universe owes its being to the transcendent Godhead and yet the forms of this universe do not contain or express Him

adequately. His absolute reality is far above the appearance of things in space and time.

And yet the beings do not dwell in Me, behold My divine Mystery.

My spirit which is the source of all beings sustains the beings but does not abide in them. (*Bhagavadgita* 239)

There is also an analogy in the *Gita* that the space is the true universal, all pervading, infinite background on which aerial phenomenon takes place, but its nature is stable and immutable. The infinite self is also one, not many. Though it is immutable being, it is the support of all that moves. It exists in space but does not consist of space and though the Supreme controls creation and dissolution as the spirit and guide, He is above the procession of cosmic events.

The individuals are subject to *maya* or delusion, being lost in the outer appearances. Birth in the world or *Samsara* is the result of imperfection. Rotation in the cycle of existence is inevitable so long as we are blind to the truth. We get rid of individuality when we transcend *maya* and realize our true status. The infinite character cannot become fully explicit in any finite existence. True deliverance or freedom means self-transcendence or union with the highest through logic (knowledge), love (emotional) or life of righteousness. The end we seek is becoming *Brahman* or touching the eternal, '*brahmasamsparam*'. The *Gita* harmonizes the different ideals of life current at the time and corrects their extravagances. Intellectual inquiry, strenuous self sacrifice, fervent devotion, ceremonial observance and yogic exercises were looked upon as affording access to the divine. The *Gita* synthesizes them all and shows the exact place and value of each of them.

The *Bhakti marga* or the path of the devotion indicates the law of the right activity of the emotional side of man. *Bhakti* is emotional attachment distinct from knowledge or action. Emotion expresses a living relation between individuals, and becomes instinct with the force of religious feeling when it binds God and man.

Devotion to the Supreme is possible only with a personal God, a concrete individual full of bliss and beauty. We cannot love a shadow of our minds. The nature of love towards God or *bhakti* is indescribable 'as the taste of the dumb person.'

The difficulty of those whose thoughts are set on the Unmanifested is greater, for the goal of Unmanifested is hard to reach by the embodied beings. (*Bhagavadgita* 293)

The object of the devotion is one highest being or *Purusottama*. The author of the *Gita* emphasizes how God lives in each individual, however, he is partly the same and partly different from an individual. The devotee throws himself entirely on the mercy of God. Absolute dependence is the only way.

Fix thy mind on Me; be devoted to Me; sacrifice to Me; prostrate thyself before Me; so shalt thou come to Me, I promise thee truly, for thou art dear to Me. (*Bhagavadgita* 377)

The message of the *Gita* is open to all without distinction of race, sex, or caste. Those, who, on account of their past births, suffer from many disabilities and also those engrossed in worldly pursuits, can overcome their weaknesses and attain the highest. The only way

to rise out of our ego-centred consciousness to the divine plane is by focusing all our energies, intellectual and emotional, on God. Then our whole being is transformed and lifted up towards the unity and universality of spirit. For the true *bhakti* we require first of all *sraddha* or faith. The highest reality has to be assumed or taken on faith till it reveals itself in the devotee's consciousness. The infinite presents itself to the human soul in a variety of aspects. The lower Gods are forms or aspects of the One Supreme. The *Gita* ranks the *avataras* of the divine as lower than *Purusottama*. Only the Highest can give us freedom.

Through divine service or *karma* we can also reach the Highest. *Karma* is an act or a deed, by which also the impersonal becomes personal. The *Gita* recognizes that it is through work that we are brought into relation with the rest of the world. Right conduct is whatever expresses our real unity with God, man and nature; wrong conduct is whatever does not bring out this essential structure of reality. The *Gita* requires us to develop a spirit of detachment and indifference to the results of action, the spirit of the yoga or impartiality

Not by abstention from work does a man attain freedom from action; nor by renunciation does he attain to the perfection. (*Bhagavadgita* 133)

Naiskarmya is the state where one is unaffected by work. What is demanded is not renunciation of work, but renunciation of selfish desire. While life remains, action is unavoidable. To be free from desire, from the illusion of personal interest, is the true non-action and not the physical abstention from activity. When egoism is removed, action springs from the depths and is governed by the Supreme secretly seated in the heart.

Therefore O son of Kunti(Arjuna), do thy work as a sacrifice, becoming free from all attachment.(*Bhagavadgita* 135)

The *Gita* asks us to perform action without entertaining any hope of reward. All work is to be done in a spirit of sacrifice, for the sake of divine. It is a combination of *pravrthi* or work, and *nivrthi* or withdrawal that the *Gita* upholds.

Whatever be the method we pursue wisdom, love or service, the end reached is the same. When the mind is purified and egoism is destroyed, love culminates in the ecstasy of devotion, where soul and God become one. Whatever path we adopt the end is seeing, experiencing and living the divine life. This is the highest form of religion or life of spirit called *Jnana* in the wider sense of the term. *Jnana* as the method of attaining spiritual reality is distinct from the *jana* as the invitation which is the ideal. *Moksha* or direct perception of God is not an act of service or devotion or for that matter cognition, however much it may be led up to by it. It is an experience or a direct insight into the truth. It is to attain God that the different paths are tried.

The *Bhagavadgita* is not only a religious classic but also a literary classic, which is known for its melody and magic of phrase, intensity of utterance, the vision of the seer and the lofty thought. The chief problems facing today's technological civilization where human being has become a statistical average are 'recovery of faith in god' and 'reconciliation of mankind'. The *Gita* is specially suited for this purpose as it presents truth which is eternal and belongs to the very flesh of humanity, past, present and future. All literature visualizes the union of the microcosm with the macrocosm, the intense longing of the soul to become one with the Supreme Lord. When the human soul

becomes enlightened and united with the divine, fortune and victory, welfare and morality are assured. When Plato prophesied in *The Republic* that there would be no good government in the world until philosophers become the rulers, he meant that human perfection was a sort of union between sublime thought and just action. He further observed that religious literature should be read to cleanse the human mind of error and conceit, to purify the soul to reach the Highest. This according to *The Gita* should also be the aim of man.

The *Gita* is, therefore, a mandate for action. It exhibits what a man ought to do not merely as a social being but as an individual with spiritual destiny. We must find out the truth of our own highest and inner most existence and live it. Our *svadharma* outward life and *svabhava* must answer to each other, only then we can live in God's world.

He who does work for Me, he who looks upon Me as his goal, he who worships Me, free from attachment, he who is free from enmity to all creatures, he goes to Me, O Arjuna ! (*Bhagavadgita* 289)

This is the essence of *bhakti*. The above verse contains the substance of the whole teachings of *The Gita*. Whatever be our vocation, whether we are thinkers, creative artists, scientist, philosophers or humble men and women with no special merits, if we possess one great gift of the love of God, we become God's tools, the channels of his love and purpose. When this vast world of living spirits becomes attuned to God and exists only to do His will, the purpose of man is achieved.

Therefore, the *Gita* attempts a spiritual synthesis which could support life and conduct on the basis of the *Upanisad* truth, which it carries into the life-blood of the Indian people. The *Gita* being a religious work insists on the ultimateness of a personal God (*Purusottama* as the highest form), and calls for a full flowering of the divine in man to its utmost capacity of wisdom, power and love (Krsna being an avatar of *Purusottama*).

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Rajyashree Khushu-Lahiri

**Broken Laws, Shattered Lives:
A Study of *The God of Small Thing***

“They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much.”¹

The above quotation points to the central theme in *The God Of Small Things* – the theme of broken laws. The contention of this paper is that through the delineation of this theme, Roy is not only critiquing the deep rooted caste system in India, but the entire patriarchal structure and its concomitant devaluing of women. The novel has been aptly described as “one of our protest novels, radical and subversive and attacks several holy cows. In its taboo-breaking too, it goes farther than what has been attempted.”² This paper will highlight the breaking of two major taboos or laws – the inter-caste man-woman relationship and the old-age incest taboo.

According to Gerda Lerner, patriarchy “means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over woman in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the

important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power”.³ Patriarchy is a historic creation formed by men and women in a process which took nearly 2,500 years to its completion. The basic unit of its organization was the patriarchal family, which both expressed and constantly generated its rules and values. The roles and behavior deemed appropriate to the sexes were expressed in values, customs, laws and social roles. Further, the enslavement of women preceded the formation of classes and class oppression. Class differences were, at their very beginning, expressed and constituted in terms of patriarchal relations.

As is well known, the patriarchal structure with its resulting class and gender hierarchy is a more or less universal phenomenon, which cuts across all nations, religions and races. However, in India, a further dimension was added to it with the origination of the caste system about 2,000 years ago. This system which is an integral part of Hinduism, divides the population into four major groups. The Brahmin (priestly caste) at the top, followed by the Kshatriya (warrior caste), then the Vaishya (commoners, usually known as trading and artisan castes), and at the bottom the Sudra (agricultural laborers) some of whom are beyond the pale of caste and are known as untouchables. The caste system is not only structural, but has a cultural dimension as well. At the structural level it consists of a hierarchy of marrying groups, organized into hereditary occupations. As a cultural system it comprises belief in karma (that the circumstances of birth depend on actions in one’s previous life), “commitment to caste occupation and lifestyle, belief in the hereditary transmission of psychological traits associated with occupation, tolerance of distinct lifestyles for other castes, and a belief in a hierarchy of value along a scale of purity and pollution. In the scale of purity and pollution, brahmins are generally,

but not always, the purest and sudras the most polluted.”⁴ Thus, as against a “class” society which is characterized by personal and familial mobility, in a social structure based on the caste system, birth has a lethal effect on the life chances of an individual as it determines everything.

II

The God of Small Things centers on the relationship between Ammu, a Syrian Christian young woman divorced from a drunken, Bengali Hindu, and Velutha, an untouchable, Paravan carpenter. To a Westernized urban sensibility, this may not be a very shocking occurrence, but the fact that it has evoked the ire of no less a personage than C.D. Narasimhaiah, the doyen of English literary studies in India, is symptomatic of the deeply entrenched caste and gender prejudices that still exist in our society.⁵ The impact of the caste system can be felt even among the Christian community in India, which is indicative of the fact that the dogma of equality of this religion has not been able to dissolve it. Christians in India have internalized the idea of caste rank even though they live and operate in a largely Christian universe. Moreover, as far as caste at the lived in level is concerned, purity and pollution are far more important than *karma and dharma*, and this is true for Hindus as well as Christians.

Velutha (which means white in Malyalam) was so named because he was so black. He wasn't meant to be carpenter as his forefathers were Paravans who had

Converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican Church to escape the scourge of Untouchability. As added incentive they were given a little food and money. They were known as the Rice Christians. It didn't take them long to realize that they

had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. They were made to have separate churches, with separate services, and separate priests. . . . After Independence they found they were not entitled to any Government benefits like job reservations or bank loans at low interest rates, because officially, on paper, they were Christians, and therefore casteless.(74)

As a young boy, Velutha did not have access beyond the back entrance of the Ayemenem House as “Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched. Caste Hindus and Caste Christians.” (73) Nevertheless, Velutha’s uncanny carpentry skills and remarkable facility with machines prompted Mammachi to appoint him as the factory carpenter and put him in charge of general maintenance. This, however, “caused a great deal of resentment among the other Touchable factory workers because, according to them, Paravans were not *meant* to be carpenters.”(77)

Further, Roy trenchantly critiques the ways in which caste impinges upon the lives of women and the double standards of sexual morality prevailing in such a society. Within a caste, a hierarchy exists between the sexes. In fact, the entire system is premised upon the cultural perception of a fundamental difference in male and female sexuality. Moreover, the cultural schemes which underlie the caste system are predicated upon a basic difference between male and female bodies in respect of their vulnerability to incur impurity through sexual intercourse. Upper caste women are much more vulnerable to permanent pollution than lower caste women as it is entanglements with men of castes lower than that of the woman that are taken seriously. Thus, women need to be controlled, their sexuality contained at all times.

That Velutha and Ammu are drawn to each other is inevitable – they are both rebels and hence kindred spirits. Intelligent and talented, Velutha tries to rise above his “Untouchable” status in life by training himself to be a skilful carpenter and becoming a card holding member of the Communist Party of India. Similarly, Ammu had neither had the kind of education, nor met the sort of people who would have taught her to think in a rebellious manner. Rather, she “was just that sort of animal. As a child, she had learned very quickly to disregard the Father Bear Mother Bear stories she was given to read. In her version, Father Bear beat Mother Bear with brass vases. Mother Bear suffered those beatings with mute resignation.”(180) Her decision to divorce her drunken husband rather than become the mistress of his boss, was bold, but she had not bargained for the fact that back in her parents’ home, she would not have any “Locusts Stand I,” as her brother Chacko bluntly puts it. This, coupled with the fact that Velutha was the one man who spontaneously loved her children, first draws Ammu to him. However, the attraction between them is vibrantly physical as well. Roy vividly describes the poignant moment when they become aware of each other as man and woman.

The man standing in the shade of the rubber trees with coins of sunshine dancing on his body, holding her daughter in his arms, glanced up and caught Ammu’s gaze. Centuries telescoped into one evanescent moment. History was wrong-footed, caught off guard. Sloughed off like an old snakeskin. Its marks, its scars, its wounds from old wars and the walking backward days all fell away.

In that brief moment, Velutha looked up and saw things that he hadn’t seen before. Things that had been out of bounds so far, obscured by history’s blinkers. . . .

For instance, he saw that Rahel's mother was a woman.

That she had deep dimples when she smiled and that they stayed on long after her smile left her eyes. He saw that her brown arms were round and firm and perfect. That her shoulders shone, but her eyes were somewhere else... He saw too that he was not necessarily the only giver of gifts. That *she* had gifts to give him too.

This knowing slid into him cleanly, like the sharp edge of a knife. Cold and hot at once. It only took a moment.

Ammu saw that he saw. She looked away. He did too. History's fiends returned to claim them. To rewrap them in its old, scarred pelt and drag them back to where they really lived. Where the Love Laws lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much.(176-77)

The catastrophic consequences of Ammu's sexual relationship with Velutha bear out the dictum that sanctions hyper gamy within well-defined limits. "Superior seed can fall on an inferior field but an inferior seed cannot fall on a superior field."⁶ Mammachi's condonement, rather complicity in facilitating her son Chacko's sexual relationships with various 'low caste' women, which she justifies as being 'Men's Needs,' contrasts sharply with her revulsion on learning about her daughter's affair with Velutha.

Mammachi's rage at the old one-eyed Paravan standing in the rain, drunk, dribbling and covered in mud was redirected into a cold contempt for her daughter and what she had done. She thought of her naked, coupling in the mud with a man who was nothing but a filthy *coolie*. She imagined it in vivid detail: a Paravan's coarse black

hand on her daughter's breast. His mouth on hers. His black hips jerking between her parted legs. The sound of their breathing. His particular Paravan smell. *Like animals*, Mammachi thought and nearly vomited. *Like a dog with a bitch on heat*. Her tolerance of 'Men's Needs' as far as her son was concerned, became the fuel for her unmanageable fury at her daughter. She had defiled generations of breeding (The Little Blessed One, blessed personally by the patriarch of Antioch, an Imperial Entomologist, a Rhodes Scholar from Oxford) and brought the family to its knees. For generations to come, forever now, people would point at them at weddings and funerals. At baptisms and birthday parties. They'd nudge and whisper. It was all finished now. (257-58)

Mammachi's unleashing of fury on Velutha, and the Communist Party's final betrayal, whose spokesman Comrade Pillai categorically tells him "that Party was not constituted to support worker's indiscipline in their private life" (even Marxism does not seem to be immune to the caste system), propel the "Untouchable" to his "blind date with history". (282) With wonderful narrative skill, Roy describes in cold fury the police battering of the defenseless dalit and makes the twins witness to this outrage. However, she is quick to point out that the episode ought not to be viewed as mindless police brutality. Rather, the policemen were

Only history's henchmen. Sent to square the books and collect the dues from those who broke its laws. Impelled by feelings that were primal yet paradoxically wholly impersonal. Feelings of contempt born of inchoate, unacknowledged fear – civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness... [It] was a clinical demonstration in

controlled conditions...of human nature's pursuit of ascendancy. Structure. Order. Complete monopoly. It was human history, masquerading as God's Purpose, revealing herself to an under-age audience. (308-9)

Between the "Touchable" policemen, and the 'Untouchable' Velutha, any feeling of kinship, "any implication that if nothing else, at least biologically he was a fellow creature – had been severed long ago." So, if they hurt him more than they intended to, it was because "they were exercising fear," and "inoculating a community against an outbreak." (309)

Velutha and Ammu pay for their "transgression" with their lives, but Estha and Rahel are the two hapless, innocent victims who not only lose their mother, but are robbed of their childhood and of each other's company. "They didn't ask to be let off lightly. They only asked for punishments that fitted their crimes. Not ones that came like cupboards with built-in bedrooms. Not ones you spent your whole life in, wandering through its maze of shelves."(326) All through novel, Roy has been at pains, to point out the uncannily close bond that exists between the twins, something that nobody, not even their mother has been able to fathom. She recounts an incident when as seven-year-olds, Estha stood quietly outside the hotel room where Rahel was sleeping, and the latter sensing this, got up and unlatched the door for him. Chacko (their uncle), half asleep in the same room, "didn't bother to wonder how she could possibly have known that Estha was at the door. He was used to their sometimes strangeness."(119) Later on, when Ammu dies, Mammachi asks Rahel to write and inform Estha about it, but "Rahel never wrote to him. There are things that you can't do – like writing letters to a part of

yourself. To your feet or hair. Or heart.”(163-64) Separation from one another has disastrous effects on both (more on Estha perhaps) and they go through their adolescence and youth with feelings of loneliness, emptiness and incompleteness. Nothing could be more indicative of the immense hurt and pain that they have undergone than the incest that takes place towards the end of the novel.

According to the French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, the incest taboo is the most ancient and universal taboo, as its imposition transforms a state of nature into a state of culture: “The prime role of culture is to ensure the group’s existence as a group, and consequently, in this domain as in all others, to replace chance by organization. The prohibition of incest is a certain form... of intervention over and above anything else; even more exactly, it is the intervention.”⁷ Of crucial importance here is the distinction which he makes between nature and culture. In the former mating is unregulated whereas in the latter it is subordinated to certain rules. The essence of the incest taboo is its regulatory status, and that status makes it virtually synonymous with culture. The very fact that Rahel and Estha feel compelled to break a law which is culturally so deeply ingrained is symptomatic of the fact that they have been hurt to the core of their being. For, Roy makes it clear that although they broke the “Love Laws” that stipulate “who should be loved. And how. And how much,” what the twins shared that night “was not happiness, but hideous grief.” (328)

It may be argued that Roy could have conveyed the shattered state of Rahel and Estha’s lives through some other means. Yet what could more effectively shock people out of a sense of complacency at having rid the society of discrimination based on caste and gender?

The God of Small Things is indeed a taboo-breaking, protest novel which provides a trenchant critique of the present – day Indian society and the patriarchal structure as a whole.

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Shakuntala Kunwar

**Lionel Trilling and Biographical Approach:
A Creative Extension in the Realm of Psychoanalysis**

Art can achieve the illusion of life and can achieve it only by the authority of the writer, including conviction, belief and acceptance in the authority of the reader. “The most obvious cause of a work of art,” according to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, “is its creator, the author; and hence an explanation in terms of the personality and the life of the writer has been one of the oldest and the best established methods of literary study” (75). Sometimes, the lives of the authors may be interesting quite independently of their possible bearing upon the works of that author, but we do come across situations where an individual poet may seem to vanish behind a thicket of influences, forces and tendencies, and in such a case the only possible way to reach the real existence of that particular work seems to be this method of history—reconstructing those circumstances and influential forces which might have led the author towards that specific literary creation—the biographical method. In this the author obviously holds the centre which is well supported by Sainte-Beuve, who exhibits in his various lectures the widest range of interest, understanding, and technique, so far as any methodical criticism is concerned. But his most pronounced critical insight and the most radical method lies in the depth of his

profound devotion to the personality of the author behind the work. His observations in the following lines of his *Nouveaux lundis* are, perhaps, the most committed version of the biographical principle that has ever been written:

Literature, the literary product, is for me indistinguishable from the whole organization of the man. I can enjoy the work itself, but I find it difficult to judge this work without taking into account the man himself . . . one has to ask oneself certain number of questions about an author, and give answers to them. Only after such questions can one be sure about the whole problem one faces. . . . To sum it up: what was his master vice, his dominant weakness? Everyone has one. Not a single one of answers we give to these questions can be irrelevant to forming an opinion about the book itself—that is, if we suppose we are dealing with something other than a treatise in pure geometry. (Wimsatt and Brooks 535)

Thus, the questions one is supposed to ask oneself and answer, in Sainte-Beuve's biographical method of historical criticism, include the questions about the author's opinions regarding religion, nature, women, money, and the rules of living he followed.

Similarly, Hippolyte Taine, a French literary historian, despite his strong resistance against biography as a rigidly deterministic approach, supports the idea that the mind of the artist and the character of his 'world', both are linked by what he calls "master faculty" (Wellek 45), and we can see that Taine's views on the true value of the work of art are much modified in practice by his belief in individuality and the expression of individuality. The author expresses himself, his

particular world-view, and thereby, delineates the realities in his surrounding world, penetrating into the “essence of things” (114). Taine gives a specific connotation to the term “essence”, and desires to replace it by “the capital character, some striking and principal quality, and important point of view, and essential [sic] manner of being of the object” (Wellek 44). Taine reaches an understanding that a work of art represents the ‘characteristic’ which is, both, individual and representative of reality simultaneously. Thus finding a point of contact with Sainte Beuve Taine tends to modify his view of literary criticism that the job of a literary critic is precisely to grasp the individuality, not only of a person but also of an age, or nation. His quest is for the soul and mind of the author, and he aims at understanding and analysing it as a kind of system dominated by a ‘master faculty’ which implies, again, the domination by the major character in whom the critic is likely to see the individuality. Taine, later, tried to show the identification of Shakespeare with his heroes and criminals which seemed extravagant but, at the same time, he did not ignore “Shakespeare’s aloofness and creativity” (47). It implies that this branch of historical criticism is based on the line of “a study of the man of genius, of his moral, intellectual and emotional development which has its own intrinsic interest. . . . Affording materials for a systematic study of the psychology of the poet and of the poetic process” (Wellek and Warren 75).

Trilling’s critical output is substantial and impressively diverse in character, accommodating and assimilating as much as he can keeping safe distance from the pit-falls of the deterministic theories propounded by various literary critics. The aim of this paper is to assess Trilling’s contribution to this branch of criticism, particularly, through the incorporation of psychoanalytical tools. For him, biographical criticism is not merely concerned with the utility of the

personal details of the author in the evaluation of a work of art; it is rather a long way to go in Trillingsque criticism. Apart from the person and his thought, he takes into account the entire historical background in which the writer's mind is shaped into a particular line of thought. Trilling makes a major pronouncement, in this regard in his doctoral work *Matthew Arnold*:

I have undertaken in this book to show the thought of Matthew Arnold in its complex unity and to relate it to the historical and intellectual events of his time . . . and whatever biographical matter I have used is incidental to my critical purpose. However, because I have treated Arnold's ideas in their development this study may be thought of as a biography of Arnold's mind.
(ix)

This declaration of Trilling seems to be his attempt to decode deterministic theory and seek the extension of biographical approach towards psychoanalysis, that is, his purpose of the study of Matthew Arnold is to trace the development of the poet's mind and thought.

As far as Trilling sees the study of biography from the point of view of extrinsic importance, the biographical critic works like a literary historian, interpreting biographical statements, letters and documents. On the other hand, on its intrinsic side, the poet is treated as man whose moral and intellectual development, external career, and emotional life can be reconstructed, to which end Trilling includes Freudian psychoanalysis. He takes interest "not merely in establishing specific connections between biographical events and tendencies in the poetry but the larger ways in which family and philosophical influence worked together in the mind of the poet and were expressed in his

poetry”(Trilling, *TOS* 35). Trilling finds James Joyce, among other modern writers, as the hardest to be connected to his work. Joyce is the one who propounded the classical formulations of the idea of the artist’s impersonality. Stephen Dedalus, in his famous discourse on aesthetics in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, says that “the personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood, and then a fluent and lambent narrative, finally refines itself,” whereas, for Trilling, “it is worth noting that the impersonality is covertly transferred from the artist to the person-who-is-the-artist . . .” (Diana Trilling 286). In Trilling’s opinion the impersonality of the artist is described in quite personal terms, that is, it becomes a personal characteristic, or a social attitude.

Trilling derives a meaningful interest in biographical approach, as he observes that its best effect is to make palpable the mystery of the creative process or to suggest the exigencies, both material and psychological, against which the creative process asserts itself. Keeping in view this purpose, he has made successful attempts in making psychoanalysis a potent tool without confining himself to the deterministic lines of the branch, because his careful formulation of its concepts in non-technical language shows that he understands their boundaries, as well as what they contain. In the judgement on *Hamlet* Trilling does agree with Freud on his account of the mystery of the effect of *Hamlet* on the audience based on “the ‘magical’ power of the Oedipus motive to which, unconsciously, we so violently respond,” yet, with his strong filial sensibility which “has always been scandalously true of the French,” Freud has been “indifferent to the ‘magical appeal’ of *Hamlet*” (Trilling 1950, 49). Thus, while using the ‘potent tool’ of psychoanalysis, Trilling does not forget the other avenues of the field of literary criticism. He knows the characteristic element of multivalence

in a work of art “because historical and personal experience shows it to be true. Changes in historical context and in personal mood change the meaning of a work and indicate to us that artistic understanding is not a question of fact but value” (49). Dr. Ernest Jones’s interpretation on *Hamlet* is on a similar line. However, Trilling openly and honestly acknowledges the contribution of psychoanalysis—in the context of both Freud and Dr. Jones—as far as it extends the purview of critical understanding of a reader. In addition to the other possible meanings, using various other ‘instruments’, he arrives at an almost decisive point, as he states in his famous essay, “Freud and Literature”:

. . . They [the various meanings in a work of art] reach into life, and whatever extraneous knowledge of them we gain, for example, by research into the historical context of the work, may quicken our feelings for the work itself and even enter legitimately into those feelings. Then, too, anything we may learn about the artist himself may be enriching and legitimate. But one research into the mind of the artist is simply not practicable, however legitimate it may theoretically be. That is, the investigation of his unconscious intention as it exists apart from the work itself. Criticism understands that the artist’s statement of his conscious intention, though it is sometimes useful, cannot finally determine meaning. (49-50)

Trilling, while discussing the effect of *Hamlet* on the audience insists that “Freud claims this to be the same at all times and in all places . . . as if historically, *Hamlet*’s effect had been single and brought about solely by the ‘magical’ power of the Oedipus motive” (Louis Fraiberg 210). Trilling’s objection to the literary judgement of Dr. Jones on *Hamlet* sounds strong, particularly, in the case of Jones’s

overvaluation of “*Hamlet* as the epitome of Shakespeare’s thought” (212), which is, as Trilling admits, not only Jones’s idea; it is supported by the opinion of others also. His sound knowledge of psychoanalysis and profound understanding of life and literature enable him to give the estimate of *Hamlet* that it “is not instrument of his thought, and if meaning is intention Shakespeare did not intend the Oedipus motive or anything less than *Hamlet*; if meaning is effect then it is *Hamlet* which affects us, not the Oedipus motive” (52).

In Trilling’s criticism, we may find a creative extension of biographical approach through psychoanalysis. His argument finds its basis in his understanding of neurosis and its relation to normality. In its widest sense, psychoanalysis sees all men as partially involved in neurosis. For him, this does not mean, as is the popular belief, that all men are ill. He formulates in “Art and Neurosis” that “it is the basic assumption of psychoanalysis that the acts of every person are influenced by the forces of the unconscious” (Trilling, *TLI* 171). And with this idea he seeks an access to “relate the writer’s power to his neurosis” (171). For him, “the current literary conception of neurosis as a *wound* is quiet passivity, whereas, if we follow Freud we must understand neurosis to be an *activity*, an activity with a purpose, and a particular kind of activity, a conflict” (177). This conflict, he elaborates, is the struggle of ourselves—our socio-cultural side against our animal natures, or, in psychoanalytical terms, the conflict of the ‘ego’ with the ‘id’. To quote Trilling again in an extremely convincing statement, it is true that we are all ill, but “we are ill in the service of health, or ill in the service of life, or at the very least, *ill in the service of life- in-culture*” (178). This statement confirms Trilling’s belief in the existence of artistic genius, and it is in his explicit denial of the popular gross usage of the term that art is a product of neurosis. The

essay “Freud and Literature” makes his intention clear that he wants to “see Freud as his greatest hero whose discovery—psychoanalysis—combines scientific rigor and imaginative insight in a ‘realistic’ (or ‘tragic’) manner that reconciles the rationalist and romantic strains in the culture” (O’Hara 72). Therefore, the point from where we may begin with Trilling’s concept of biographical approach to literary study can be his keen awareness of the interaction between a writer’s artistic impulse and the surroundings which help him to avail himself of the findings of ego psychology.

Trilling undertakes the study of writers, poets, thinkers, and literary historians—British, American, and Continental—to investigate the ways in which their respective thoughts developed, the major influences they came across which must have proved instrumental in promoting their intellectual interests and ideas and, above all, the cultural forces they experienced. He finds the emergence of the greatness of modern literature in the global Romanticist literature of the nineteenth century. Thinking of the relationship between life and literature—an immediate one in a peculiarly Arnoldian fashion—Trilling receives from Arnold the largest scope for his biographical study in the particular sense he understood it to investigate the ways to comprehend as exactly as possible, what “Arnold as poet and as critic of literature, politics, and religion actually said and meant” (Trilling, *MA* ix). Trilling’s attempt to understand the relationship between Arnold’s poetry and life leads him to “understand the relation of the cockiness to his philosophy; for when the dandyism was at work, Arnold produced poetry, but when the dandyism failed, poetry failed too” (22). Trilling’s entry into the deepest region of Arnold’s thought can be seen at the point where he perceives Arnold’s intense fear of losing his poetic genius, or the ‘poetic force’ in his personality which, according to him [Arnold], lacked

resistance against the critical intellect of his friends with whom he deliberately avoided intimacy. Trilling sees Arnold in a constant drive for preserving his poetic faculty, and says that “all of Arnold’s youthful affectation is directed towards the preservation of himself, toward allowing himself to be himself . . . [and] to protect his power of joy he had to keep off his friends by . . . the barrier of his eccentricity” (28). Reading Arnold’s mind, Trilling also observes his resistance against the modern “impoetical” age and the conditions which check the emotions and power to feel, leading towards “a miserable frigidity” (29). Clough was Arnold’s most intimate friend whom he feared the most, as he considered his poetry the ‘poetry of head’, the ‘antithesis’ to which was the *whole being*. In this context, Trilling traces Arnold’s strong adherence to *Bhagwat Gita* in his urge to have ‘a therapeutic reading’ of the book “because ‘the Indians distinguish between meditation or absorption – and knowledge’” (24-25). In Trilling’s view poetry is “a precipitation of the whole personality” (25) and not a restless effort of the will.

Where Trilling’s study of Arnold, or of the biography of Arnold’s mind touches upon the most delicate aspect of his life, it is his religious work. And it is, in fact, here that Trilling seems to have reached the stage at which his assumptions shape themselves into a sort of finding, and he is in more exact a position to draw the total personality of Arnold—his temperament, psychology, and process of thought—so as to present an accurate relationship between Arnold and his work, whether positivistic or paradoxical, with an adequate precaution in maintaining an Arnoldian ‘disinterestedness’ along with the necessary distance from deterministic thought. He gets immense force in Arnold’s belief that religion is simply the connection of the imagination with conduct. Trilling also clarifies the misinterpretation of Arnold’s work

by the Continental critics of his period who accused him of being a traitor to the liberal cause, and regrets their lack of moral knowledge because of the excess of scientific knowledge. On the whole, Trilling's estimate of Arnold's work and its relation to life can be seen in his concluding remark in the beginning of his "Resolution" that "[w]here a man begins his career in personal confusion and lyric poetry, progresses through literary and political criticism, and arrives at the affirmations of religion, all the charms of symmetry suggest that his work is indeed finished; at least there are no new themes to be added . . ." (369).

Trilling, like Arnold, holds 'system' in hostile mistrust. He strategically permits the extraneous facts to operate without any explicit statement to add flexibility to his critical tenets so that investigations may be made into the ever-shifting character of social and aesthetic circumstance and with the ever changing configurations of culture. In his treatment of Keats and Joyce, he "interestingly dealt with . . . [their] presentation of themselves through their letters" (Shoben 182), appeared to be drawn very close to making manifest this loosely held, but functional, credo of the relationship between imagination and reality. Trilling finds Keats's personal letters as "interesting," and "among the letters of great men those of the great creative artists are likely to be the most intimate, the liveliest, and the fullest of wisdom" (Trilling, *TOS* 3). He does not deny the comment, or rather warning of F.R. Leavis that in the study of Keats one must keep in mind that the 'important documents' are his poems and not his letters. Yet, Trilling at the same time asserts that his letters can, undoubtedly, prove suggestive and illuminating; however, in judging Keats as a poet they are of secondary importance. He observes that Keats wanted to reconstitute the family situation, as his love for his sister and brother to whose care he devoted his life was intense. Trilling's admiration for

Keats, according to Joseph Frank, emerging out of a close reading of his letters, is an experience, or knowledge to “gauge the quality of the experience held up for our admiration in other essays” (302). The base of Keats’s ingestive imagery which is pervasive in his work is in self-reference to infant appetite—“the elementary idea,” “knowledge of felicity,” and his “first experience”—which is made “the foundation of his quest for truth” (Trilling, *TOS* 18). In Trilling’s criticism of Keats, we find that Keats’s primary appeal, for him, resides in his [Keats’s] gracefully embodying an ideal of character, and that ideal implies a direct relationship with reality of the external world, which must involve fortitude and responsibility:

The balance that he achieved reflects what Trilling calls his ‘dialectical view of any large question’, a disposition to respond fearlessly and unhurriedly when confronted by contradiction and oppositions, either within himself, in the environment, or in his relationship to society and the universe. (Shoben 183)

And this notion of Negative Capability which, for Trilling, is “the faculty of not having to make up one’s mind about everything depends upon the sense of one’s personal identity and is the sign of personal identity” (Trilling, *TOS* 37).

Trilling does not study and work under any imposition; his tenets of criticism direct and lead him towards an understanding of the creative genius in its creative process. His reaction to Dean Sperry’s criticism on Wordsworth’s “Immortality Ode” brings home to us his credo against rigidity and in favour of flexibility. Dean Sperry’s interpretation that the “Ode” is “Wordsworth’s conscious farewell to art, . . . a dirge sung over his departing powers” (Trilling, *TLI* 129) is

erroneous for Trilling because it emerges from the fallacy of the biographical approach, as ‘it does not arise from any intrinsic difficulty of the poem itself but rather from certain erroneous and unexpressed assumptions which some of its readers may make about the nature of the mind’ (130). These assumptions do not emerge from any direct personal facts of life, for, though Wordsworth lived up to the age of eighty, though the “Ode” was written when he was only thirty two [and] this is an age too early for the “dramatic failure of the sense” (133). Trilling, refuting it, asserts that poetic creation essentially owes to poetic faculty which may be discussed and analysed in isolation from the general assumptions of human mind. Perhaps, such judgements result from the assumption of the critics who try to explain a phase of poetic decline in Wordsworth’s life which they associate with some event of his life. And, quite obviously, to define the poetic faculty of a poet in such a narrow perspective cannot yield proper judgement. The critics arriving at such literary judgements hold that Wordsworth’s great poetry had its source in his profound relationship with Annette Vallon, or in his strong allegiance to the French Revolution which he admired for quite a long period. Another interpretation of those critics is that the poetic creation of Wordsworth “flourished by virtue of a particular pitch of youthful sense perception” (130) or due to his specific attitude towards Jeffrey’s criticism, or it was rooted in his relationship with Coleridge. Trilling does not believe that poetry is not an unconditioned activity, whereas, on the other hand, he does not forget to see that to hold a single event or single emotional circumstance responsible for the decline in Wordsworth’s poetic genius will be absolutely mechanical and incomplete perception. Moreover, we can also find that after composing the “Ode,” three years later, Wordsworth in *The Prelude* speaks of “becoming a ‘creative soul’ despite the fact, as he says, ‘he sees by glimpses now’” (130).

Trilling does not hesitate to admit that there is sorrow in the poem for the loss of an old way of seeing for a new one, but, at the same time, it may be rather a growth, and the poem can be defined as a poem about maturing as a poet, or about a growth of the 'spiritual vision' and 'philosophic mind' to increase the intensity of the power to feel. Exploiting the model of psychic development and normal maturity posited by classical psychoanalysis, Trilling argues unconventionally, that Wordsworth really finds the loss of the visionary gleam to be a good (as well as necessary) thing, since to acquire the greater humanization, that the attainment of the philosophic mind permits entails that one put away with the solipsistic illusions of childhood and youth. Stephen L. Tanner's observation of Trilling's adherence to Freud's scientific views related to psychoanalysis and Arnold's notion of culture is an extremely comprehensive and convincing in this connection:

For Trilling, they [Arnold and Freud] complemented each other: Arnold speaks to us of the value of high culture, Freud of the discontents of civilization. Between them they express the range of social possibility, and between them Trilling sustains his own dialectic. Trilling shared Arnold's recognition of the importance of balancing intellect with emotion and spirit, but, being secularly oriented, he looked to science rather than to religion for information about man's nature, and his main frame of reference became Freudian psychology. . . . 'Because of Freud, the contingency of incentive and dread is clearer than in Arnold; because of Arnold, the intellectuality and sanity of art are clearer than in Freud. (93-94)

In fact, Trilling's Freud seems to be selective and idealized. The man overshadows the method, that is, Trilling chose not to see

the negative and reductive side of Freud, as he was never much interested in some of Freud's technical or clinical formulations. Trilling's interest in Freud was partly moral, psychological, and cultural, but "whenever Freud made some reductive or positivist kind of statement Trilling would tend either to disregard it or point to something else" (Steven Marcus 87). Perhaps, in order to make it convenient for himself, Trilling tries to give such explanation that "in a scientific age, we still think and feel in figurative formations" (Trilling, *LI* 50). But, at the same time, Freud also allows him to create "in psychoanalysis itself, what Trilling described as essentially 'a science of tropes, of metaphor and its variants, synecdoche and metonymy'" (Giles Gunn 35) His acceptance of the self as "a tangle of culture and biology" and Freud's contention that the element of the biology "given" in man's make up play a more decisive role in shaping the self's spiritual independence than any culturally "conditioned" factors (Trilling, *LI* 54). His support for the 'Freudian self' was based on the assumption that "[T]here is a residue of human quality, beyond the reach of cultural control, and that this residue of human quality, elemental as it may be, serves to bring culture itself under criticism and keeps it from being absolute" (113). Trilling's work reveals that his ambivalent mind, perhaps, always thought that the study of modern literature in the light of the great classics and the latest developments in such social sciences as cultural history and psychology would produce an archive of instructive ethical performances that in turn could lead to the development of the magnanimous or 'truly liberal imagination'.

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Saurabh Kumar Singh

**Contemporary Issues in Arundhati Roy's
*The God of Small Things***

Arundhati Roy's maiden text *The God of Small Things* has the capacity to address various issues which are, at present, the burning topics in the world of fertile academic discourses. It has immense bearings in the contemporary socio-political conditions. A number of readings of this novel have focused on the novel as subaltern history, feminist reading, and patriarchal oppression and so on so forth. Undoubtedly these critical readings have yielded to lots of fresh insights, but the issues like: devouring commodification, creeping imperialism, nasty dalitism and essential environmental feminism that constitute the very deep texture of this celebrated text concerning small but inevitable incidents, accidents, and *things* of life, have not been given proper placement. In a very important and vital move postcolonial feminists (in this case environmental feminists) have strongly advocated the view that political economy of imperialism affects a community's social interaction with nature and land and reduces that into mere commodity. Nature and land, once occupied a very sacred position in the psyche of people, has become the prey to the economical greed of common folk. These feminists/activists have suggested the possible understanding regarding the interconnections of gender, class, caste exploitation and

environment destruction to a typical habit of capitalist accumulation that eventually yields to deeper form of commodification of natural resources. In this article I am going to talk about these macros which are hidden but deeply embedded in the small lives (micros) of ours. The structural narrative of *The God of Small Things* allows us to develop greater insight into this commodification that in turn perpetuates the construction of typical patriarchal ideological constructions under the cultural logic of capitalism. Being written in the heyday of postcolonialism does not entail the impression that this novel is merely against western perception of the world, but it is strictly against that patriarchal ideology which is found everywhere (globally and locally) and directly links itself with the political economy of imperialism. This novel very aptly unearths the complicated issues of history and economics which are somehow concealed under the burden of dominant narratives and discourses of any sort.

The story primarily takes place in a town named Ayemenem now part of Kottayam in Kerala state of India. The temporal setting shifts back and forth from 1969, when Rahel and Estha, a set of fraternal twins are 7 years old, to 1993, when the twins are reunited at age 31. From the novel we come to know that the family derives its name from a prominent Syrian Christian descendant, father E. John Ipe, who in 1876 at the age of seven received blessings from the patriarch of Antioch. The family prospered well under British Empire as landowners and government bureaucrats, but since independence their fortunes have deteriorating. Shri Benaan John Ipe (referred to as Pappachi, which means grandfather), an imperial entomologist prior to his retirement, fathered Ammu and Chacko with his wife, Shoshamma Ipe (referred to as Mammachi, which means grandmother). Pappachi has been bitter since his discovery of a new

species of moth was dismissed and then credited to someone else. His facade of being a perfect husband and father hides his abusive tendencies towards his family, especially Mammachi and Ammu. One night, while Pappachi is beating his wife, Chacko, Ammu's brother, a Rhodes scholar home from Oxford University stops him and tells him never to do it again. From then on, till his death, Pappachi never hits nor speaks to Mammachi again. He also refuses to let Ammu continue with her college education, so she is forced to return home to Ayemenem.

Without sufficient dowry for a marriage proposal, Ammu becomes desperate to escape her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother. Finally, she convinces her parents to let her spend a summer with a distant aunt in Calcutta. To avoid returning to Ayemenem, she marries a man who assists managing a tea estate (who she later discovers to be a heavy alcoholic, who beats her and attempts to prostitute her to his boss so that he can keep his job). She gives birth to two children, dizygotic twins Estha and Rahel, but ultimately leaves her husband and returns to live with her mother and brother in Ayemenem.

While studying at Oxford, Chacko had fallen in love and married an English woman named Margaret. Shortly after the birth of their daughter Sophie Mol (Mol means girl), Chacko and Margaret get a divorce (Margaret having fallen in love with another man, Joe, whilst pregnant). Unable to find a job, Chacko returns to India to teach. Chacko never stops loving Margaret, and the two of them keep in touch (even though she no longer sees him in a romantic light). After the death of Pappachi, Chacko returns to Ayemenem and expands his mother's pickling business into an ultimately unsuccessful pickle

factory called Paradise Pickles and Preserves. Margaret remarries, but her husband Joe is killed in an accident. Chacko invites the grieving Margaret and Sophie to spend Christmas in Ayemenem. On the way to the airport, the family (Chacko, Ammu, Estha, Rahel, and Baby Kochamma) encounters a group of communist protesters. The protesters surround the family car and force Baby Kochamma to wave a red flag and chant a communist slogan. She is humiliated and begins to harbor a deep hatred towards Velutha (a man from the factory), who Rahel claims to have seen in the crowd. After this, the family visits a theater playing “The Sound of Music”, where Estha is molested by the “Orange drink Lemon drink man” (the food vendor).

Velutha is an untouchable (the lowest caste), a *dalit*. His family has been working for Chacko’s for generations. Velutha is extremely gifted with his hands, an accomplished carpenter and mechanic. Unlike other untouchables, Velutha has a self-assured air. While his skills with repairing the machinery have made him indispensable at the pickle factory, there is a lot of hostility about the fact that he is an untouchable working in a factory of touchables who resent him. His self-assured air does not help. Rahel and Estha look up to Velutha and he becomes a father figure to them. This relationship is further solidified figuratively on the day of Margaret and Sophie’s arrival. Ammu and Velutha realize that they are attracted to one another.

When her intimate relationship with Velutha is discovered, Ammu is tricked and locked in her room and Velutha is banished. When the twins ask their mother why she has been locked up, Ammu (in her rage) blames them as the reason why she cannot be free and screams at them to go away. She says they are the two millstones around her neck, and she says she should have taken them to an

orphanage the day they were born. Rahel and Estha decide to run away, and Sophie convinces them to take her with them. During the night, while trying to reach an abandoned house across the river, their boat capsizes and Sophie drowns. The twins cannot find her. Warily, they fall asleep at the abandoned house where they had already been storing food and toys in preparation for their departure. They are unaware that Velutha is there as well, for it is where he secretly meets with Ammu.

When Sophie's body is discovered, Baby Kochamma, another member of the family, goes to the police and accuses Velutha of being responsible for Sophie's death. She claims that Velutha attempted to rape Ammu, threatened the family, and kidnapped the children. A group of policemen hunts Velutha down and savagely beats him for crossing caste lines. The twins witness this terrible scene, and are deeply affected.

When the twins reveal the truth of Sophie's death to the chief of police, he is alarmed. He knows that Velutha is a communist, and is afraid that the wrongful arrest and impending death of Velutha will cause a riot amongst the local communists. He threatens Baby Kochamma, telling her that unless she gets the children to change their story, she will be held responsible for falsely accusing Velutha of the crime. Baby Kochamma tricks Rahel and Estha into believing that unless they accuse Velutha of Sophie's death, they and Ammu will all be sent to jail. Estha bears an even heavier burden, when at the police station he is called in to respond "yes" to police questioning that will reveal Velutha as guilty. Not only does he carry the extra guilt of being forced into testifying against Velutha, but he also sees the aftermath of the police beating. Velutha dies from his injuries.

However, Baby Kochamma has underestimated Ammu's love for Velutha. Hearing of his arrest, Ammu comes to the station to tell the truth about their relationship. She is told by the police to leave the matter alone. Afraid of being exposed, Baby Kochamma convinces Chacko to feel that Ammu and the twins are responsible for his daughter's death. Chacko forces Ammu to leave the house. Ammu, unable to find a job, is forced to send Estha to live with his father. Estha never sees Ammu again, as she dies alone and impoverished a few years later.

Rahel, when grown up, leaves for the US, gets married, divorced and finally returns to Ayemenem after several years working as a waitress in an Indian restaurant and as a night clerk at a gas station. Rahel and Estha, both 31 at this time, are reunited for the first time since they were 7 years old. Both Estha and Rahel have been damaged by their past, and by this time Estha has become perpetually silent because of his traumatic childhood.

The commodification of things whether animate or inanimate can well be perceived from the very beginning of the novel. The very first chapter of the novel, "Paradise Pickles and Preserves," unmistakably refers to the just beginning of the commodification. The pickle business that Chacko has seized from his mother, Mammachi, and his adherence to reconstruct it according to new demands of patriarchal/imperial/market scenario which he has learnt from West, marks a painful deviation and shift in the mode of production from a simple house business to bigger factory labor that marginalizes middle class women in deep private, while at the same time imposing some more exploitative techniques that encompasses working class women and low caste laborers. Earlier this business was in the hand of women,

so some power and authority, but now it has been snatched from them, and is being fully *enjoyed* by patriarchal forces. It also marks the subsequent degradation of middle class women to the level of proletariat class and further pushed into the direction of commodification. Women as merely a commodity. Useless. Here goes the vivid presentation of this shifting:

Up to the time Chacko arrived, the factory had been a small but profitable enterprise. Mammachi just ran it like a large kitchen. Chacko had it registered as a partnership and informed Mammachi that she was the Sleeping partner. He invested in equipment (canning machines, cauldrons, cookers) and expanded the labor force” (Roy 1997: 55-56).

In an interesting observation regarding commodity fetishism, Karl Marx ponders, “a commodity is . . . a mysterious thing [because] a definite social relation between men . . . assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things” (1978: 320-21). If we apply this on the moves of Chacko, it is quite possible to understand that his deliberate effort to craft a brand name for his business is in accordance with the new forms of productions.

Until Chacko arrived in Ayemenem, Mammachi's factory had no name. It was Chacko who christened the factory Paradise Pickles & Preserves and had labels designed and printed at Comrade K.N.M. Pillai's press. At first he had wanted to call it Zeus Pickles & Preserves, but that idea was vetoed because everybody said that Zeus was too obscure and had no local relevance, whereas Paradise did (Roy 1997: 56).

From the novel we can easily glean several other examples of subjects turning into merely a commodity. Baby Kochamma and the cook Kochu Maria are addicted to the temptation of satellite television. Accordingly they don't fail to assume the viewpoint of a white, middle class subject. Baby Kochamma, to the sheer height of absurdity, views ethnic cleansing, famine and genocide, as direct threats to her furniture (29). Rahel and Estha tragically compare themselves to the so called "clean children" in *The Sound of Music*, and as a result there is a formation of negative image of themselves which is intensified by the patriarchal stamp of Estha as deviant and dirty during the sexual assault by the Lemandrunk man (100). As a result the children perpetually live in a world dominated by isolation and traumatized paralysis which shockingly affects the emotional plane. Estha internalizes profound colonial patriarchal assumptions that ditch him with the profound sense of shame, inferiority, and objectification. Even afterwards, he continually strives to wipe away these negative feelings by constantly cleaning and bathing. In this novel the woman's body is severely stripped of her animate and dynamic qualities and has been reduced to objects and things (commodity/property). Ammu's body is "jiggling and sliding". She compares herself as an object that is being consumed by marriage in the same way in which firewood is consumed by cremation. In the police station she is being humiliated by a police officer when he "tapped her breasts with his baton ... As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket" (9-10). This is nothing but a stark reminder of her status as a commodity.

Environmental feminism is that social and political movement which points to the co-existence of environment and feminism on considerable grounds. They voice their strong argument in the favour of impressive parallel between the oppression and subordination of

women in family and society and the steadfast degradation of nature through the incessant construction of differences into conceptual binaries and patriarchal/ideological hierarchies that allow a systematic, however, logically unsound unfair, justification of domination by subjects classed into numerous higher-ranking categories over *other* subjects invariably classed into lower ranking categories e.g. man over woman, culture over nature, white over black and so on so forth.

The repletion of the novel with several traumatic events “Where did it all begin?”, without any fail, alludes in a plethora of instances to the history of imperialism/exploitation in the state of Kerala. In the early sixteenth century, the Portuguese seized control of the spice trade from Arabian and thus set themselves as dominant European power till 1662. The British authority annexed the coast of Malabar in 1792 and directly accessed it, while in the princely states of Cochin and Travancore in south, it ruled indirectly. The novel suggests that with opening of Suez Canal in 1869, Kerala as well as the rest of India opened a better way for British to exploit India with the imposition of serious economic and social restructuring. In Travancore and Cochin, the British made changes in the law that gave tenants proprietorship rights but demanded tax payments in cash, thus increasing sharecropper hardships. Moreover, the British began establishing first coffee then later rubber and tea plantations on an extensive scale, initiating in the process the development of a large landless proletariat. At the same time, the British relied on collaborators within Kerala, prominently among them were the Nambudiri Brahmin class and also Syrian Christians, who benefited from close contact with British missionaries. In reference to this history, we might recall that in the novel the family’s status is linked with official recognition from a church authority, not to mention Baby Kochamma’s painful obsession with Father Mulligan.

One extremely important field work study of Syrian Christians in the state of Kerala reports: “British planters, towards the latter half of the 19th Century, pioneered the opening of plantations. Christians were employed in these plantations and probably their religious affiliations helped them in getting along with the British planters. Towards the beginning of [the twentieth] century, Christians started opening up new areas for plantations, very much modelled on the European plantations” (Kurian : 41-2). The new cash economy system which was stimulated by the establishment of financial institution within the churches and educational organizations set up by the missionaries, led to the emergence of Kerala’s early banks out of investment schemes, and chit funds. Furthermore, these patriarchal structures, given that they were in place in their churches, households and governing structures, eased inheritance and property transactions with imperialist powers, whereas the Nair Hindus, who were organized in matrilineal joint households, called taravads, in which property is passed down through the mother’s line, experienced significant confusion and financial loss under colonialism’s cash economy. The changes that developed from relations of imperialism had a varying impact on women, though generally, as Jeffrey reporting the comments of an earlier researcher suggests, “the spread of male-dominated monogamous households constituted a ‘retrograde change’” (1992: 10).

This above stated account of Kerala invariably refers to that picture of imperialism which not only transforms the economy but also casts profound consequences on social relations%% especially gender and caste relations and the environment at large. It perpetuated the divisions of labor that intensified the the existing caste and gender hierarchies. It paved the way for divide and rule policy along with cash economy to inflict more exploitation of the land, in this regard

nature. In this connection Gail Omvedt makes a very valid and pertinent remark irrespective of any nation but in general, "The accumulation of the earth's resources for the increase of capital has imposed many facets of a money economy and the logic of production for profit on regions throughout the world, but not primarily by turning people into wage laborers," but by other means, especially "force and violence against nonwage laborers" (1993: 20). In this way, as the environmental feminist critique, we witness that *The God of Small Things* offers us a vantage point to see the so far invisible patriarchal ideological forces and its burdened legacy as the leftover of dominant hegemonic powers, strategically sustained and perpetrated after the so called end of imperialism.

This novel beautifully takes up the issue of caste in a complicated way. The notion of "untouchability" is an old age phenomenon. This word came from the Hindu notion of purity and pollution. The discourse was - "I am pure, you are polluted." A clever justification of the social difference was given with the help of the Karma theory. One is born into a "dalit" family because of one's accumulated bad deeds. On account of such birth, basic human rights were denied to the so called "lowly born." So the dalit problem is really a Human Rights problem. For human beings who are born to "dalit" parents, it is the problem of getting over the feeling of being lesser human beings, of being invisible in the history of the nation, of searching for a new identity and of redefining one's culture and roots. The dalit consciousness thus has negative and positive areas. Arundhati Roy's novel shows how terribly cruel such a system can be. But her depiction is not so simple. Here the portrayal of caste hierarchies follows the same pattern as other practices of patriarchal domination. Here the concept of ideology is in full swing. Just as ideology has the

capacity to turn the things upside down to produce the web of lies as true, in the same way elite class who owns the factory and modes of production, instead of projecting the view that the wealth of a community is generated by those who labor to create it i.e. untouchable workers, the caregivers, the nurturing foundation provided by land, and factory workers%%this patriarchal ideology justifies that the source of wealth belongs to those who own the enterprise. The Kochammas are considered upper class. They are factory owners, the dominating class. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma would not deign to mix with those of a lower class. Even Kochu Maria, who has been with them for years, will always be a servant of a lower class. Mammachi recalls “a time, in her girlhood, when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan’s footprint”; “[In her day], Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads” (Roy 1997: 71). Furthermore, when Velutha transgresses those restrictions, he is constructed as a sexual, transgender deviant, an “AC-DC,” to reinforce gender and caste subordination. In the social world of the novel, elite insecurity demands the heteronormative drama of humiliation and disdain.

Velutha belongs to an untouchable class Paravan. Though the immediate cause of his death is police torture and subsequent custodial death for his alleged involvement in the abduction of children and the drowning of Sophie Moll, but in depth study narrates another treacherous story. His subsequent degradation is due to his birth%%his birth as an untouchable. But significantly enough he does not have the air of being so. He has a sharp mind and he does not link himself to his caste profession. He is well expert in running the machines. In

Mammachi's factory, he is in the charge of *general maintenance*. Mammachi pays him less than a regular worker and more than what is paid to a paravan. That's why upper caste workers hate him as they believe in the age old belief that Paravans were not meant to be carpenters.

Velutha commits another blunder in the eyes of those who believe in the superiority of upper caste. He dares to sin by instinctively drawn towards Ammu. They simply breach the traditional Love Laws and establish physical love. They have empathy to each other as both belong to same category marginalised and oppressed one. Baby Kochamma, the upholder of these hard and fast rules, misinforms and misreports the police. As a result Velutha is arrested and becomes the victim of inhuman suffering that ultimately results into his tragic death. Here we register a strong protest from the novelist to those people who do not allow the *others* to lead a dignified life. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar too denounces this degraded practice, "I do not believe that we can build up a free society in India so long as there is a trace of this ill-treatment and suppression of one class by another (Ambedkar: 30).

In this way, we may safely affirm that this only masterpiece of Arundhati Roy is a brilliant critique on patriarchal/imperial proliferation of various modes of subjugation. It has the capacity to address the current burning issues which are the talk of the town. It focuses on such an issue which is not confined only to India but transcends its boundaries to embrace the whole universe. The contemporary world is on the brink of destruction due to the devastation done to Nature that comprises the forest, the environment and the man. Injustices are being perpetrated to Mother Nature and human beings alike. The exploitation is at fast and the possible elimination of social evils seems

to be a beautiful dream which can never be fulfilled. Colonialism/imperialism is *back* in the garb of neoliberal globalization. The novel does not suggest any possible ending of these problems. There is no solution suggested. But it is successful in conveying its message. At least it makes us aware regarding the atrocities done to the vital aspects of our life. It advocates for the involvement of all the classes of society to come on one common front to search for new possible ways to take breath in fresh nature and environment. It warns us not to fall into the jeopardy of perpetual reification or abstraction as a commodity. It asks to retain the sanctity and identity of environment and human beings as an *individual*.

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Monica Chhabra

**Theatrical Violence in the Selected Plays of
Tennessee Williams**

Theatre is a medium that provides a concrete shape to the dramatist's attempt of projecting the essential essence of human life and experience. Technical innovations and stage experimentations have been a prominent and continuous feature in the history of modern drama. Tennessee Williams' contribution to the development of American dramaturgy and production form involves its own distinctive patterns of acting, designing, stage settings and lighting. An anti realist from the beginning of his career, Tennessee Williams explains his plastic conception of theatre in the Production Notes to *The Glass Menagerie*. He writes:

Expressionism and all other unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is a closer approach to truth... Everyone should know now a days, the unimportance of the photographic in art; that truth, life or reality is an organic thing which the poetic imagination can represent or suggest, in essence, only through transformation, through changing into other forms than those which were merely present in appearance.¹(Endnotes)

Although he was influenced by the art forms of Appia, Stanislavsky, Piscator, Brecht and others, yet Williams and his artistic collaborators have strived to evolve a stage form, which attempts to restore to the theatre a more complete theatrical syntax:

His 'plastic' theatre is concerned not only with the exposition of rational planes of experience but also with the connotation of the ambiguous world of meaning above and below accepted levels of reason. Williams attempts to project into the cube called a stage, a vision of the entire complex of human experience, including those planes of reality, which Wagner called 'unutterable'.²

Williams' plays abound in violence. He deftly integrates the structural and textural forms in his theatrical art so as to vividly present the complex personalities of his characters and their tormented existence on stage. His efforts to utilize the stage space with technical and mechanical dexterity so that it corresponds to the violence of the script, makes his plays rich in theatrical violence. Williams believed theatre to be a collaborative venture. He acknowledged the contribution of Elia Kazan, Margo Jones, Eddie Dowling, Jo Mielziner and others, in the successful staging of his plays. Commenting upon his relationship with Kazan, Williams asserted that both had:

Enjoyed the advantages and avoided the dangers of this highly explosive relationship because of the deepest mutual respect for each other's creative function; we have worked together three times with a phenomenal absence of friction between us and each occasion has increased the trust.³

Kazan's production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* established Williams as one of the most important post-war American playwrights. It ran for 855 performances and became the first play ever to win all three major awards, the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critic's Circle Award and the Donaldson Award. "In fact, *A Streetcar Named Desire* might be read as a compendium of his characteristic dramaturgy, verbal and visual language and thematic preoccupations."⁴ The play, packed with theatrical violence, enticed the theatre-goers and stimulated a thought provoking sentiment. Through the skillful use of music, lighting and stage setting, Williams added vibrancy to an already violent script.

A Streetcar Named Desire shocked its audiences with its depiction of a violent rape scene on the stage. Referred to as scene ten in the play's manuscript, this scene became one of the most violent theatrical projections of the time. Hysteria and physical aggression mark the scene. Williams uses an expressionistic mode in the depiction of this scene on stage. He presents the distorted reality of Blanche's subjective vision through the use of lurid reflections and grotesque shadows that appear on the walls around her. The walls become transparent on the stage, so that the sordid life on the street can be visualized simultaneously with the on goings inside the room: "The night is filled with inhuman voices like cries in a jungle. The shadows and lurid reflections move sinuously as flames along the wall spaces".⁵ It further elaborates:

"Through the back wall of the rooms, which have become transparent, can be seen the sidewalk. A prostitute has rolled a drunkard. He pursues her along the walk, overtakes her and there is a struggle". (399)

The actual encounter between Blanche and Stanley, which ensues after Blanche's abusive address of Stanley as 'swine', becomes not only a sexual encounter, but also an irrational, revengeful lust for power and supremacy. The intensity and violence of the situation is theatrically presented by Blanche's attempt to escape Stanley with a broken glass bottle "She smashes a bottle on the table and faces him, clutching the broken top" (402). "He springs forward towards her, overturning the table. She cries out and strikes at him, with the bottle top, but he catches her wrist" (402)

Violence reverberates on the stage even in the last scene when Blanche attempts to escape the Doctor and the Matron "Divested of all the softer properties of womanhood, the matron is a peculiarly sinister figure in her severe dress" (415). Blanches' subjective perception of reality at this moment is once again theatricalized through external images projected as reflections on walls that simultaneously showcase her bafflement, anger and helplessness. Physical violence dominates the chase: "The Matron catches hold of Blanche's arm and prevents her flight. Blanche turns wildly and scratches at the Matron. The heavy woman pinions her arms. Blanche cries out hoarsely and slips to her knees" (417).

The violent subjugation of Blanche on the stage made the audiences question the validity of her fate in the play.

Accustomed to the musical comedies and the revived works of Aristophanes, Shaw, Chekhov, Wilde, Synge and others, the Broadway audiences in the post World War II years found the theatrical, and yet realistic, violence of Tennessee Williams' plays as mind racking and volatile. Another instance of major theatrical violence is witnessed

earlier in the third scene of the play, which carries its own title, 'The Poker Night'. Williams had once thought about it as the title for the play. It is the scene in which Blanche and Stanley truly begin to see each other as a threat. Stanley exhibits violent animosity towards his pregnant wife Stella, under the excessive influence of alcohol in this scene. It also captures the unrivalled spirit of the post war Bohemian culture and its clash with the cultural realms of the South. The kitchen of Stanley's house, which is the venue for his poker night, suggests a "sort of lurid nocturnal brilliance, the raw colors of childhood's spectrum" (286). A picture of Van Gogh's of a billiard parlor at night, which is hung in the kitchen, inspires the atmosphere of Stanley's place on the stage. Williams creates a coarse and rough environment through the use of bold primary colors for the shirts of Stanley and his friends and by focusing light on the poker table where vivid slices of watermelon, whiskey bottles and glasses are kept. Stanley's reactions towards the interruptions in his poker game by the presence of Stella and Blanche in the house, lead the audience to another episode of theatrical violence:

He impulsively smashes the white radio, switched on by Blanche in the bedroom: Stanley stalks fiercely through the portieres into the bedroom. He crosses to the small white radio and snatches it off the table. With a shouted oath, he tosses the instrument out of the window. (302)

Stella becomes the next target in his drunken stupor. He charges after Stella and there is the sound of a blow, followed by the cries of Stella. Violence, confusion, aggression dominate the scene: "Blanche screams and runs into the kitchen. The men rush forward and there is grappling and cursing. Something is over-turned with a crash." (303)

Williams thus explored an effective operatic score in such kind of theatrical violence.

He also applied music and its variable tonalities as an unerring clue to the violent scenic interpretations in this play. The doctrines of theatrical expressionism reared by Appia and Wagner, declared music as the ideal art to whose condition all the other arts aspired. Adolphe Appia explains the relevance of music to drama:

Music finds its ultimate justification in our hearts, and this occurs so directly, that its expression is thereby impalpably hallowed. When stage pictures take on spatial forms dictated by the rhythms of music they are not arbitrary, but on the contrary have the quality of being inevitable.⁶

Like Chekhov, Williams also believed in the use of music, often from an off stage source, and sound effects to heighten or comment upon a dramatic situation. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, he employs two distinct music streams, the music of the 'Blue Piano' and a faint polka strain or the 'Varsouviana'. These become the theme music for the two categories of people in the play. The music of the 'blue piano' being played in the bar room around the corner of the Kowalski residence is used to highlight the moods and lifestyle of people like Stanley, Stella, Eunice and others living in the French Quarter. "This 'Blue Piano' expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here." (243)

The faint, distant polka music that triggers in the mind of Blanche Du Bois becomes a thematic reminder of the death of Allan Grey, her young homosexual husband and a simultaneous reflection of

the guilt of Blanche. The suicide of Blanche's husband, reported violently in the play as an episode of self-shooting, takes place in the vicinity of the Moon Lake Casino. The polka music, which filters from the casino and fills the background during the death of Allan Grey, settles vehemently in the mind of Blanche. Williams' technique of identifying this music with the mind frame of Blanche and repeatedly using it as a measure to depict the subjective reality and turmoil of her mind, added to the violent presentation of Blanche Du Bois' psychology on the stage. It is introduced for the first time at the end of scene one, when Stanley meets Blanche in his house and after the initial courtesies asks her, "You were married once, weren't you?" (268) and the music of the polka rises up faintly in the distance onstage.

Blanche experiences the echoes of the same music while narrating her past to Mitch in scene six. At first, "Polka music sounds, in a minor key faint with distance" (355) and then "the Polka resumes in a major key" (355). She explains the significance of the music when she tells Mitch: "We danced the Varsouviana. Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the Casino. A few moments later - a shot!" (355)

Williams accentuates the theatrical effect of this reported episode by introducing the sound and light beam of a locomotive and juxtaposing it with the narration of her violent history: "A locomotive is heard approaching outside. She clasps her hands to her ears and crouches over. The headlight of the locomotive glares into the room as it thunders past. As the noise recedes she straightens slowly and continues speaking. (354)"

The Varsouviana steals in softly and later violently when Stanley hands over the bus ticket to Blanche on her birthday supper. It continues to ring in her mind feverishly even in scene nine: "The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it and the sense of disaster closing in on her and she seems to whisper the words of the song." (379)

The last scene also marks the audibility of this music on stage with the entry of Blanche into the bedroom. During her chase by the matron "The 'Varsouviana' is filtered into a weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle" (414). Ironically, the play ends with "the swelling music of the 'blue piano' and the muted trumpet" (419) indirectly signifying the triumph of Stanley over Blanche.

Williams displays a similar kind of theatrical violence in *Camino Real* (1953), a play that confounded critics and confused audiences. Tennessee Williams wrote about the play in its 'Foreword': "My desire was to give these audiences my own sense of something wild and unrestricted that ran like water in the mountains, or clouds changing shape in a gale, or the continually dissolving and transforming images of a dream." (420)

He creates a phantasmagoria of brutality, treachery, corruption and death on the stage to shatter the outer shell of man and reveal the decadence and rottenness within the human soul before his audiences. Critically acclaimed as a major failure, this play provides the most graphic delineation of theatrical violence on stage. The stage resources articulate the playwright's view of the intensely depressing qualities of human existence. The play's director Elia Kazan defends the play on

the basis of its strong subjectivity, conveyed through an organized stagecraft. He says:

Camino Real is the most direct subjective play of our time. It's Tennessee speaking personally and lyrically right to you; That's one reason we've pulled the audience inside the fourth wall by having the actors frequently speak directly to the spectator and by having some of the exits and entrances made through the aisles of the theatre. This device also gives a feeling of freedom.⁷

The play coordinates various theatrical dimensions to create a profoundly challenging philosophy of life and mortality.

Instead of diurnal chronology, he has substituted a feeling of time by dividing the play into sixteen blocks on the royal or real highway. Each block corresponds with a French scene, marking the entry or exit of a character and is announced to the audience by the hotel proprietor, a man who seems to take delight in toying with the romantics who wander about in degradation and in low spirits. Written in the form of a pageant and a dream, the play assumes an expressionistic form for the American theatre. The stage division and the setting contribute tremendously to capture Williams' characters in that violent middle realm between life and death where everyone had gathered at the end of their life's journey.

Lemuel Ayers, a friend of Williams from the University of Iowa, who designed the set, presented the stage as a plaza, resembling the sea ports of Tangiers, Havana, Vera Cruz, Casablanca and others, and divided it into three sections, portraying the different worlds created

by the human beings inhabiting them. The settings of these areas tend to highlight the contrast and opposition marking the life of each world. The 'Siete Mares,' a luxury hotel catering to those of substantial means and opposite to it, the 'Skid Row' which contains the Gypsy's gaudy stall, the Loan Shark's establishment and a flea bag hotel called 'Ritz Men Only' are placed on one side of the stage, representing a world where one lives in, irrespective of the conditions and quality of life chosen for the self. The other side of the stage is presented as a desolately dry square, where the real struggles of life, are fought by the inhabitants of both sides:

It becomes the totally sterile and destructive half, the way of literal or figurative death, which seems to be able to overcome the combined factions of the Ritz Men Only and the Siete Mares... From out of nowhere comes the piping of the street cleaners who are bent on sweeping up the human debris that litter the place and hauling it off in their carts to some off stage hell. The life-sustaining fountain has dried up. ... It is the spot to which the dying refugee returns from over the wall, destroyed by the frightfulness of the Terra Incognita.⁸

The third demarcation comes on the stage from a great flight of stairs upstage, that mount the ancient wall to a sort of an archway that leads out into 'Terra Incognita', a wasteland between the walled town and the distant perimeter of snow topped mountains. Scaling the wall, and escaping into this fatal wasteland, is presented as the only direct, but impossible, escape from the barrels of the street cleaners in the square.

The play showcases extreme theatrical violence through the lives of the people residing in various parts of the Camino Real. The

violent deaths, which take place on the stage during the course of the play, transpire a sense of shock and disgust in the audience. Williams did not hesitate to stress the ugliness of death on the stage. Block Two presents the ruthless shooting of a young explorer who had unsuccessfully ventured to cross the Terra Incognita:

A figure in rags, skin blackened by the sun, tumbles crazily down the steep alley to the plaza . . . the officer fires at him. He lowers his hands to his stomach, turns slowly about with a lost expression, looking up at the sky and stumbles toward the fountain. . . almost entirely ignored, as a dying pariah dog in a starving country. (444)

The blood stained young man continues to lie on the stage until the end of Block Three, when Kilroy enters and kneeling beside the dead body announces, "Hey! This guy is dead!" (460). Henceforth the body is put into a white barrel and carried away by the street cleaners.

Furthermore, Williams stages a kind of aggressive hunt when Kilroy challenges the street cleaners, who finally kill him. Kilroy's physical death on the stage follows after his futile attempts to procure an accommodation into the Siete Mares and his inability to gather courage to cross the Terra Incognita. The stage directions explain: "Kilroy swings at the Street cleaners. They circle about him out of reach, turning him by each of their movements. The swings grow wilder like a boxer. He falls to his knees still swinging and finally collapses flat on his face." (577)

Depicted as a personification of Death, the Street cleaners present a very heinous and detestable image of mortality on stage.

Williams makes the appearance of the street cleaners undergo a change, according to the status of the person whose dead body they have come to collect. He, thus, ironically and sarcastically tries to comment upon the fact that irrespective of the status or position of man, death is inevitable and similar for all. All figures that die in the play are finally carried in the same white barrel, although when they come to take the ragged youngster in Block Three, “their white jackets are dirtier than the musicians and some of the stains are red” (460) and contrary to this, “the street cleaners disguised as expensive morticians in swallowtail coats come rapidly up the aisle of the theatre and wait at the foot of the stairway for the tottering tycoon” (521), Lord Mulligan to be carried away.

Often alleged as an anti-drama, an anti-theatre and a grotesque mime, *Camino Real* turned away audiences mainly because of its raw display of violence on stage. Tennessee Williams went to the extremity of presenting the dissection of human body (through a dummy) on the stage, which made critics think about the play as a decadent pretentiousness. The last block illustrates the dissection of Kilroy’s body by a group of medical students and the discovery of his golden heart. Here, Williams uses the theatrical technique of involving the audience in the action. He extends his acting space into the auditorium by making Kilroy enter it:

Kilroy dashes off stage into an aisle of the theatre. There is a wail of a siren; the air is filled with calls and whistles, roar of motors, screeching brakes, pistol shots, thundering footsteps. The dimness of the auditorium is transected by searching rays of light – but there are no visible pursuers. (582)\

In fact, like Edward Albee, he believed in the active participation of his audience in the theatre. Albee created plays of such language and structure, that they conspired to assault the collective and individual sensibility of the audience. As Albee explains: "In nine or ten of my plays, you'll notice actors talk directly to the audience. In my mind, this is a way of involving the audience. . . I don't like the audience as voyeur, the audience as passive spectator. I want the audience as participant."⁹

Exponents of a violent dramaturgy, both Williams and Albee saw the violence and death on stage as paradoxically life giving. Albee's views expressed in one of his interviews, in fact, seem to be a reflection of Tennessee Williams' views on theatre too. He says:

If one approaches the theatre in a state of innocence, sober, without preconceptions and willing to participate; if they are willing to have the status quo assaulted; if they are willing to have their consciousness raised, their value questioned – or reaffirmed; if they are willing to understand that the theatre is a live and dangerous experience – and therefore a life giving force, then perhaps they are approaching the theatre in an ideal state and that's the audience I wish I were writing for.¹⁰

Perhaps, Williams expected a similar audience for *Camino Real* who could live through its violent journey to ultimately understand the life force behind it. Probably, the audiences could not correlate the positive redemption indicated through the breaking of violets in the mountains at the end of the play. In 1938, Artaud wrote *The Theatre and Its Double*, in which he emphasized that the dramatic experience "should disturb the senses' repose", should unleash "the repressed

unconscious” and should produce “a virtual revolt”¹¹. Artaud captured the sensibility of his audience through *The Theatre of Cruelty*. Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee also professed a theatrical art that emanated from their need of reaching out to their audiences in a different, unconventional manner that could jolt their sensibilities.

Williams made a substantial contribution to the American theatre, by animating it through language. His verbal duels generated a compelling energy within each play. He successfully captures the violent personal politics and the limited perceptions of his characters through a fiery, charged language. Williams does not use an extensively stylized, obscure or pretentious language for his characters, rather he adds local color and spontaneity through the use of simple, relevant language suitable to the situation and his characters. Through the dramatic dialogue, which is often defined as the spoken action in the play, Williams employs another device to express his idea of theatrical violence on stage. Luigi Pirandello, whose influence is evident on Tennessee Williams, discusses the importance of dialogue in his article, “Spoken Action”. He says:

Artistic miracle can only occur if the playwright finds words that are spoken action, living words that move, immediate expressions inseparable from action, unique phrases that cannot be changed to any other and belong to a definite character in a definite situation: in short, words, expressions, phrases, impossible to invent but born when the author has identified himself with his creature to the point of seeing it only as it sees itself.¹²

The verbal violence of Blanche and Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and the violently narrated story of Catherine about

Sebastian Venable in *Suddenly Last Summer*, made the American theatre-goers admire the genius of Tennessee Williams. The Broadway audiences were awe struck by the 'ape' speech of Blanche, which established an animal identity for the rough, raw and blatant people like Stanley. The spectators remained speechless for the biting violence created through the use of such words on stage as 'ape' and 'survivor of the stone age' and the description of the poker night as "a party of apes" where "night falls and other apes gather! There in front of the cave, all grunting like him, and swilling and gnawing and hulking." (323)

The famous lines of Blanche, "They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at – Elysian Fields" (246) made the audiences realize the connecting depth of death and desire. Her explorations on death incorporated verbal violence and introduced stark realities of life. Williams used with ease and confidence, words like 'rutting hulk', 'swine', 'mama's pet', and familiarities in the colloquial speech of a lower middle class American. This came as a shocking surprise to his audiences.

Broadway critics and audiences received yet another play from Williams, charged with violent language when *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* opened in New York in 1955. Williams made his spectators witness a charged and volatile action conveyed through violent dialogues. Dealing with the themes of homosexuality and mendacity, the play became a success mainly because of its strong and vibrant language that made possible the projection of such taboo themes on the stage. Theatre-goers were shocked by the open use of words like, 'son-of-a-bitch', 'drunken whelp', 'son of a-tub of-hog fat', 'goddam it', spoken by characters belonging to landed gentry. The

violent exchange of ideas between the three main characters of the play: Margaret, Brick Pollitt, and Big Daddy Pollitt, presented a sharp, bold and outrageous language before its audience, who were made to witness and experience the complexities involved in human situations and relationships.

Williams openly talked about sex and love making in this play. He used a language, which was considered indecent by certain critics but caught the attention of his audience. For instance, Big Daddy tells Brick :

...I was good in bed ... and I'm going to pick me a good one to spend them on! I'm going to pick me a choice one, I don't care how much she costs, I'll smother her in – minks! I'll strip her naked and smother her in minks and choke her with diamonds ... and hump her from hell to breakfast. (96)

He again tells Brick, "I still have desire for women and this is my sixty-fifth birthday", "I realize now that I never had me enough. I let many chances slip by because of scruples about it, scruples, convention– crap. ... " (93)

Williams gave to the Broadway audiences, heightened verbal duels between Brick and Big Daddy in Act Two of this play. The father and the son confront each other to prove the truths related to their respective lives about death and homosexuality. Big Daddy, in his attempt to know the truth behind Brick's alcoholism, invites the revelation about his terminal cancer and impending death. "Big Daddy violently charges Brick: "Don't tell me what I am, you drunken whelp! I'm going to tear this coat sleeve off if you don't set down! " (102) He again dictates : "Do what I tell you! I'm the boss here, now! I want you to know I'm back in the driver's seat now!" (103)

Audiences ran short of reactions, when they heard Big Daddy speak about mendacity to Brick:

What do you know about this mendacity thing? ... Pretenses! Ain't that mendacity? ... Having for instance to act like I care for Big Mama! – I haven't been able to stand the sight, smell, sound of that woman for forty years now. ... Pretend to love that son of a bitch of a Gooper and his wife Mae and those same screechers out there like parrots in a jungle? ... Church! – It bores the bejesus out of me but I go! – I go and sit there and listen to the fool preachers! Clubs! – Elks! Masons! Rotary! – crap. (108)

Through a violent language, Williams brought the stark realities of life before his audiences.

Big Daddy says: "The human animal is a beast that dies and if he's got money he buys and buys and buys and I think the reason he buys everything he can buy is that in the back of his mind he has the crazy hope that one of his purchases will be life everlasting!" (89)

Tennessee Williams narration of cannibalism in *Suddenly Last Summer* and the description of such places as the Encantadas and the sea beaches with serenading music, made his audiences visualize violence through speech. He compelled them to think differently with his violent expositions of speech. Williams' language on stage is a language of boldness. He expresses sexual desire in words and phrases like "That one's delicious looking, that one is appetizing" or "that one is not appetizing" (375). He describe Cabeza de Lobo, the place of

Sebastian's devouring in *Suddenly Last Summer* as "blazing white hot . . . as if a huge white bone had caught on fire in the sky and blazed so bright it was white and turned the sky and everything under the sky white with it" (420).

Tennessee Williams thus invites his audiences for a violent spectacle on stage through his plays. He provides a concrete expression to the inner violence of his characters on stage through his dramaturgy. Tennessee Williams gave to the American theatre an architectonic structure composed of word, music, dance, gesticulation, lighting and scenery. His "plastic theatre" successfully presents the complexities involved in human experience on stage. Theatre becomes a medium for the presentation of violence contained within the human personality for Williams. His theatre stands as a connotation of the distinctive American dramaturgy that presents with dexterity the violent psychological and emotional delineation of his characters on stage. His plays are thus, packed with theatrical violence in their attempt to bring out the violence within man on stage.

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M. Parimala

**Kamala Das' *A Home Near the Sea* and Jayakanthan's *Wedlock*:
Expression of Unvoiced Protest**

'Protest' has now become a prominent factor in everyday life. Bengtson says that 'the effects on the life course of an individual are pathetic even without protest' (Dunham and Bengtson: 227). One can witness the ubiquitous of protest in all fields like social, cultural, religious, economic, political, working institutions, households and so on. Protest has been defined as 'an expression or declaration of objection, disapproval or dissent, often in opposition to something a person is powerless to prevent or avoid' (Random House Dictionary, 1967: 816). One can find protest from various segments of population who fall under distinct categorization such as class, caste, race, religion etc., reacting to the disorders, discrimination, injustice and exploitation done to them. The aim of this paper is to examine the protest raised by distinctively unidentified segment of people in Indian society from the select short stories Kamala Das' *A Home Near the Sea* and Jayakanthan's *Wedlock*. It also analyses how their protest has been viewed and accepted by the given society.

Jayakanthan, one of the most prolific and powerful Tamil writers of the 20th Century has penned the story titled *Wedlock*. In

this story he portrays the life of a newly wedded couple Marudamuthu, a coolie and Ranjitham, an orphan, who make the roadside platforms as their living home. This might be a real story witnessed by the author because, it has been said that his characters are real life characters from the marginalized people living in the slums of Chennai around his party office. Ranjitham, who came from the village, could not consummate her marriage or nuptial ceremony in a city slum under the roofless roof. Her protest is revealed from the frustration born out of the helplessness of the situation. The effect of their protest yields nothing but punishment by the law. The other story *A Home Near the Sea*, written by Kamala Das, is set in a park near the sea and is about the miseries encountered by husband Arumugam and his wife in the slum. Das instead of provoking their protest silences her characters to find peace in their homeless slum at the end knowing the effect and response of their protest in the society.

The characters sketched by both the writers belong to the most deprived group of people in the society who are treated worse than the Dalits and the Blacks. These groups of people are even deprived of the aforementioned categorization and are oblivious about their class, caste, creed and religion and their protest lies in need of basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothes. Since they are humiliated as downtrodden living in ghettos, they neither have courage nor strength to voice their protest publicly against the affluent, dominating, powerful and so their protests remain unvoiced for ever. They are powerless to start any reform movements for ameliorating their life situation and nor have any collective activists to protest against. The critics, Dunham and Bengtson says, 'another neglected aspect of activists' lives has been social class,' (Dunham and Bengtson: 224) because activists are most likely to come from middle class, professional

families and not the working class, ‘the working class people do not participate in the social world where protest is salient nor are they socialized to those values that promote protest.’ (Dunham and Bengtson: 225) Moreover, they are seen as disturbances and nuisance by the neighborhood in the civilized residential areas and sometimes it happens that they themselves become the likelihood of disorders for the dominant social group to protest against.

The couples depicted in both the stories are homeless and have chosen slums as their heavenly place. The women characters Ranjitham and Arumugam’s wife find impossible to compromise with their homeless life unlike the male characters Marudamuthu and Arumugam, who think that they are fated to this life and try to console their wives. This evinces their inability to protest. In *Wedlock*, Ranjitham reveals her protests of anger, when they are not allowed to celebrate their nuptial night peacefully ‘owing to the curse of circumstances.’ (W: 12) The newly married couple Marudamuthu and Rangitham celebrates their nuptial ceremony not inside the four walls but in a public park with sky as the roof decorated by stars and mood. Besides, they face many disruptions between 10 p.m. to 2 a.m., within which the newly wedded couples’ life ended bitterly and pathetically. In the other story *A Home Near the Sea*, Arumugam’s wife expresses her dissatisfaction and quarrels with her husband for not having a house to live in and employment to survive in the society. Getting a menial job itself is a great endeavor for such platformer dwellers, since they are seen as untrustworthy people of the society. A young beggar explains to Arumugam’s wife that getting a servant job in some rich families is itself a difficult task. He says, ‘These days people are full of suspicion ... Nobody offers a job to you unless you take some certificates with you.’ (W: 93) This talk between the characters reveals how the

economically deprived people are suspected as criminals and are exploited by the upper class people.

The upper class people are not in a position to understand or accept the fact that it is the economic deprivation and poverty that turns them criminals and illegal citizens before the law. Their poor and pathetic condition to survive in this world induces them to indulge in unlawful acts like helping the smugglers to transport their goods, to have illegal sexual relationships and other possible ways to earn money to quench their appetite as described in *A Home Near the Sea*. Similarly, in the other story, through the beggar character it is revealed that the platformers involve in some unwanted criminal jobs deliberately to be caught by the police just to be detained in the prison, so that they get an opportunity to live under the roof for sometime with three meals a day. The people who are unable to withstand the monsoon usually perform illegal acts to escape from the heavy rain and cold weather preferring jail. Hence, they choose prison as the better place than the pavement, 'Jail will be an ideal place for the coming months.' (W: 94) In another incident, Ranjitham and Marudamuthu are seen as uncivilized, indecent, and filthy who spoil the beauty of the nation. Seeing the couples so close to each other in the public park in the midnight, a passerby clad in white mocks at them saying 'this park's turned very nasty' (W: 14) Even crows, birds and dogs express their anger to disrupt the couple, 'Crows flapped about restlessly within the leafy branches of a huge banyan in the park. Was it an illusion of dawn that disturbed them? A few cawed as well. (W: 16) Later they are suspected as prostitutes and are arrested by the police. The couple pleads before him to prove them husband and wife, whereas the policeman could not bring himself to see that sacred symbol of wedlock, 'His law had not taught him to probe hearts and discern

emotion, only to burrow into darkness and unearth crime. (W: 19) This incident answers the question raised by Usha Bande, ‘Is the law really would redress their problems that they face or it crush them underfoot?’ (Bande: 9) Therefore, law dose not raise the head of the underprivileged rather it shun their voices or protest and punish them further to live in this sinful society.

On the contrary, both the writers emphasize that destitute are more generous, kind legal and selfless people when compared to the affluent and the people in power, who indulge in all kinds of social evils and live as a hypocrite in the civilized society. In *Wedlock*, though Ranjitham is fret with her platform like, later consoles her frustrated husband by making a very ironical statement about the upper class people, ‘Don’t we know about all those people and their bungalows and cars? Their husband – wife stories are the talk of the town. Do you really think they love each other as much as we do?’ (W: 18) Similarly, Kamala Das, in *A Home near the Sea* depicts her characters so generous and selfless to mock at the upper class community, who procure and secure wealth for their future generations and being helpless and unkind towards the working class. Despite being poor, Arumugam’s wife remains selfless and generous in helping a young beggar with a blanket to protect him from cold and rain. When she was asked about her safety, she just laughs and sleeps peacefully smiling. Arumugam’s wife, who protests her living in the slum, later consoles herself after hearing the talk of a young beggar who brought awareness about their humiliation in the privileged society. He explains her aesthetics of life in slum and comforts her to sleep peacefully, ‘You see the flowers of the park and the blue sea. And at night you lie watching the sky with all its stars. This is an ideal life in my eyes.’ (HNS: 95)

To conclude, the regional writers Jayakanthan and Kamala Das have touched the distinct group of people, whom others have ignored or feared to raise their protest, considering it meagerly worthless. But, in a way both the writers act as passive protesters through their stories in not demanding any help from the government to reorganize their life style and to raise their status in the society. By ending the stories realistically and irrevocably, the writers evince the readers, the survival of the economically deprived people and their unvoiced protest along with the bad effects without exaggerating the situation. One thing to be proud of these two writers is that at least these people are given space in their literary page. Most importantly, everyone should comprehend that, ameliorating the pathetic condition of the destitute and other downtrodden people will change the fate of our nation and will erase the shame on our country. Therefore, the government should come forward to stretch its helping hand and to heed to their silenced voices.

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Chandra N.

**Unravelling the Self:
A Study of Atwood's 'Journey to the Interior' and
Kamala Das's 'An Introduction'**

India and Canada being commonwealth countries have undergone colonialism in different ways. Therefore, both can be reviewed with postcolonial perspectives. Therefore, postcolonial critics such as Fanon, Said, Bhabha, and others started writing on postcolonial impacts in the commonwealth countries i.e. former colonised notions. One of the postcolonial issues with regard to is nationalism and self-identity. One of the most influential and challenging interventions in the debate concerning nationalist representations is Homi K. Bhabha's essay 'Dissemi Nation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation'. This is because, in Bhabha's argument, who become split by similar kinds of ambivalence to those that threaten the coherence of colonial discourses. In making this argument, the essay might make us think about the worrying similarities between colonial discourses and nationalist representations.

Narratives, which claim otherwise, can, do so, only through the marginalization of certain groups, yet even this claim will be undone by the disjunctive temporalities, which they cannot help but create. In Bhabha's work, nationalist discourses are ultimately illiberal and are

challengeable. Therefore, the problem of getting self-identity existed in the former colonised countries. The mixed culture and different ways of living changed the people of the former colonised countries. They mix their culture with the former colonizers and the originality is lost. Not only their culture, their language, the way of living, their costumes, their food habits and everything were changed. The people in the commonwealth countries have to adapt to new systems of power structures and being liberated and also they cannot leave their old tradition. This stance of being in-between two cultures makes them to suffer to get a self-identity.

If this is the case with the colonised men, the problems of women differ from men. The ‘double colonisation’ of women is the reason for that. Kirsten Holost Petersen and Anna Rutherford have used the phrase ‘a double colonisation’ to refer to the ways in which women have simultaneously experienced the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy. It affects women from both the colonised and the colonising cultures in various ways. Colonialism can add other kinds of patriarchal systems to an already unequal situation; it is not always the sole or primary source of patriarchy. Ketu H. Katrak has argued in ‘Indian Nationalism, Gandhian “Satyagraha”, and the Engendering of National Narratives’ that Mahatma Gandhi’s resistance to British colonial rule in India during the 1920s and 1930s used specifically gendered representations for the purposes of Indian nationalism but ultimately did little to free Indian women from their patriarchal subordination to men. Male critics like Fanon, Said, Bhabha and others have become so prominent in discussions of postcolonial theory and Boyce Davies has become suspicious of the male-centred bias of postcolonial critique, and asks ‘where are the women in the theorising of postcoloniality? If the gender difference in postcolonial critics remains

male-dominant, postcolonialism will like colonialism, be a male-centred and ultimately patriarchal discourse in which women's voices are marginalised and silenced.

This is the reason for the existence of less number of women writers in former colonised countries. After Third world postcolonial feminist writers like Spivak, Mohanty, Talbat and others women writers became more and more and they started writing their problems. Margaret Atwood, a Canadian writer and Kamala Das, an Indian writers are selected for the analysis to reveal their suffering in postcolonial times. Atwood's 'Journey to the Interior' and Kamala Das's 'An Introduction' portray their dilemma in getting self-identity. Both the writers are questioning their self-identities in their works. This confusion in identity is due to their previous colonised situation.

In Atwood's 'Journey to the Interior', her confused mind set-up is revealed. She is confused with her landscape; she could not find any difference in the landscape. Both the British and French have occupied her country. She gets more identities with many cultures, which their country got from their former colonisers. She says the trees, the cliffs, and other common things she finds out remains same, "there are similarities" (Atwood: 184). One thing she could not understand is why the people in other two countries have different identities. She points out how Canada's originality has also lost its identity. The Canadian identity has taken different forms. She asks if there is no difference in landscapes, why the Canadians struggle to get their 'self-identity'. In postcolonial days also, the memories of the colonial days prevent the Canadians to get their identity. They are divided separately and kept apart from their neighbour countries. Even after colonialism, the notion of 'former colonized country' remains the

same. She finds no difference in the days of colonialism and in the days of postcolonialism, because she has no identity even after getting freedom from colonizers.

The last stanza of Atwood's poem shows her confused stage about getting her identity. It is easier for her to lose her way even if she finds out an identity; it will easily vanish away and mix up with another identity. Therefore, the confusion exists. Atwood talks about the possibilities of getting Canadian identity. She says there are many problems in the mind to find out status and say, "who am I", even at the end, there is no such identity is found. She also says "there are no destinations" and she is "walking in circles again" (Atwood: 184). She concludes by saying it is easier to lose her identity in this landscape than in any other landscape, "...it is easier for me to lose my way/ Forever here, than in other landscapes" (185)...

Atwood tries to get such an identity and continues her journey in her other works also: *Surfacing* is one among them, "While *Surfacing* has elicited a sizeable body of scholarship dealing with the themes of dual-discovery, the divided self and journey to the interior" (Clark: 3)... Atwood's quest for identity still continues and mentions this in through one of her protagonists where "she (the protagonist) rejects conventional gender-determinations of her life, searcher for the new clues, invents rituals, and destroys idolatrous artefacts in furious ritual cleansings of the old family cabin, but acts of will are not enough in this paradigmatic quest for identity" (Larson: 31).

In Kamala Das's 'An Introduction', she talks about the problems a woman faces in patriarchal society. She says that she is not ignorant and she knows what 'power' means. This is written in

postcolonial mode and it talks about double colonisation. According to her, not only the British but also the patriarchal structures rules over the women in her society. The patriarchal society and the culture are dominating women in her society. She also wants freedom and to get an identity as a free bird. She narrates how the culture has enslaved her. She does not say only man is dominating, but the whole patriarchal society and the elder family members are the representatives of that.

In the first part of the poem, she talks about writing in English. Though it is the language of the colonised, she feels comfortable in writing in English. The other people interrupt her by saying not to write in English and she does not like that idea. She wants to live with her wishes/desires. She questions them "Why not let me speak in/ Any language I like" (Das, 1976: 47)? In the middle part of the poem, she tells about the gender differentiation in patriarchal society. When she grew, she understood the male domination directly from her husband. The elders refuse every interest of hers. The elders are the representatives of patriarchal society. She touches the double colonisation of women in colonial countries. She is asked by the elders to behave like a woman, be smart in quarrelling with the servants, not to husband or to the elders. In Kamala Das's case, she hunts the identity everywhere and that is evident in most of her writings, which is found in her another poem "A Losing Battle", where she finds that men will not allow the women to any identity, "...Men are worthless to trap/them/ Use the cheapest bait of all, but never/ Love, which in a woman must mean tears/And a silence in the blood" (Das, 1969: 550).

Therefore, there is a ladder, where the woman can dominate the servants, if they want, but one should not protest her own husband or elders. This hierarchy does not satisfy her. She wants to know how

she is different from man and why do they dominate women. She wants to get away from the traditional framework of being a woman, whereas the elders are pushing her towards it. She confuses to get a self-identity. In the end of the poem, she also talks about her identity that she is a saint, she is “the beloved”, and she is “the betrayed” one. She concludes the poem by saying “I too call myself I” (Das: 49), but she does not get the meaning for ‘I’ and, she has not recognised her identity as a fellow human being in her society.

Both the poets, Das and Atwood, are talking about getting their identities. Atwood is talking about her landscape, whereas Das is talking about patriarchal domination. Both write about their own personal experiences in their poems, yet they are the representatives of their native land and people/women. They fail to get an identity due to colonisation and there is no solution to get an identity in the patriarchal cum former-colonised societies. Both the writers’ works stand for their lives, even though it seems autobiographical; it gives voice for their colleagues. Atwood gives voice for every Canadian and his/her identity, whereas Kamala Das gives voice for every woman in her society who thirsts for freedom of living and freedom of thinking. For Atwood the split in her nation’s culture is the reason for this dilemma and for Kamala Das, it is the choice of selecting a language among three languages, bring the confusion to get the identities. Choice is the reason for the dilemma in getting an identity, if there is no choice, there will be single identity. If choices are more, the problems will also be more to get an identity. Too many identities confuse them to conclude their ‘self-identity’ and they fail to recognize their self-identity.

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Book Review

Perspectives on Women Empowerment edited by Satendra Kumar. Jaipur : Yking Books, 2010, pp. 298, Rs. 995. ISBN:978-93-80930-09-1.

The past few decades have witnessed the focusing of attention on gender issues in general and women empowerment in particular among policy makers, feminist scholars, political scientists, sociologists, historians and litterateurs too. 'Empowerment' has become a catchphrase and a magic bullet that can fast track the process of social transformation. Representation, assertion and identity formation are key elements in empowerment of women as it entails a voice out of centuries long silencing. It is a complex concept and its interpretations vary according to ideological perspectives. The book under review edited by Dr. Satendra Kumar is an attempt in this regard.

The book consists of thirty two research papers on a varied range of issues but the basic emphasis is a literary perspective of women empowerment as the title itself unfolds. Dr. Kumar has sincerely culled papers with a view to giving holistic picture of women as a gender category and their quest for asserting due position in civilizational matrix. Most of articles are focused on writings of leading literatures of English, Hindi, Kannada etc. The anthology includes the wresting of a number of renowned novelists, play-writers, story writers, poets and literatures

like Premchand, Mulkraj Anand, Ismat Chughtai, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Kumar Markandaya, Jhumpa Laheri, Mahesh Dattani, Girish Karnad, Kamala Das, Bharti Mukherjee, Githa Hariharan, Arundhati Roy, Margaret Laurence, Manju Kapur etc. for investigating and reading into the silences. This is suggestive that editor has possibly chosen all the leading voices that echo the contemporary dreams, aspirations and hidden feelings of women carrying the burden of inhuman patriarchy and unjust social-cultural practices of tradition bound society.

Prof. S.S. Deo's brief introduction in which he holds that the question of empowerment is more pertinent (in context of South Asian women) particularly in regard to her cultural, social and the domestic constraints (p.2), sets the tone of the book under review. The tone finds full expression in the first paper by Rajul Bhargava. She, analysing the writings by women historians and scholars like Sukumari Bhattacharya, Romila Thapar, Uma Chakravarti, Prabhati Mukherjee, Namita Gokhale, Nirmala Garg etc., concludes that women enact their writing against the gendered perceptions perpetrated by society with the avowed aim of throwing up the differences and reiterate it in very different ways. Shrawan K. Sharma in his essay posits his stand of a harmonious model and says that though social, legal, political and economic independence is must for women, it cannot give them complete independence, satisfaction and inner happiness. He adds that the Revolutionary changes are easier to carry than to sustain and so it is through self analysis and self- understanding and through vigilance and courage, they can begin to change their lives (p.26). Hemalatha K. in her essay titled 'Changing Trends in the Status of Women' explores diverse groups within 'women' itself and categorically highlights the gender discrimination and injustices prevailing in upper middle class

elite of society on the one hand and dalit woman on another. With long quotations from same text *Poisoned Bread* the author has made the essay undue lengthy which could be avoided.

Surekha Dangwal and Shruti Khanna co-authored paper enquires into the powerful personality dynamics of women in Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*. Laurence, a prolific writer of outstanding caliber, attempted to present the psyche of a Canadian woman, who finds her way to spiritual redemption. Two papers in the anthology one by Sumitra Kukreti and another by Nalini Jain are based on Shashi Deshpande's fictions. Sumitra Kukreti rightly observes that women characters in Deshpande's novel *Small Remedies* overcome the barriers of caste, class and gender and become an archetype of success by deconstructing the stereotype perception of women.(p.5-4). Malti Agrawal's paper is special in anthology on two counts: first the article is based on one of Premchand's shortest novel *Nirmala*. Premchand's writing is of landmark significance in all its capacities to depict and portray the experienced realities of middle class woman. Malti Agrawal draws many parallels in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Manju Kapur's novel *Home* with comparison to *Nirmala*. Manoj Kumar in his essay based on Namita Gokhale's *Paro* asserts that by presenting the characters of *Paro* and *Priya* as foil and counterfoil, the novelist has highlighted the obsessive patterns of behavior among women - those who are victims owing to their socio-economic dependence on man and also those who wants to negate the pre-fixed forms of the society. K.K. Vishwakarma's paper examines the techniques of narration in Kamal Markanday's novels and comes to the conclusion that the events are narrated chronologically without repetition and meandering. H.C.S. Chauhan's paper attempts to introspect the plight of an Indian woman through the ages and delineates

the dichotomous position of Indian women, described in Holy Scriptures. But he fails to understand the historical realities of women during the age of Buddha. It is undisputed, historical reality despite Buddha's preaching on equality and compassion women were not in bitter position with comparison to Vedic period. We get truly a dark picture of women as depicted in Jatakas. Anju Bhatt's paper based on Ismat Chughtai's *Lifting the veil* (a collection of short stories) deals with feminine sexuality middle class gullibility and the evolving conflicts in the modern Muslim world. She reaches at the conclusion that *Lifting the veil* is truly a saga of women's problems in the sociological context depicting a very hidden emotion laid deep and undiscovered in the unexplored female psyche. O.P. Dwivedi's essay takes the question of 'positionality of subalterns' in Arundhati Ray's *The God of Small Things* and highlights the failure of author to give subalterns their voice. But Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak's paper *Can Subaltern Speak* focuses on alternative paradigm which one should take into account. Two articles in the anthology are devoted to Manju Kapur's novels - one by Ajay Kumar Sharma, who examines the narratives and qualifies the energy trends of modernity described in Manju Kapur's novel *A Married Woman* and another by Satendra Kumar who painstakingly ventured to study Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* in reference to A.J. Greimas's semiotic analysis. Some of the papers in anthology are devoted to role of women in agriculture, their participation in informal sector and other aspects of economic relations. B.N. Pandey and Pratima Pandey have discussed in length role of women in productive process of agriculture and emphasized on 'Feminization of agriculture'.

To sum up, the book is undoubtedly a fruitful critical document that presents holistic view on literary perspective of women

empowerment. The editor's endeavour is praiseworthy to integrate heterogeneous voices of women as social class. Women's empowerment is a holistic idea for struggle that challenges not only patriarchy but the mediating struggles of class, cast, ethnicity and religion. Most of the writings on women empowerment revolve around their political representation at various levels but they certainly are not sufficient measures for upliftment. Literature being the mirror of society is one of the most powerful instruments of identity formations. Dr. Satendra Kumar's work possibly reveals the spirit and intellectual ethos of what Amartya Sen calls 'the argumentative Indian'.

Sanjay Kumar

Book Review

Paul Hoffman. *The Left Hand of God*. UK: Penguin, ISBN-10: 0718155181. PRICE: £ 7.78.

Paul Hoffman has worked as a magazine editor, a science journalist, a publishing executive and a television personality. Paul Hoffman has written two novels *The Wisdom of Crocodiles*, and *The Golden Age of Censorship* earlier. *The Left Hand of God* is his first third novel. This is a fantasy and genre work appeared as the first volume in a new epic trilogy (a group of three related novels). *The Left Hand of God* possesses 448 pages divided over forty-six numbered chapters. Narration is via numerous characters both major and minor, but mainly follows the protagonist, Thomas Cale.

The Sanctuary of the Redeemers is a vast, harsh, cold, unforgiving and desolate place where aspiration and joy are not welcome and expected. Most of its occupants are boys and cowered under the terrifying regime of Lord Redeemers for years whose cruelty and violence have the only purpose i.e. to serve in the name of the One True Faith. The boys are fed only enough to keep them alive. They are leading a hellish life.

In the vast fortress which is the sanctuary of the Redeemers, a violent religious order, a boy of fifteen and cassock-clad hero dwells.

He has long-forgotten his real name, but is now called Thomas Cale. He is untamed, secretive, strange, witty, attractive, violent, profoundly bloody-minded, traditional macho hero, devilish and cunning. He is so used to cruelty that he seems immune, but one day he witnesses a terrible crime which makes him and his two friends flee to the distant city of Memphis. When the Redeemers launch a fatal attack on the far larger and more powerful Empire, Cale's coveted skills are called upon to help the Redeemers.

On the downside *The Left Hand of God* is the novel which is replete with strange contrasts. Fourteen or fifteen years old characters, for instance, who at times acted their age, but more often than not, acted far removed from their teenage years. Other contrasts in *The Left Hand of God* include the tone of the book which ranges wildly from humorous to witty, to adventurous and to serious without any real logic or sense. On account of these different contrasts, it's almost impossible to describe *The Left Hand of God*. One cannot proclaim with conviction to whom the novel should be recommended – minor or adult. Much of the time it would be felt like one is reading an adult novel because of the contrasts, occasional obscenity and verbosity.

Many times the story of the novel almost falters. The pace is a little too breathless at times as the book sacrifices depth for pace. It has a slow building tension, even though the story gets momentum in the first instance. Characters are little specified, the actions little too obvious and the transition as well as evolution of the characters rather uneven. Characters fail to change, grow or develop in any particularly notable ways.

The world depicted in the novel is a kind of composite nowhere land. The world building is bizarre and so is beyond comprehension. There are also places where the world building is a little deliberate and forced. Though it may be to impress and amuse. Paul has created the world that is stranger than any place we know. Places that we know are indeed different. The geography of the world is incredibly vague and is not helped by the use of familiar place names. Moreover, the names of characters given in a sub-Gormanghastian style, like IdrisPukke, Desmond and Chancellor Vipond are also annoying and queer. Besides these factors, cultures have formed around different concepts and religion has taken a twisted and convoluted path towards something strangely funny but shocking.

Notwithstanding the above factors, one would enjoy reading about Thomas Cale and varied cast of characters which include Vague Henri, Kleist, Riba, Redeemer Bosco, IdrisPukke, Chancellor Vipond, Marshall Materazzi, Arbell Swan-Neck and Captain Albin etc. The cast of characters range from very awesome gang leaders to funny, mysterious yet comic ex-military types. Paul deals with everyone with an expert, solemn and benign touch. Hence it is very interesting. Secondly, even though the plot is full of commonplace ideas as war, fighting a duel, being picked on by bullies, falling in love, and so on, the suspense is so condensed that a reader would constantly keep guessing till the superb twist ending.

Paul's writing is really easy on the mind, poetic and beautiful in places, charging along with incredible pace and tension. His writing seems entirely suited to Fantasy. It has tremendous momentum. The title does really capture what the book is about. It is both a haunting

literary thriller and a deeply evocative testament to the inner complexities that mark all of our lives.

Paul has created a world that is at once weirder and stranger than any place. He has created a terrifying world and filled it with strange and complex varied cast of characters. Paul Hoffman's *The Left Hand of God* is a dark novel, haunting and exciting. The tale is appealing; the fight scenes are exciting and the characters easily recognisable. It both frustrates and entertains, but ultimately can be a rewarding experience as long as readers afford to ignore the hype

In closing, the author's accessible writing style, youthful protagonists, light humor, amusing world-building characterization and impeccable narration add to his merits as a novelist. Likeable characters, unpredictability of the plot, entertaining story, quirky dialogue and a spellbinding sense of mystery regarding the direction of the series make the novel distinct. From the first sentence one can tell that the book is a page turner. Let us wait in anticipation of the second volume in the epic trilogy to find in which direction the story will move.

S. K. Singh

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**The Female Face of God : Some Thoughts
Inspired from Paulo Coelho**

Paulo Coelho tries to invoke the female face of God, especially in his novel, *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*. This powerful idea has been a constant factor in the works of Coelho. All energy is basically feminine and yet it has to fight for recognition in the realms of formal religions, and social and cultural set-up. This has been one of the greatest ironies of human civilization. Coelho has his own way of presenting things. *By the River...* is not a very long novel. It is very artistically created. The atmosphere, the symbols and the thrust areas have been carefully chosen. 'River' and 'Weeping' – both these words refer to water. Water is a feminine symbol; it refers to creation and regeneration. Both the symbols do not possess any definite shape. Both 'river' and 'weeping' acquire shape and color as per the circumstances; they can be widely and differently interpreted. The word 'I' in the title brings sensitivity. 'I' makes the title genuine and sincere. The biblical reference is obvious. If we look at the title, we will find it to be strange. At the same time, it is loaded with meaning. By the biblical reference, religion comes into picture. The sentence sends strong religious as well as feminine signals. This is how I will interpret the novel. Religious and feminine spirits have been combined.

Here is an acceptable alternative to the present understanding of religion. The masculine tone of formal religions all over the world is intimidating, monopolistic and quite unfair.

The figure of Eve dominates Western literature. Eve is the looming Western archetype for women in general; so much so that the word 'Eve' stands for all girls and women. We can quote thousands of literary and ordinary expressions to prove the point. Now going further, we can see that Eve is a weak symbol for whole womanhood. Jung said long back that Eve represents the natal stage of female consciousness. Eve stands for instant gratification. She cannot think. She cannot wait. She does not know the meaning of higher ideals like sacrifice and purity. She is shown to be born out of Adam's ribs. The vicious male conspiracy could not have gone further in showing the earthly creator (woman) being born of a man's ribs. Eve is of course the cause of everyone's fall. This is one thing common among all formal religions. Hindu scriptures also hold the woman to be the tempter. The archetype shows the man as an ascetic absorbed in meditation. A woman (an Urbashi or a Rambha) appears, dances, and seduces him to carnal pleasures. This is very cruel of formal religions.

Coelho presents an alternative in the form of Mother Mary. A pure woman holding her child by the side of a fountain or river is the dominating picture of this novel. We get a refreshing alternative female image. 'How much time must pass before we accept a Holy Trinity that includes a woman? The Trinity of the Holy Spirit, the Mother and the Son?' (148)

The concept of 'purity' becomes very typical when one speaks of women. Purity, chastity, virginity – traditional religions all over the

world have burdened the female folk with these heavy ideas. Guilt seems to be a female forte. How often our mindset has been corrupted by pictures of a girl confessing and a man listening to her confessions. Coelho does not shy away from treading into forbidden territories of female purity. He is talking about religion. He is talking about an alternative spirituality. He cannot ignore the all important issue of a woman's purity. Coelho's idea takes a great burden off the shoulders of women. No one is marginalized. Purity is in the mind. Self respect is the highest incarnation of purity. To live with one man compromising one's own dignity is no purity. There is no nobility in forced suffering. Suffering without a purpose is weakness. Therefore we have a prostitute touching saintly heights in *Eleven Minutes*. Maria's profession does not prevent her from experiencing true love. Similarly in *The Witch of Portobello*, Athena is declared a witch but actually who throw her away are satanic. The following lines that I quote mark the hypocrisy and devilishness of the institution of formal religion. These words are also important because they mark the strength of a woman who can raise her voice.

‘A curse on this place!’ said the voice. ‘A curse on all those who never listened to the words of Christ and who have transformed his message into a stone building. For Christ said: Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ Well, I ‘m heavy laden, and they won’t let me come to Him. Today I’ve learnt that the Church has changed those words read: ‘Come unto me all ye who follow rules, and let the heavy laden go hang!’ ... ‘I swear that I will never set foot in a church ever again. Once more, I’ve been abandoned by a family and this time it has nothing to do with financial difficulties or with the immaturity of those who marry

too young. A curse upon all those who slam the door in the face of a mother and her child! You're just like those people who refused to take in the Holy Family, like those who denied Christ when he most needed a friend!' (55-56)

Religions across the globe have become institutions without spirit. They follow the rules but do not follow the intention behind those words. That is why women are generally at the receiving end of all religions. That is why a new faith, a new order, a new beginning is required that recognizes the female face of God, does not shun women in the name of purity, and does not exploit them physically or emotionally.

Coelho's writing directly connotes to spirituality, mysticism, Sufism, and alternative ways to pray God. In *By the River...*, he is bold to suggest that God should be prayed in the female face and female ways. His method of conveying this message is unique. There is mist in the atmosphere. There is rain. There are men and women silently weeping, mediating, and moving in trance in far away dream-like locations. The method is beautiful.

The Witch of Portobello by Paulo Coelho is another example where he sets out to resurrect 'fallen women', women who have been cast away from society. He is interested in very fundamental questions like 'what is purity', 'what is justice', 'who can actually deliver justice' etc. The power of one human being or for that matter a group of human beings to pronounce verdict, to declare someone as 'good' or 'bad' is questionable. The question of purity becomes important in connection with establishing the female face of God because a woman is a source of creation. All women are ultimately mothers. All girls are future mothers. This is how religion perceives women. The production

house must be pure; only then the product will be good. All human beings identify with their mothers. The figure of 'mother' lies at the core of anyone's consciousness. Therefore, there is this burden of purity. This burden of purity is perhaps the greatest reason why the Western world has drifted away from religion. Women have found it impracticable. Women are the carriers of culture and religion and family traditions. Once women do not identify with a set of religious beliefs, it gets impossible to perpetuate those ideas in practice. This is the reason why new beliefs are required. Every age must have its own interpretation of religion.

There is no problem with an Oriental soul accepting the female face of God. God is worshipped in her various female incarnations throughout the Oriental belt of consciousness. In the Western dogma, God is strictly male. Coelho's effort is to change that. Mother Mary must be included in the trinity. He hopes to engulf the materialistic, dry, hopeless world with the waves of female consciousness. Water, shapelessness, tears, flexibility, generosity, creativity will finally defeat reason, masculinity, physical power, cruelty, competitiveness and a new world order will be created. That is why there is this deliberate effort to shun away reason. Coelho's world is incomplete without miracles, prophecies, trances, voices, phantoms and so on.

Marginalization as a concept has been under severe intellectual scrutiny in the recent past. It all depends on the frame of mind with which we view a scenario. West-centric, male-centric, reason-centric, money-centric world-view marginalizes a number of significant segments of world. Following Paolo Coelho's blog also helped me in understanding things from his perspective. Rumi, Rabindranath Tagore, a farmer, sometimes a Sufi saint are his persons of the week. There

are beautiful Jataka or Zen tales. The following one is significant as it underlines parameters of justice.

‘During one of Bankei’s classes, a pupil was caught stealing.

All the disciples demanded he be expelled, but Bankei did nothing.

The following week, the pupil stole again. The others, irritated, demanded that the thief be punished.

“How wise you all are,” said Bankei. “You know what is right and wrong, and you can study anywhere you like. But this poor brother – who does not know what is right or wrong – has only me to teach him. And I shall go on doing that.”

A flood of tears purified the thief’s face; the desire to steal had disappeared.’ (www.paolocoelhoblog.com dated 1.10.10)

This female face of God is evoked basically to generate self-worth and self-respect in people who think that they have fallen or people who have faced big tragedies or people burdened with unspeakable guilt. If we look closely, this will include the whole of present day society. There is lots of unhappiness around. The pressure to be successful, to be happy, and to be presentable – this pressure has marred the beauty of life. Coelho’s effort is to revive the original sense of wonder in living. These lines are good- ‘Try to feel good about yourself even when you feel like the least worthy of creatures. Reject all those negative thoughts... surrender yourself to dance or to silence or to everyday activities... Everything is worship if your mind is focused on the present moment.’ (Blog: 28.8.2010)

The account is further given in the following way:

Happiness is a relative term. There is nothing like absolute happiness in this world. Society tries to define how ideals should be manifested in reality. Currently, for example, the ideal of beauty is to be thin, and yet thousands of years ago all the images of goddesses were fat. It's the same with happiness: there are a series of rules, and if you fail to follow them, your conscious mind will refuse to accept the idea that you're happy. The element of 'conditions apply' vanishes the moment one thinks of God as Mother. A mother never puts conditions on her love towards her children. God is mother. The moment we accept this, many things get uncomplicated. Whether you worshipped regularly or not, what you ate, what you did and with whom – all these considerations get dissolved and at once one feels accepted. The idea of performance curbs your potential. Start doing what you want to do and everything else will be revealed to you. Believe that God is the Mother and looks after her children and never lets anything bad happen to them. As children there is no problem in crying. Accept your weaknesses. In order for us to liberate the energy of our strength, our weakness must first have a chance to reveal itself. This is a big lesson indeed. If I will not accept my follies, my wickedness, my dirty thoughts, how am I going to overcome them. Acceptance of evil is the first step towards defeating it. I quote, 'In order for us to understand the powers we carry within us and the secrets that have already been revealed, it was first necessary to allow the surface — expectations, fears, appearances — to be burned away.' (Blog: 4.10.2010)

Coelho again and again advocates nurturing of doubts. One day this is how his blog began, ‘**Lord**, protect our doubts, because Doubt is a way of praying. It is Doubt that makes us grow because it forces us to look fearlessly at the many answers that exist to one question.’ (Blog: 7.10.2010) There is no point in taking oneself too seriously. The possibility of change, growth and improvement is one the noblest human attributes, We must not lose them. Ego, hardened attitudes, dogmas, written laws, rituals – they tend to destroy the purest of human gifts, namely, adaptation, acceptance, improvisation, amalgamation. In the end, we have to say that human spirit must prevail. The lesser the formal rules, the better.

A new definition of morality, a new concept of religion is emerging. Every age needs its own ideas. We must have our own set of beliefs. The present moment demands that everyone must follow one’s own religion. I will close this discussion with a quotation by Coelho: ‘Yes. The world is at a point when many people are receiving the same order: Follow your dreams, transform your life, take the path that leads to God. Perform your miracles. Cure. Make prophesies. Listen to your guardian angel. Transform yourself. Be a warrior, and be happy as you wage the good fight. Take risks.’ (*By the River...* , 151)

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