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M.S. Kushwaha

### Some Reflections on the Application of Indian Poetics

Not only the opponents but also the advocates of Indian poetics insist on the need of applying it to modern or western texts, though their motives are far different. The opponents argue that Indian poetics is the product of a literary culture which is not only confined to India but which also no longer operates even in this country. How can it apply to a western text which originates from a different cultural context? On the other hand, the advocates of Indian poetics hold that the theories propounded by Indian poetics are universally valid; it is another matter that they had not applied them to complete texts. The two recent collections of essays - *East West Poetics at Work*, edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah (New Delhi, 1994) and *Indian Poetics and Modern Texts*, edited by P.K. Rajan and Swapna Daniel (New Delhi, 1998) — are obviously intended to demonstrate the applicability of Indian literary theories. While the former includes about twelve essays on the application of Indian poetics to modern/western texts, the latter is exclusively devoted to this task. There are also full-length studies on the application of the *rasa* theory to western texts. Of these mention may be made of J.B. Paranjape's *Old Lamp for the New: A Study of William Faulkner's Novels in the Light of Rasadhvani Siddhanta* (New Delhi, 1982), Rama Kant Sharma's *Hardy and the Rasa Theory*

(New Delhi, 1997), and Priyadarshi Patnaik's *Rasa in Aesthetics* (New Delhi, 1997) wherein all *rasas* are illustrated with examples from western literature. Similarly, *Vakrokti* has been applied to various English poems in Shrawan K. Sharma's *Kuntaka's Vakrokti Siddhanta: Towards an Appreciation of English Poetry* (Meerut, 2004), and *aucitya* theory to Shelley's poetry in Archana D. Tyagi's *A Study of Shelley's Poetry in the Light of Ācārya Ksemendra's Aucitya Siddhanta* (New Delhi, 2008). In fact, there is no point in contending that Indian poetics cannot be applied to modern or western literature simply because it is based on Sanskrit literature or represents a specific literary culture. A literary theory, worth its name, always transcends the time and place of its origin. It is concerned with matters which are common to all literatures. Indian poetics, too, is no exception. It deals with questions of universal significance. Of its six major theories, the *rasa* is concerned with the emotive content, while *rīti*, *alamkāra* and *vakrokti* are related to form. *Dhvani* centres on meaning, while *aucitya* underscores the general principle of propriety in the employment of not only various elements of a literary work but also literary theories. Obviously, there is nothing peculiarly Indian about these theories except the fact that they have developed in India. The three topics with which Indian poetics is concerned — content, form and meaning -- constitute every work of literature.

John Oliver Perry's allegation that Indian poetics represents 'religious view' or 'a Hindu value system' is grossly misconceived<sup>1</sup>. For one thing, he singles out only *rasa-dhvani* theory, and associates it with 'spiritual experience -- that of bliss'. The spiritual experience, it may be pointed out, is a universal experience, not circumscribed to 'religious view' or 'a Hindu value system'. Secondly, the *rasa* theory has been 'spiritualized' by its commentators, especially Bhatta Nayaka and Abhinavagupta (and his followers); Bharata's own approach is down to earth. There is nothing spiritual about his theory of *rasa*,

which is firmly grounded in human psychology. In fact, the theories of Indian poetics are purely literary; they have nothing to do with religion and ethics.

It may also be observed that Indian literary theories have their analogues in western critical thought. There is discernible resemblance between the *alamkāra* theory and figures of speech or tropes, *rīti* and the concept of style, and *Vakrokti* and the concept of 'deviance' in stylistics. Of course, there is nothing like *rasa* in western aesthetics, but the centrality of emotions in a work of art is recognised by western aestheticians and critics like I.A. Richards<sup>2</sup>. The *Rasa* theory's emphasis on the emotional impact of drama finds a parallel in Aristotle, and its objective to communicate a distinct emotional experience finds an echo in Tolstoy who proclaims: "Art is that human activity which consists in one man's consciously conveying to others, by certain external signs, the feelings and also experiencing them"<sup>3</sup>. *Dhvani*, which propounds that meaning in poetry is suggested, not stated, finds its forceful allies in the French Symbolists<sup>4</sup>. *Aucitya* is called *prepon* in Greek and *decorum* in Latin, and is discussed by both Aristotle and Horace.

There are actually no borders in the realm of literature. The literature of one country is read and appreciated in another country. Speculations on literature are equally of a universal character. At the same time, it is also true that no theory, however comprehensive, can cover all literary works. Like the Creator of the world, a true writer follows no set guidelines<sup>5</sup>; all genuine literary works are marked by novelty and freshness. And this is a never-ending process. Hence an ultimate and all-embracing theory of literature is an impossibility.

The trouble starts when a literary theory begins to stake absolutist claims. And this happened in the history of Indian poetics. It is marked by a search for the 'soul' (*âtman*) or essence of poetry. *Alamkāra*, *rīti*, *dhvani*, *vakrokti*, *aucitya* — all by turns, claimed

themselves to be defining principle of poetry. Though *rasa* was conceived originally as one of the components of drama<sup>6</sup> (though most important), later, when coupled with *dhvani*, it was enthroned in the form of *rasa-dhvani* as the final and foremost theory of literature. And since *rasa* has no counterpart in western aesthetics, this theory was considered the most distinctive Indian aesthetic theory. This also accounts for the fact that *rasa-dhvani* theory is more often applied than other Indian literary theories which, except *aucitya*, are easier to use. *Auchitya*, of course, is not a theory with fixed determinants (though Ksemendra tries to mount it as a theory) but a general principle which is based on discrimination and discernment (*viveka*), and hence very difficult to apply<sup>7</sup>.

I have argued elsewhere<sup>8</sup> that the *rasa*-theory is basically concerned with performing arts like drama, and it cannot be applied to other genres in its original form. And even in the case of drama, it cannot be applied alike to all kinds of dramatic compositions. S.C. Sengupta, for instance, applies the *rasa*-theory to *Hamlet*, and comes to the conclusion that “the predominant state is Aversion (*jugupsâ*) but it is strengthened and enriched by other mental states, and the total affect is not merely revolting (*bibhatsa*) but tragic – a concept for which there is nothing corresponding in Indian poetics”<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, in his application of the *rasa-dhvani* theory to Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, Madhusudan Pati discovers that “whereas in the first section a neatly orchestrated body of the *bhavas* generates a refined feel of *karuna* as the controlling mood, there is a certain dichotomy at work in the later sections not allowing any particular emotions to intensify into a state of calm joy”<sup>10</sup>. These scholars, of course, are interested in exploring the possibilities of the *rasa*-theory without sacrificing the integrity of the text. Other scholars, who are intent on demonstrating the applicability of the theory, end up by naming *vibhâvas*, *anubhâvas*, *sancâribhâvas*, *sthâyibhâva* and the

corresponding *rasa*. This tendency is deprecated by the noted Sanskrit scholar, G.K Bhat who states: “What is absolutely necessary is to guard against the mistake the Sanskrit critics have made. The commentators of Sanskrit poetry and drama have indulged themselves in discovering and locating the *vibhâvas*, *anubhâvas*, and *vybhicâri-bhâvas* in literary pieces on which they were commenting and then naming the *rasa*”<sup>11</sup>.

This tendency of naming persists also in the application of other Indian literary theories. Here, for instance, is an exposition of the following passage from *Macbeth* in the light of the *vakrokti* theory:

Besides this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against  
The deep damnation of his taking off;  
And pity, like a naked new born babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven’s cherubin horsed  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind. (I.vii.16-24)

The exposition follows:

Duncan’s virtues are likened to angels and pity to a ‘naked new born babe’ and ‘heaven’s cherubin’. Both these figures of speech constitute sentential figurativeness. The expression, ‘trumpet-tongued’ being a case of metaphorical transfer, is an example for lexical figurativeness. Adjectives like ‘meek’, ‘clear’, ‘deep’, ‘naked’, ‘new-born’, ‘sightless’, ‘horrid’, etc. enhance the force of expression and hence are instances of lexical figurativeness manifesting in qualification (*viæsanavakratâ*). ‘That tears shall drown the wind’ is a

hyperbole and hence another instance of sentential figurativeness. Thus, in short, this passage, noted for its force and beauty, is a clear case of figurativeness of lexical, grammatical and sentential levels<sup>12</sup>.

I have selected this passage specially because it has been commented upon also by Cleanth Brooks in his book, *The Well Wrought Urn*, from another angle — that of paradox<sup>13</sup>. Though both the scholars are motivated by their theoretical standpoints, there is a world of difference in their treatment. While the *vakrokti* exponent is content with locating various types of *vakrokti* in the passage, Cleanth Brooks tries to relate the composite image of ‘a naked new born babe’ to the central theme of the play.

Nevertheless, a theory, however ingeniously applied, cannot exhaust the meaning of a text. And a genuine critic is primarily concerned with the text, not with the theory. For, “literary criticism”, as the noted Hindi-critic Namwar Singh rightly observes, “is not the same thing as poetics at work or poetics in action”<sup>14</sup>. Literary criticism is a direct encounter with the text. “Words in poetry”, says F.R. Leavis, “invite us, not to ‘think about’ and judge but to ‘feel into’ or ‘become’ — to realize a complex experience that is given in words”<sup>15</sup>. He even goes to the extent of proclaiming that “By the critic of poetry I understand the complete reader: the ideal critic is the ideal reader”<sup>16</sup>.

This reminds us of the Indian concept of *sahrdaya*. The word ‘*sahrdaya*’ etymologically means ‘one of a kindred heart’ or ‘one with the heart’. In either case, the emphasis is on the heart, not on the mind. The concept of *sahrdaya* is further elaborated by Abhinavagupta when he states that “*sahrdayas* are those whose mirrors of the minds are cleansed of all impurities by their constant study of literature, and who are thus capable of identifying themselves with whatever is described in a literary work”<sup>17</sup>. The two qualities which are stressed

here are the capacity for identification (*tanmayibhāvanā*) and freedom from mental impurities. In fact, the purity of mind is the pre-condition of identification. And the mind cannot be pure unless it is emancipated from the hold of pre-conceived notions and ideas. A text has to be approached with an open and receptive mind. It is only in such a mind, which resembles a clear mirror, that the full meaning of the text is reflected.

But this does not imply that the study of Indian poetics is useless. It is an independent discipline (*śāstra*), and offers valuable information about the ways a literary text is constituted. It deserves more attention than structuralist or post-structuralist theories which are not directly concerned with literature. But Indian literary theories, like all other theories, should be studied for clarity of understanding, not as ready-made canons of literary criticism. It should not be forgotten that literary theories are dependent on literature, not vice versa. To judge a literary work in terms of a theory is therefore nothing but a Procrustean exercise<sup>18</sup>.

As I have said earlier, literature cannot be bounded by any theory. Like the charm of a youthful maiden<sup>19</sup>, a literary work is more than the sum total of its constituents. In fact, every work of literature, like a living organism, is unique, and demands an individual response. To enter into the spirit of a literary text, the critic will have to be a *sahrdaya* or he should, according to Rājasekhara (*Kāvyaśikṣā*, chap. IV), possess the *bhāvayitrī pratibhā* (the intuitive power to grasp and unveil the poet’s meaning). In either case, mere learning is of no account<sup>20</sup>. Hence genuine critics are as rare as genuine poets.

## Notes and References

### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> See *Absent Authority: Issues in Contemporary Indian English Criticism* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1992), 189-90.

<sup>2</sup> See for details, Gupteshwar Prasad, *I.A. Richards and Indian Theory of Rasa*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> *What is Art?*, tr. Pevear, Richard and Volokhensky, L. Penguin Books, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> See for details, Rayan, Krishna. *Suggestion and Statement in Poetry*, London: The Athlone Press, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> In his *Dhvanyâlôka* (III.42) Anandavardhana compares the poet with the creator (*prajâpati*): “In the boundless realm of poetry, the poet alone is the creator, as it pleaseth him, so doth this world revolve” (K. Krishnamoorthy)

<sup>6</sup> See Bharata, *Nâtyaûâstra*, VI.10.

<sup>7</sup> Even such an astute critic as F.R. Leavis could err in this matter. In his *Revaluation* (pp. 171-72) he criticizes the use of imagery in the second stanza of Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” on the ground of propriety, but his charges are convincingly rebutted by Desmond King-Hele in *Shelley: His Thought and Work*, 215-16.

<sup>8</sup> See M.S. Kushwaha, “The Validity and Scope of *Rasa* as a Critical Concept”, *East-West Poetics at Work*, ed. C.D. Narasimhaiah (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1994), 77-87.

<sup>9</sup> S.C. Sengupta, “*Hamlet* in the Light of Indian Poetics”, *Indian Poetics and Western Thought*, ed. M.S. Kushwaha (Lucknow, Argo Publishing House, 1988), 248.

<sup>10</sup> Madhusudan Pati, “Things Fall Apart: An Enquiry into Rasa-configuration”, *East-West Poetics at Work*, ed. C.D. Narasimhaiah (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1994), 210.

<sup>11</sup> *Rasa Theory and Allied Problems* (Baroda: M.S. University, 1984), 64.

<sup>12</sup> See C. Rajendran, “*Vakrokti* as Poetic Art: A Study in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*”, *Indian Poetics and Modern Texts*, eds. P.K. Rajan and Swapna Daniel (New Delhi: S.Chand and Company, 1998), 149.

<sup>13</sup> See Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn* (London: Methuen, 1960), chap. II (“The Naked Babe and the Cloak of the Manliness”). Brooks concentrates only on the second half of the passage, beginning with “And pity, like a naked new born babe”.

<sup>14</sup> Namwar Singh, “Ânandavardhana Reading the *Mahâbharata*”, *East West Poetics at Work*, 167.

<sup>15</sup> *The Common Pursuit* (Penguin Books, 1952), 212-13.

<sup>16</sup> *The Common Pursuit*, 212.

<sup>17</sup> *Dhvanyâlôka-Locana*, I. 1.

<sup>18</sup> After completing the paper I came across a statement by Sir W. Temple (*Of Poetry*) which reinforces my viewpoint. He says: “The truth is, there is something in the genius of poetry too libertine to be confined to so many rules; and whoever goes about to subject it to such constraints loses both its spirit and grace, which are ever native, and never learnt, even of the best masters”. Cited, *An Anthology of Critical Statements*, ed. Amaranatha Jha (Allahabad: The Indian Press, 1931), 48

<sup>19</sup> I have borrowed this analogy from Ânandavardhana (*Dhvanyâlôka*, I. 4) who has used it to characterize his concept of *dhvani*.

<sup>20</sup> Ânandavardhana (*Dhvanyâlôka*, I.7) makes a similar statement about *dhvani*: “It cannot be understood merely by the knowledge of word-meaning and grammatical rules. It is understood only by those who have an insight into the true import of poetry”.

Sudhir Kumar

### **Whose Cultural Studies? : Some Reflections on Indian Perspectives on Cultural Studies**

The present essay is an attempt to configure, contextualize and critique the coordinates of what may be termed as Indian perspectives on cultural studies in the context of the growing trend of establishing and validating the Euro-Americo-centric (dis-)courses of cultural studies in the departments of literary and humanistic studies in Indian universities. The prevalent pedagogy of cultural studies is a kind of neo-imperialism that perpetuates the stranglehold of dominant western theories/discourses in Indian universities and excludes the Indian perspectives and worldviews from its purview.

#### **Introduction: Gandhi and Cultural Action**

We may begin by what Gandhi wrote in one of his last notes found among his papers after his assassination on 30.01.1948:

I will give you a talisman: Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test: Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man (woman) whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him (her). Will he (she) gain anything by it? Will it restore him (her) to a

control over his (her)own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and you self melting away (Tendulkar 89).

One can hardly ignore the fact that the textuality of this Gandhian talisman is grounded in a performative cultural politics that has been the touchstone of *sanskriti* (culture), *swaraj* (freedom) in its widest sense) and *sanskritik karma* (cultural action) in Indian contexts. The significance of Gandhi's talisman is that it translates *sanskriti* (culture) into performance of ethical action or duty known in Indian contexts as *dharma*(duty), *sadachara* (action based on truth), *paropakara* (well-being of the other), and *nishkama karma* (selfless, detached action) keeping the poorest human at the centre of his *swaraj* (freedom).

Thus, Gandhi ties the issue of culture and cultural action for *swaraj* (freedom- political, economic and cultural) to the condition of the "hungry and spiritually starving millions" in India. Needless to say, the Gandhian talisman that addresses the economic as well as spiritual poverty rampant in the present times may have served as the "*mool-mantra* or cardinal principle" to be practiced by all those who wield power( social, political, economic and cultural) in the post-independence India but are in the grip of selfishness, self-doubt and self-aggrandizement. It is worth noticing here that Gandhi translates the propriety of culture and freedom, which may largely be theoretical, into the practical domain of the performance of ethical action in order to empower the poorest and the weakest. Gandhi seems to warn the Indian academics engaged with project of Cultural Studies in India:- "An academic grasp (of Indian culture) without practice behind it is like an embalmed corpse, perhaps lovely to look at but nothing to inspire or ennoble." (*Young India* 277) In other words, Gandhi's insistence on the selfless performance of ethical action for the welfare

of all, which connotes “*lokasangraha*” of the *Gita* (or *sarvodaya* in Gandhian terminology) lies at the centre of the Indian culture. The *Gita* also points to the ceaseless performance of selfless or detached ethical actions for the universal welfare which is the characteristic feature of Indian culture:

Controlling the sense organs with the mind, he who commences the Yoga of action with the organs of action, unattached, is held to excel, O Arjuna! (*The Gita* 3.7)

Always do prescribed work; work is superior to inaction. Indeed, even life in the body is impossible without working. (*The Gita* 3.8)

...At least, to promote the welfare of the world, you ought to do works. (*The Gita* 3.20)

...just as the ignorant work with attachment to that work, so should the wise work, unattached, seeking the world's integration. (*The Gita* 3.25)

It is important to remember here that Gandhi through his ‘talisman’ translates the sacred yet practical idea of *nishkama karma* (detached action/work) and *lokasangraha* (work/action for universal well-being and solidarity of human beings which is akin to Gandhi's idea of *sarvodaya*) into the terms of moral economy of the so-called secular and mundane politics. By placing the poorest (both in material and spiritual terms) at the centre of his political, social and cultural praxis, Gandhi blurs the distinction between sacred and secular actions, or between political and cultural actions. Similarly, Gandhi's act of cultural translation of such moral/spiritual values as *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence or love), *karuna* (compassion), *sewa* (service) and *samyama* (self-restraint) into his vision of value-based politics manifest in the multiple forms of *swaraj* (freedom), *satyagrah* (truth-

force), *swadeshi* (love of the immediate neighbour or true indigenism) and *sarvodaya* (universal welfarism) speaks volumes of his holistic or integrated vision of life- in which there is no separation between the secular and the sacred. In the Gandhian world-view, the vision of true freedom or *swaraj* will remain merely a caricature of good society or a chimera at best, if does not mean the social, economic and cultural freedom of the poorest and the weakest in our society. That is why, Gandhi's talisman tells us about the practical method to perform actions without selfishness and self-doubt for the true empowerment or all-inclusive progress of human beings.

### Reading *Sanskriti* as Culture: Indian Perspectives

While Gandhi was all for the decolonization of mind through the realization of cultural *swaraj*, he always welcomed the confluence of cultures and the assimilation of the best available in other cultures: “Preservation of one's own culture does not mean contempt for that of others, but requires assimilation of the best that there may be in all other cultures”. (*Young India*) Gandhi, no doubt, celebrates a form of cultural hybridity which is a natural corollary to the processes of contact (and even conflict) of cultures in the global contexts; but this cultural hybridity is worthless if it fails to inspire the human beings to be good humans and do good to their nation and the world at large:

The Indian culture of our times is in the making. Many of us are striving to produce a blend of all the cultures which seem today to be in clash with one another. No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive. There is no such thing as pure Aryan culture in existence today in India. Whether the Aryans were indigenous to India or were unwelcome intruders, does not interest me much. What does interest me is the fact that my remote ancestors blended with one another with the utmost freedom, and we of the present generation are a result of that



blend. Whether we are doing any good to the country of our birth and the tiny globe that which sustains us or whether we are a burden the future alone will show (*Harijan*).

This is why Gandhi's vision of *sanskriti* (culture) may justifiably be located in the discourses of cultural studies in India as it continues to challenge and inspire its pundits as well as practitioners.

The usage of *sanskriti* (culture) is a fairly recent phenomenon in western and Indian contexts. *Sanskriti* (culture), in the Indian contexts, refers to a multidimensional process through which human beings refine, purify and re-form their actions in accordance with the existing moral values. Agyeya, the prominent cultural critic and modernist Hindi writer, raises some very important points in this regard in his essay—"Sanskriti Ki Chetana" ("Consciousness of Culture"):

In the pre-modern times, the ideals and values did exist; but they were not designated as "cultural ideals/values" as *sanskriti* or culture was not understood as an isolable and isolated (and quite narrow also) concept in India. In India, there was no need to designate the ideals and symbols that influenced the growth of human character as "sanskriti or culture" because they were the constituents of "dharma" (duty). In entire world history, nowhere dharma (duty) has been conceptualized in such all-inclusive and all-embracing terms (and this conception of dharma still holds except for those Indians who are immersed in the influence of western education) as has been done in India. (*Bhagavad Gita Bhashya of Sri Shankaracharya*)

In this way, *dharma* (duty) is "the ethical law or substratum that holds the actions of the entire society" (Agyeya 69). The *Manusmriti* (The Laws of Manu) also describes the ten points of *dharma* (duty) which are also the co-ordinates of *sanskriti* (culture) in the Indian context. To re-orient Manu's discourse in consonance

with the changed times, it can be affirmed that all the members of civil society should follow or try utmost to follow the ten-point dharma (duty) in order to ensure peace and true progress in the world: "The ten points of dharma (duty) are *dhruti* (patience), *kshama* (forgiveness), self-control *dama* (self-control), not stealing *asteya* (stealing), *shaucha* (purification), *indriya nigraha* (mastery of sensory powers), *dhee* (wisdom), *vidya*, truth *satyam* (learning) and lack of *akrodha* (anger). (The *Manusmriti* VI.92).

Can we possibly ignore the significance of these values, as inscribed by Manu in his conception of *dharma* (duty) that lies at the centre of Indian world-view of *sanskriti* (culture) in the present contexts of extreme greed, consumerism, naked dance of violence, environmental degradation and spiritual and material starvation? In the Indian tradition, Ashoka (272-232 B.C.) was, perhaps, the first Indian ruler who used the languages really spoken and understood by the masses to publicize, through the installation of the multimedia of rock and pillar edicts/inscriptions throughout his vast Mauryan empire, the performance of ethical *dharma* (duty) which lies at the centre of Indian *Sanskriti* (culture): "...Practicing dharma is good. But what is *dharma*? *Dharma* means abstinence from sin; performance of many good deeds and the pursuit of values such as compassion, charity, *satya* and purity....I got this message inscribed so that people could follow it accordingly and it might remain permanent. Whosoever practices it will consecrate her/his life." (*Ashok Ke Dharma Lekha* 89)

The exclusion of Indian voices/perspectives on culture and society in the existing courses of "Cultural Studies" in Indian universities necessitates the search for an alternative project of Cultural Studies which includes the visions and world-views of those Indian thinkers/writers who tried to understand the possibilities of *swaraj* (freedom) for "the hungry and starving millions" of India as envisaged by Gandhi.

Needless to say, Gandhi expects those who are struggling for “swaraj” to follow the path of *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satyagraha* (truth- power or soul-force) and *swadeshi* (love of the neighbour) which are the foundational values of Indian culture. It would be worthwhile to remember that the recent non-violent movements in Egypt and Tunisia were also inspired by Gandhi’s ideals of truth, non-violence and non-cooperation with forces of injustice, which, according to him, are the primary values of Indian culture.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Sanskriti*(Culture) and *Sahitya* (Literature): Inside and Outside the Text**

In the Indian context, a literary text has always been considered as a *sanskritik* (cultural text). Perhaps no other language of the world, save Sanskrit, offers the etymological and discursive connectivity between the signifiers of literary text (*kriti*), language (*sanskrit*), the process of purification (*sanskar*) and culture (*sanskriti*). That is why an average Indian student of literature is familiar with the inevitable and inseparable connection between *sahitya* (literature) and *sanskriti* (culture) as manifest in most of the Indian texts of literary theories. This may also explain why a student in India may not bother much about the much-talked-about cultural studies?—much to the chagrin of her university-based teacher whose heart and mind often overflows with latest theories imported from France, U.K. or U.S.A! Her familiarity with the Indian perspectives on *kriti-in-sanskriti*/ ‘*sanskriti-in-kriti*’ (text-in-culture/culture-in-text), in fact, saves her from being crushed under cartloads of imported theories of the so-called “Cultural Studies”<sup>2</sup>. In fact, whenever we experience aesthetic pleasure (that is *rasa*) in our critical examination of meanings of literary or cultural texts from different perspectives of caste, gender, class, race, language, power-relations, spiritual and psychological issues, we are doing some serious cultural studies business. Culture as represented in a text

(*sanskriti-in-sahitya*) may contest, resist or protest against the culture outside the text.

Such values as duty(*dharma*), interdisciplinarity, pluralism(diversity), unity, harmony, and well-being of all (*loka-mangal* or *kalyana*) have always characterized and connected the coordinates of *sanskriti*(culture) and *sahitya*(literature) in India right from Bharata’s *Natyashastra*(c 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.) to Kshemendra (11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the author of *Auchityavichararcha*), Mammata (11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the author of *Kavyaprakasha*), Acharya Vishwanatha(14<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the author of *Sahityadarpana*) to Premchand’s *Sahitya Ka Uddeshya* (1936)- to cite only a few examples:

He then thought: “I shall make a fifth Veda on the Natya with the semi-historical tales (itihasa), which will conduce to duty (dharma), wealth (artha), as well as fame, will contain good counsel and collection (of traditional maxims), will give guidance to people of the future as well, in all their actions, will be enriched by the teaching of all authoritative works (shastra) and will give a review of all arts and crafts (Bharata 03).

This teaches us duty (dharma) to those who go against duty, love (*kama*) to those who are eager for its fulfillment, and it chastises those who are ill-bred or unruly, promotes self-restraint in those who are disciplined, gives courage to cowards, energy to heroic persons, enlightens men of poor intellect and gives wisdom to the learned.( Bharata 14-15).

In order to critically appreciate how writing or composing *sahitya* (literature) is a *sanskritic* (cultural) action in Indian context, one may replace the word ‘*natya*’, (drama) ‘*kavya* (poetry) with *sahitya* (literature). The cultural and political purpose of literature is further explained by Bharatamuni in *Natyashastra*:

It will (also) give relief to unlucky persons who are afflicted with sorrow and grief or (over)-work, and will be conducive to observance of duty as well as to fame, long-life, intellect and general good, and will educate people( Bharata15).

Hence I have devised the drama in which meet all the department of knowledge, different arts and actions( Bharata 15).

In his important treatise on the significance of *auchitya* (propriety) of literature, *Auchityavicharacharcha*, Kshemendra holds that *auchitya* (appropriateness or propriety), which is the soul of literature, is contingent on, inter alia, on such ethical/cultural/political co-ordinates of meaning represented in a text as *desha* (nation), *kal* (time), *swabhava* (subjectivity), *sattva* (being, essential nature, nobility of character etc.), *tattva*(truth), *abhipraya*( intended meaning), *awastha* (the state of being), *vichara* (thoughts), *sarsangraha* (essence or wisdom) and so on. Likewise Mammata also lays due emphasis on the values associated with cultural materialism and the moral and political economy of life in his discourse on the purpose of *kavya* or *sahitya* (literature) in his *Kavyaprakasha*:

Poetry leads to fame, procurement of wealth, knowledge of the ways of the world, cessation of the inauspicious, immediate bliss par excellence and imparts advice in the manner of a beloved (*Kavyaprakasha* 05).

Poetic imagination, proficiency resulting from a study of the world, sciences, poetical compositions and the like, practice under the guidance of those who know poetry- these constitute (conjointly) the cause of its origin( *Kavyaprakasha* 07).

Similarly, Acharya Vishwanath in his *Sahityadarpana* (The Mirror of Composition) tells us that the purpose of literature is to help

us attain *purusharthas* (the four cardinal principles of life), namely, *dharma* (duty), *artha* (wealth), *kama* ( love) and *moksha* (liberation) (*The Sahitya-Darpana or Mirror of Composition of Vishvanatha*,01) And what Premchand, an eminent twentieth century Indian writer/cultural thinker, says about the significance of literature, in his presidential address delivered in the first session of Progressive Writers Association at Lucknow (U.P.) in 1936 seems to echo the views of Bharata, Kshemendra, Mammata and Vishwanath on the ethical and cultural significance of literature: "Only that literature passes off as true literature on our touchstone that has sublime thoughts, ideas of freedom, essence of beauty, soul of creativity and light of the realities of life- that which engenders constant dynamism, struggle and unease in us and does not make us sleep any longer because our incremental sleep is a sign of death. (*Sahitya Ka Uddeshya* 16). This is also why Premchand defines *sahitya* (literature) primarily as a "criticism of life" ( (*Sahitya Ka Uddeshya* 2) that gives us "good taste", "spiritual and mental fulfillment", "power and dynamism", "love of the beautiful", "true determination and strength to conquer the difficulties of life" ((*Sahitya Ka Uddeshya* 4.) In other words, the processes of writing, reading and relishing literature have always been considered as interconnected cultural actions in Indian aesthetic/cultural tradition. In this sense, anyone engaged in writing or reading *sahitya* (literature) is also performing a *sanskritik* (cultural action) in accordance with the Indian perspectives on what is fashionably called today- cultural studies.

### Some Reflections on Culture, Language, Knowledge and Power

The word which signifies "culture" in Indian context comes from Sanskrit, that is, *sanskriti* which implies minimalist theory but maximalist ethical action for its existence. Before we discuss *sanskriti* in the Indian context, let us begin with a brief analysis of the "culture" and "cultural studies". Whereas in its early phase the word "culture"

( from Indo- European root- “*kwel*”- to revolve or move around and subsequently from Latin, *colere*- to cultivate, to inhabit) referred to the dynamic process of cultivating, protecting and tending something, in modern times, it primarily signifies (i) a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development ( for example, cultivation of taste in music, literature, films, philosophy, painting and other arts, fine arts and humanities) (ii) a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, or a group ( which makes it applicable to almost all human activities). That’s why Raymond Williams considers “culture” to be “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language”( Raymond 76).

Moreover, the complications inherent in the word “culture” grow further as it has had an uneasy and difficult relationship and interaction with “civilization”(Latin, *civis*-citizen) which is generally used to describe an achieved state or condition of organized social life (Raymond 48). It is interesting to note that Raymond Williams, who was one of the pioneers of Cultural Studies, does not even include Cultural Studies (not to speak of defining it) in his important book, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, which was published (in 1976) in the heydays of the project of Cultural Studies. (Raymond, 80) Broadly speaking, the project of Cultural Studies includes, inter alia, the analysis of connections between culture / cultural productions and power. Stuart Hall in his essay ‘The Work of Representation’ aptly defines Cultural Studies as “a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society.”

On the other hand, the multiplicity of meanings associated with the word “*sanskriti*” (generally considered a synonym of “culture”), as have already been discussed above, gives us a clue to the maximalist idea of *sanskriti* ( also spelt as *samskriti*) in the Indian tradition. The

polyvalent term-*sanskriti* refers to the performativity of an individual or a group or an institution in the process of attaining purification, improvement and preparedness as is evident from its meanings– “making ready”, “preparation”, “perfection”, “formation”, “hallowing”, “consecration”, “determination”, “effort”. (Monier-Williams 1121) Another cognate but equally loaded signifier which is etymologically as well as epistemologically tied to *sanskriti* in Indic wisdom tradition is *samskara* which refers to “putting together”, “forming well”, “making perfect”, “purification”, “adornment”, “making ready”, “preparation”, “forming the mind, training, education”, “correction, purity” etc. ((Monier-Williams 1120). Similarly, *kriti* as a constituent of “*sanskriti*” refers to “ the act of doing, making, performing, composing”, “activity, action, creation, work”, “literary work” etc. ( Monier-Williams 303). That is why the Indian concept of “*sanskriti*” always suggests the desirability of having an “ethical turn or transformation” in our lives in order to realize that attainment of consecration, purity, preparedness and readiness (in all walks of life) which should be visible through the actions of individual or an institution. This “ethical turn” in literary and cultural studies is , at present, being considered an important event in the western theory. If we discursively and methodically put together the interrelated significations of *sanskriti*, *samskara* and *kriti*, as underlined above, and explain them with textual and contextual illustrations (culled from literary, folk, philosophical, cultural or historical sources) in an easily comprehensible narrative/language, we are engaged with Indian perspectives on cultural studies. It is worthwhile to quote Agyeya( 1911-1987), an eminent Indian writer(Hindi poet, novelist and critic) in connection with the Indian perspective on *sanskriti* (cultural studies):

*Sanskriti* (culture) is primarily the name of a value-based vision and all other factors influenced by it. It includes all those factors which formulate and determine the relationship between society, individual and family, characterizes division and utility

of labour and capital, and all our connections with all being and objects. *Sanskriti* (culture) represents, regulates and re-assesses these connections and is also an expression of them. In other words, *sanskriti* is simultaneously their foundation and effect. (Agyeya 59)

He further elaborates the performative or action-oriented aspect of the value-based vision called *sanskriti* in the Indian context:

Indian *sanskriti* (culture) is basically a *dharmik* (duty-based) *sanskriti*. Moreover in the Indian context the word “*sanskriti* (synonymous with culture) may be said to be the result of our *englished* education. It will, however, be more appropriate to say that in the context of India, dharma or duty has been the foundation of *sanskriti* and what is known today as ‘*sanskriti*’ is only an extension of the performance of *dharmā* (duty) (Agyeya 11).

Let us also see how modern Hindi poet Shamsar Bahadur Singh dialogically deals with *sanskriti* (culture) in terms of ethical action which is directed to empower the most deprived people in his poem- ‘Baarh- 1948(The Flood-1948)’:- “Culture is not this life/ Culture is an expression/ of / the *sanskriti* of future/ which lies in the roasted grams, Jainendra Kumarji,/ which Mahadeviji has been distributing among the flood-victims” (Singh 82-83)

It is the centrality of dharma (duty) in the discourses of *sanskriti* in Indian contexts that Gandhi underlines in *Hind Swaraj* (1909), and afterwards in his famous ‘talisman’ (1948). To him, true civilization means ‘good conduct’, ‘observance of morality’ and ‘duty’:- “Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization means “good conduct” (Gandhi 53).

Even Dr B.R. Ambedkar, who worked for the dismantling of the inhumane caste-system, caused by the perversion of *sanskriti* in the Indian contexts, highlighted the importance of such important texts as the *Upanishadas* which are the repository of cultural/civilizational values or insights that may be used in the reconstruction of the existing caste-based, highly iniquitous social order: “ But I am told that for religious principles as will be in consonance with Liberty, Equality and Fraternity it may not be necessary for you to borrow from foreign sources and that you could draw for such principles on the *Upanishads*.” (Ambedkar 78) Ambedkar protested against the degenerated state of Indian culture that nourished the existed caste-system. He held that the demand for swaraj(freedom) is futile without social and cultural reconstruction of Indian society and that “... the emancipation of the mind and the soul is a necessary preliminary for the political expansion of the people. (Ambedkar, 44)”. Needless to say, one may easily gauge how Ambedkar’s oppositional cultural politics is grounded in the search for an alternative egalitarian *sanskriti* (culture).

Like Gandhi Sri Aurobindo also highlights how practice of *dharmā* (duty) and harmony between the temporal and the timeless characterize the Indian culture :”India’s central conception is that of the Eternal, the spirit here encased in matter, involved and immanent in it. ...” (Aurobindo)<sup>3</sup> Contrary to what we call the Indian perspective(s) on cultural studies which are grounded in duty(*dharmā*), celebration of diversity in unity, and ethical action(*karma* or *sadachara*), even the recent books on Euro-Americo-centric “Cultural Studies” betray the writers’ obsession with theoretical jargon and critical sophistry. For example, Gary Hall and Claire Birchall have recently (2009) edited a book entitled- *New Cultural Studies* which has appropriately been subtitled as- *Adventures in Theory*. In order to democratize the discourses of cultural studies in India, there is an urgent need to include

multiple Indian perspectives (as represented in the visions of such Indian thinkers/cultural critics as Raja Rammohan Roy, Ramkrishna Pramahansa, Swami Dayananda, Swami Vivekananda, R.N.Tagore, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Maulana Azad, Jotiba Phule, Tilak, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Pandita Ramabai, B.R.Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh, Lala Lajapat Rai and others) on culture and society in the framing of courses of Cultural Studies in Indian universities.

### **Gandhi and Tagore on Culture and Language:**

Writing about the students' role in the non-co-operation movement in *Young India* of 1 June 1921, Mahatma Gandhi states the importance of cultural swaraj (that is, decolonization of the mind) and cultural action in the context of India's non-violent struggle against colonialism highlighting the interconnections between language, literature, culture and power which are relevant even today:

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about in my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave. I refuse to put the unnecessary strain of learning English upon my sisters for the sake of false pride or questionable social advantage. I would have our young men and women with literary tastes to learn as much of English and other world-languages as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world, like a Bose, a Roy or the Poet himself. (Barker)

It is interesting to note that Gandhi's metaphorical use of the "house", "walls" and "windows" in the first two sentences of this oft-quoted statement foregrounds a characteristic feature of Indian culture, that is, its "openness" to multi-cultural discourses resulting in what

may be termed as "cultural pluralism". Without undermining the significance of cultural pluralism, Gandhiji makes it contingent on the crucial issue of India's swaraj or freedom- cultural, political and economic. While engaging himself with Tagore on the issues of imposing "English studies" on Indian students and their participation the Non-Cooperation Movement, Gandhiji questioned the disproportionate importance and power made available to an Indian subject who is interpellated through the discourses of the English language and the English studies:

The Poet does not know that English is today studied because of its commercial and so-called political value. Our boys think, and rightly in the present circumstances, that without English they cannot get Government service. ..Hundreds of youths believe that, without a knowledge of English, freedom for India is practically impossible. The canker has so eaten into the society that in many cases, the only meaning of Education is a knowledge of English. All these are for me signs of our slavery and degradation. It is unbearable to me that the vernaculars should be crushed and starved as they have been. (*The Mahatma and the Poet* 64)

The continuing relevance of Gandhiji's critical appreciation of the political economy of the English language and its location in the colonial (as well as the postcolonial) discourses of power cannot be overemphasized. What is to be emphasized here is the fact that there is not even a trace of hatred for the English language and literature in Gandhiji's oeuvre. His writings and speeches give ample evidence of his *rasamubhuti* (aesthetic relish) of English literature and language. He was fond of quoting from the works of such eminent English writers as Shakespeare, Milton, Dickens, Tennyson, Newman, Blake, Gray, Shelley, Wordsworth, Ruskin and Carlyle among others. Gandhiji and Tagore both were well versed with the English language. But both of

them in their writings and speeches expressed their dislike for an India where the predominant use of English by the intellectual and the political elite might breed a culture of mimicry and amnesia.

R.K.Narayan in his novel, *The English Teacher* (first published in 1946), represents the resistance to the hegemony of English through a dialogue between Krishna, a lecturer in English and his colleague Mr Gajapathy, Assistant Professor of English: “Mr Gajapathy, there are blacker sins in this world than a dropped vowel.” ... I drove home the point: “Let us be fair. Ask Mr Brown if he can say in any of the two hundred Indian languages: ‘The cat chases the rat’. He has spent thirty years in India.” (*The Mahatma and the Poet* 63-64) It is worthwhile to remember here that Tagore and Gandhi both had a vision of India in which India’s cultural freedom rests on the increasing usage of Indian languages by the Indians at the local and the national levels. The objective of national integration can be realized only when the native Indian languages are used and promoted in all spheres/activities of the nation and the translational traffic between Indian languages and literatures is accelerated- as suggested by Gandhi. Whereas the decentering of English from the nucleus of power is constitutionally and culturally desirable, it may continue to exist in India as the link language and also as a language of global diplomacy and commerce.

The present-day Education system of India (at all levels- primary, secondary and higher) still largely prescribes what Paulo Freire (1922-1997) called the “pedagogy of the oppressed” as it is invested with an overt Euro-American-centric utilitarian or narrow, economic vision of education that caters to the demands of the global economy. Using Freire’s discourse one may well consider India “a dependent society” without its own voice: “The dependent society is, by definition, a silent society. Its voice is not an authentic voice, but merely an echo of the voice of the metropolis- in every way, the metropolis speaks,

the dependent society listens. . .” (Narayan 06) Gandhiji contests this hegemony of the so-called global economy, which poses as global culture, over the local as well as the national culture. That is why he also reiterates the seminal significance of the various Indian languages (that is, “vernaculars” as they are generally considered even in a post-colonial context in India) that enable the people of India to understand and disseminate the varied forms of the cultural and the national imaginary:- “But I would not have a single Indian to forget, or be ashamed of his mother-tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular” (*The Mahatma and the Poet* 64).

One can easily gauge the extraordinary power wielded by the linguistic elite who are the latter-day Macaulay’s acolytes in social, political, economic and cultural domains in India. According to the Census of India Report (2001), “fewer than a quarter of a million (2.5 lakh) people speak English as their first language in India” (Freire, 09).<sup>4</sup> In other words, only a microscopic minority of 0.228% people speak English as their first language in India whereas there are more than 43% people (that is, more than 352 million people) in India who are the native speakers of Hindi alone. Though written in English, the Constitution of India does not include English among the twenty two languages of India listed in its Eighth Schedule. The official language (Articles 343-344) of the Union of India is Hindi while English is to be used for official purposes only for a limited period (fifteen years). Article 351 of Indian Constitution envisages that:

It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in other languages of India specified in

the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages (*Census of India*).

It is, indeed, a travesty of constitutional propriety that no Central Government in the postcolonial India could enforce the language policy as directed by the Constitution of India. Ironically enough, what the Bollywood film industry could easily do with regard to the language policy and national integration was never seriously taken up by any Government in India.

Even in a global context, the worldwide number of the native speakers of English is about 350 million whereas the number of native speakers of Hindi is more than 352 million in India only. . (*Shorter Constitution of India*) Contrary to the popular myth that proficiency in English is the determining factor for the growth of national economy, one can well cite the fact that English is not the national language of seven out of ten largest economies of the world. (McArthur, 03) Have we completely forgotten how Tagore and Gandhi both advocated the use of Indian languages in all kinds of national work including education, judiciary, legislation and public administration? In his essay-”*Asantosh Ki Pahali Pirhi*” (“The First Generation of Discontent”), Agyeya, the prominent Hindi writer and cultural critic, articulates the anguish of an Indian intellectual who remained deprived of his own “language” in the so-called independent, postcolonial India: “I received education but I did not receive the language which is the basis of education. . . . When I must be thinking in my own mother tongue, I was cramming the vocabulary of a foreign language; when I should have been proud of my own identity, I was proud of my capacity to put on carry the borrowed plumes. (economywatch.com)”

While delivering his first lecture in English in India on 9 February 1919 in Madras (now Chennai) on ‘The Centre of Indian Culture’,

Tagore expressed his views on the significance of Indian languages for the realization of cultural decolonization and dissemination of *sanskriti*:

It is needless to add that, along with those languages in which lies stored our ancestral wealth of wisdom, we must make room for the study of all our great vernaculars which carry the living stream of the mind of modern India. Along with this study of our living languages, we must include our folk literature, in order to truly understand the psychology of our people and the direction towards which our underground current of life is moving. . . . We must not imagine that we are one of these disinherited peoples of the world. The time has come for us to break open the treasure trove of our ancestors and use it for our commerce of life. Let us, with its help, make our future our own- never continue our existence as the eternal rag-picker at other people’s dustbins (Agyeya 32-33) .

Have not most of our modern, university-based, Indian intellectuals been reduced to being “the eternal rag-pickers” at the dustbins of Euro/Americo-centric knowledge? One cannot help appreciating Tagore’s farsightedness which is exhibited when he castigates the contemporary English-centric Higher Education system which ruthlessly victimizes those Indian students (who are now in millions!) who fail to attain proficiency in English: “What a terrible waste of national material to cut off all higher educational facilities from the thousands of pupils who have no gift for acquiring a foreign tongue, but who also possess the intellect and desire to learn.” (Tagore 32).

Unfortunately enough, even those students who excel in higher education at various Indian universities and colleges and get high positions, are, in Tagore’s words, “condemned to carry to the end the dead load of dolorous dumbness?(Tagore 61) because of our



total neglect of Indian languages as carriers of national culture. It is worthwhile to remember here that neither Tagore nor Gandhi were speaking as narrow nationalists or nativists. Tagore cautions us in no uncertain terms lest he should be misunderstood as a cultural chauvinist: “Let me state clearly that I have no distrust of any culture because of its foreign character. On the contrary, I believe that the shock of such forces is necessary for the vitality of our intellectual life” (Tagore 54). In the same speech Tagore gives a fitting reply to the peddlers of perpetuating the colonial model of higher education even today who cite the fact that there are no textbooks in Indian language to justify their position. Tagore rightly said “... unless higher education is given in the vernacular languages, how are textbooks to come into existence? We cannot very well expect a mint to go on working if the coins are refused circulation” (Tagore 32-33). English-centric education is, to Tagore, a kind of mouse-trap which denied cultural freedom to the trapped Indian students: “The fact is, it was nearly a hundred years ago when we first entered our English school, and we have not been able to get out of it; we have got the same kind of shelter in it as the mouse in the trap- it threatens to be so everlasting” (Tagore 15).

Thus, Tagore and Gandhi both in their views on “cultural swaraj or freedom” reinforced the connectivity between language, culture and power. Another contemporary of Gandhi and Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, did not mince words when he critiqued the mimicry exhibited by the colonized Indians through the use of English in their conversation: “When a Maratha or Gujarati has anything important to say, he says it in English; when a Bengali, he says it in Bengali.... English is being steadily driven out of the field. Soon it will only remain to weed it out of our conversation.” (Prakash 24)

In his important essay- “Search for an Identity”, prominent Indian writer in Kannada, Professor U.R. Ananthamurthy also criticizes the cultural/literary mimicry of the west by the contemporary Indian writers who, according to him, are the victims of English education:

While Indian dance and music are uniquely Indian, why does contemporary Indian literature takes its bearings from the literature of the West? Are we really a nation of mimics, victims of English education which has conditioned the faculties of our perception so much that we fail to respond freshly to the immediate situation in India?... And our reaction against the West- isn't it often emotional, while intellectually we remain bound to western modes of thought? (Ananthamurthy 106)

Ananthamurthy also cautions us about the dangers of essentializing India if its culture is envisioned merely as religious/spiritual or metaphysical. In Indian contexts, *sanskriti* (culture) has always been pluralistic marked by a symbiotic existence between different world-views. Ananthamurthy rightly says:

The great Indian tradition was not merely spiritual and devotional and devotional: we had the materialist Lokayukta School, the Sankhya System, and Jainism and Buddhism which were atheistic. It is a tradition of intensely conflicting world views, yet our revivalists prefer to select only one aspect of it. Isn't this debilitating romantic strain in us also due to our obsession with the west? (Ananthamurthy 112).

Ananthamurthy, therefore, questions the westernized Indian intellectuals who tend to lay the complexities of Indian culture on the proverbial Procrustean bed of western rationality and scientific reason:

That is why we don't understand the complex pattern of ancient Indian thought, its daring subjectivity, caught as we are in the narrow confines of western scientific rationality. In his simplicity the peasant still keeps alive the mode of thinking and perception, which at the dawn of human civilization revealed to the sages of the *Upanishads* the vision that Atman is Brahman. Shouldn't we prefer the so-called superstition of the peasant

which helps him see organic connections between the animal world, human world and nature surrounding him to the scientific rationality of western science that has driven the world into a mess of pollution and ecological imbalance?( Ananthamurthy 110)

Of all the nationalist leaders, it was Dr Rammanohar Lohia who addressed the language-question in the postcolonial India in the context of Indian culture and society. According to him, the power structures in postcolonial India execute “daily repression” through the “weapon of language”. The ruling elite “speak in a language which the masses do not follow. The peasants, workers, agricultural labourers, shopkeepers, clerks and such other illiterate masses thereby develop an inferiority complex. This is the root cause of India’s degeneration.” Empire may have perished politically; but the imperishable empire of the English language continues to render millions of Indian students voiceless victims in the post-independence India. Lamenting the condition of Indian education system that continues to perpetuate the hegemony of the English language at the cost of creativity and growth of a vast number of Indian students, Dr Lohia, in his essay, “Banish English” aptly says:

From his cradle to the grave an Indian is obliged to study various languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and so on. Due to this ceaseless struggle to command the intricacies of a foreign language, his study of geography, history, economics, chemistry, mathematics, and other sciences hardly attains perfection. His entire life is wasted on learning the English language. Unendingly trying to refine his language, he hardly tastes of depth of a subject. This is why our study of science, economics, politics, history, geography and other subjects is nothing but a cheap imitation. It lacks any monumental contribution. . . . The Indian student is fettered to the chain of English. His mind is rusting. (Lohia 15).

That is why, Aijaz Ahmad, an eminent culture-critic, in his essay- ‘Disciplinary English: Third Worldism and Literature’, roundly criticizes the neo-imperialistic relationship between Indian universities and their American and British counterparts :”First, so fundamental and even genetic is the relation, indeed the dependence, of the Indian university upon its British and American counterparts that knowledge produced there become immediately effective here, in a relation of imperial dominance, shaping even the way we think of ourselves.” (Joshi 209)

Another culture-critic, Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, in her essay, ‘Fixing English: Nation, Language, Subject’ takes a critical look at the continuing hegemony of English in India:

. . . the preserve of English in India is guarded by interests predominantly defined by ideology, region and class. . . . Therefore ‘English’—not simply the language, but the locus of a set of values loosely termed ‘westernization’—must be viewed within an essentially conflictual social dynamics. . . . With this curious function—of imposing an equality of handicap on learners from all regions—English finds its most powerful *raison d’etre* in India. . . . Finally, and in a sense subserving these opposed interests, is the fact that English is the asset enjoyed by the English-speaking upper classes; the lack of it is a handicap suffered by the rest, traditionally known as the masses. It has thus constituted the most visible divide between the ruling classes and the ruled. (Rajan 14-15)

Even Swami Vivekananda, one of the most articulate cultural thinkers/activists of modern India, understood the dangers of cultural mimicry and deracination that may be the result of the imposition of English on Indian students:

The language in which we naturally express ourselves, in which we communicate our anger, grief or love etc- there cannot be a fitter language than that. We must stick to that idea, that manner of expression, that diction and all. No artificial language can never have that force, and that brevity and expressiveness, or admit of being given any turn you please, as that spoken language... And language is the chief means and index of a nation's progress... What is the use of creating an unnatural language to the exclusion of the natural one? Do you not think out your scholastic researches in the language which you are accustomed to speak(ing) at home? ... The language in which you think out philosophy and science in your mind and argue with others in public – is not that the language for writing philosophy and science? (Vivekananda<sup>82-83</sup>)

Thus, the perspectives of such cultural thinkers/critics as Gandhi, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Rammanohar Lohia, Swami Vivekananda, U.R. Ananthamurthy, Aijaz Ahmad and Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan on the intersections between culture, language, knowledge and power show a “family resemblance” yet such discursive interconnections involving the Indian world-views are not generally explored in the field of cultural studies in Indian universities.

Thus, the essay as a whole aims at critically analyzing the search for Indian alternatives to cultural studies which are embedded in the Indian discourses of *sanskriti* (culture) and ethical action. And while we are engaged in the search for alternatives, we should, as Gandhi rightly said, continue to keep all our “windows open” to let in all kinds of noble ideas and values for our cultural enrichment and have our feet firmly planted in our soil. Only then the vision of *sanskritik swaraj* can be realized.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>It will not be out of place to mention here that the activists in Egypt and the Tunisia who were in the forefront of the recent non-violent revolution made good use of Mr Gene Sharp's Gandhian pamphlet-”198 Methods of Nonviolent Action” which inspired them to overthrow the oppressive regimes through Gandhi's weapons of satya and ahimsa. Professor Gene Sharp, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, is a well-known Gandhian whose books have become the handbooks for strategizing the non-violent non-cooperation movements in many countries of the world in recent times (Burma, Bosnia, Estonia, Zimbabwe, Serbia, Ukraine, Egypt, Tunisia). Some of his important books are- *Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power: Three Case Histories*, (Foreword by Albert Einstein), Ahmedabad, Navjivan, 1960; *Gandhi As A Political Strategist With Essays on Ethics and Politics*, New Delhi, Gandhi Media Centre, 1999; *The Role of Power in Nonviolent Struggle*, Boston, The Albert Einstein Institution, 2000; *The Politics of Non-violent Action* (3 Vols), Boston, Porter Sargent, 1973; *Self-Liberation*, Boston, The Albert Einstein Institution, 2009; *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, Boston, The Albert Einstein Institution, 2010 (First Pub. In 1993 in Burma); Also see *The Hindu*, February 18, 2011, p.7 and *The Times of India*, February 9, 2011, p.17. For Gandhi's increasing relevance to the field of cultural and postcolonial studies, please see- Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2001) and *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, London, Routledge, 2004 (First pub. 1990); also Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

<sup>2</sup>Cultural Studies as an interdisciplinary approach to cultural texts started in Britain in the late 1950s with Richard Hoggart (*The Uses of Literacy*- published in 1957) and Raymond Williams (*Culture and Society-1780-1950*, published in 1958) in the vanguard. It was institutionalized with the founding of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies(CCCS) by Richard Hoggart in 1964. In 1968, Left-wing British sociologist and cultural critic, Stuart Hall, (*The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, published in 1988) became the Director of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and was largely instrumental in giving Cultural Studies its present theoretical turn by importing insights/theories of structuralism, semiotics, post-structuralism and theories of power. Ironically enough, even after more than fifty years of its existence, Cultural Studies does not have a specific methodology or a specific area of interest. In a way, there is nothing that falls outside of the scope of Cultural Studies- which is its strength and weakness both for its supporters and detractors. Cultural Materialism and New Historicism are also intriguingly associated with Cultural Studies- at times making its theoretical field full of critical cant and jargon. Dazzling theoretical sophistication and linguistic manoeuvres related to cultural studies may easily be seen in Homi Bhabha(*The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge, 1994,) and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak (*In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, New York, Routledge, 1988).

<sup>3</sup>Even in the contemporary theories of Cultural Studies ideological interconnections between language and power figure prominently. See Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, London, Routledge, 2000, pp.66-95. Barker elsewhere aptly says-”Language structures which meanings can or cannot be deployed under determinate circumstances by speaking subjects. As such, language is implicated in forms of power, with cultural politics

operating at the level of signification and text.” (See Chris Barker, *Making Sense of Cultural Studies: Central Problems and Critical Debates*, New York, Routledge, 2002, p.22).

<sup>4</sup>Paulo Freire, ‘Cultural Action for Freedom’ in *Eye*, Vol.4.No.4.July-Sept. 1997, p. 7. Similarly, for the role of the colonial and the postcolonial power-structures in framing and implementing an Education System in India that perpetuated the hegemony of the English language and culture please see: Gauri Vishvanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1989; Svati Joshi(Ed.), *Rethinking English: Essays in Literature, Language and History*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994; Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan(Ed.), *The Lie of The Land: English Literary Studies in India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1993. It is interesting to note that the critique of language, knowledge and power offered by Gandhi and Tagore contains the major insights present in the works of contemporary postcolonial critics.

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Deepti Dharmani

**Intersecting Lines of Caste, Class and Gender:  
A Study of Bama's *Karuku***

Woman must write herself . . . writing is precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as the springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structure. (Helene Cixous 879)

Bama has suffered multiple hegemonies as a woman, dalit and therefore poor and as a Christian Indian. Bama's *Karuku* structured like a novel besides being an "autobiographical intervention as a speech act," (Anderson 121) is a bare, bald but bold account of a Dalit woman's struggle against the hegemonic structures. *Karuku* besides being a projection of the intersection of gender, caste and class and a collectivist discourse is also a critique of the hegemonic western feminism. Though written, the piece has an exceptional orality for the demotic and colloquial language. The informality of narrative style, the unconventional use of grammar and spellings and the circularity in the narratology lend the writing a vocality which makes itself heard clearly without any circumlocution. Thus Bama's work "not only breaks the mainstream aesthetics, but also proposes a new one which is integral to her politics" (Holmstrom xi). The work is structured into nine chapters representing gestation, pregnancy and

labour, as the narrator forms a new identity by drawing a new vision, and thereby may fit into the gynocentric model. However the issue of sexuality that the mainstream western feminist thought is so obsessively occupied with, is markedly missing and there are no undercurrents of suppression or repression even. Though the autobiography has several stories embedded in the narrative as a pointer to the patriarchal oppression of women, Bama's chief preoccupation is to expose the patriarchal order that works through social institution of family, police, system of education and church. Thus this writing "does not accord with the theory of patriarchy which puts the father at the centre of the family and culture" (Anderson 130) but writes about the fathers rendered vulnerable by social institutions more powerful than the family. Therefore the gender critique is embedded in the critique of caste which happens to be the critique of the hegemony of class. As such any translated work of a woman writer from the so called third world is an effort to carve out a space at varied levels: at the level of a still colonized sphere within the decolonized world and at the level of post colonization.

Since during her speech acts the writer is all set to break the silence and suppression of her voice as well as the voice of the subaltern, the metaphor of mouth becomes central to her works: In signifying power the mouth is perhaps richer. "It is not just grinding maw for food but as the bodily organ of the voice, it expressly communicates the entire self, in its innerness and outerness" (Anderson 124). It speaks with fullest power. Haaken on the other hand was aware of "the potential for silencing within this dynamic of speaking out" (Parker 113).

The metaphor of mouth works at three levels. First it is the metaphor for speech and speech is emblematic of empowerment. Second, mouth is associated with the function of eating and as such represents both consumption and a desire to consume. Many critics

have examined how "the powerful are characterized by their eating and the powerless by their not eating the act of eating" (Anderson 124). Thus food often becomes central metaphor for life's imperatives be it family sexuality, oppression, death and transformation. Food as the organizing element of the discourse of the oppressed and especially of women is exhibited in innumerable writings of women and often of men. Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* had focused on the materiality of food to argue its impact on the mind and its creativity. Third mouth represents the hegemonic powers that have for centuries silenced the subaltern. Both the acts of speaking and eating are therefore ways to empowerment.

Foregrounding the power equations in this manner Bama has ascribed both the colonizing as well as decolonizing potential to mouth. This duality is embedded in the title. *Karuku* is the double-edged, sword-like sharp palmarya leaf endowed by nature with teeth to tear the skin of the oppressor. The writer at once seems to be pointing out the multivalence of the paradigm of caste with the class inherent in it, and gender that act as two-edged sword and by inversion points out to the oppressed their teeth to fend themselves. Duality works yet at another level. Bama in *Karuku* has used both singular and plural first person pronouns in her discourse. While Rich found "a political problem" in using "we" and "you" for "representativity" (Anderson 125), Bama employs both, besides 'I' while giving her first person accounts of experiential reality. While the first becomes a part of her aesthetics foregrounding her politics, the second gives orality to her discourse. Bama's use of first person pronoun has an inference of "you" as the addressee, her use of interrogatives as a part of her rhetoric and her repeated use of "I do not know" structures, for example twice in the first chapter, are an abandonment of what Mason calls "the Western obsession with the self" and the hegemonic dichotomy of one and the other and her identification with the other

without any impositions and finalities. In combining all these linguistic strategies Bama is presenting her autobiography as a collaborative project which acknowledges the role of the witness, their capacity for understanding and their vulnerability. As an uncompleted statement and non totalizing account *Karuku* seems to be giving a new ethical dimension to the politics of feminism.

The narration begins with the description of the native village through the evocative elemental imagery. Having described the abounding floral and water resources the author describes the wind and breeze that sweep the earth and the gleaming light of the sun that “wakes up in the east.”(3) and sets in the west: “To look at the light in the western sky was like looking upon revelation of God” (3-4). Significantly Bama’s village has the east- west dichotomy as sharp as that in the world structure. After this description follows the description of the elemental beings which are so frightening that “The merest glimpse would induce fever, frightful diarrhea and eventual death” (5). Thus come from the mouth of the author the stories of grit of Bondon the stealer. Bondon fears not any of the peys or even the deity of the Muniyaandi temple or the deadly snakes, but would hide in fear at the possibility of being seen by the caretaker ahead of him. Thus combining the realistic with the fantastic (a feature also found in the writings of the Afro-American) Bama sets the stage of man-made hierarchies and goes on to describe the minutest distinctions within human society on the basis of caste/class and religion. The lowest of the low the paryas live next to the cemetery. The life of the outcast, the untouchable is thus metaphorically worse than a death like situation. Bama’s description is microcosm of what Ardener called the world structures with several muted groups within the muted groups. The topography of the village is a sharp reminder of the topography of Loraine as described by Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye*. The east-west dichotomy, the structure of the houses and the direction of human

movement are also alike. Here the movement is always unidirectional - from the east to the west and never the vice versa. One can draw another parallel and that is of the compulsive minor criminality in the oppressed group. Stealing of money and food is not a greed- oriented act but has been described as a circumstantial imperative and a mode of resistance to the controlling powers. The idea is best illustrated in her short story collection titled *harum scarum saar*. The politics of power is exhibited in the Pongal gifts exchanged between the Parayals and the Ayyas. Often “tastes and distastes for food are constructed, articulated and enjoyed as part of the project of constructing and presenting the self” (Lupton 129). But in this story “pongal” the refusal to take food gift as an act of resistance to the hegemonic power is at last endorsed by the erstwhile servile father followed by the cattle as they too refuse to eat the landlord’s gifted stale food. Gender intersection is noticeable in the men’s self- determinism in contrast to the woman’s subordination when she takes the order for the ragi to be cooked. In the case of Bondon the stolen food is a desire for equality: “Food symbolizes what we desire and what by imagination we transform, giving meaning to life” (Stowell13). The gift of banana in the story “freedom” is in sharp contrast to the stale unnutritional food rejected by Subramani and thus strengthened he takes courage to run away.

In *Karuku* Bama has added a sequel to some of her chapters, which seemingly act as appendages but are thematically an integral part of the text. These sequels are a mode of foregrounding the essential concerns and often adding philosophic dimensions to the brief episodic or rather anecdotal text. The first chapter for example has three stories — of Bondon, Kaaman and Nallanthanga. The first is that of the stealer which underlines the already discussed concept. The second story of the ‘Jack of all Trade and Master of None’/ highlights the patriarchal compulsion of man to settle in a fixed trade to be able to get settled in



a family. And the third story presents woman both as a victim and a victimizer with the social tendency to idolize the dead victim. The last story with all the suicidal attempts shows the virtual impasse for the poor to redeem themselves in utter poverty and by inversion points out the need for education for survival — the mode adopted by the writer herself. Here in this story too food is central as return of Nallanthanga is on account of her inability to feed her seven children in the severe drought and her utter humiliation when her sister in law turns her ravenous children out after plucking the food from the little ones. The over crossing of gender role divisions by Kaaman and the victimization by a women readily assert the need to revisit and revise the Eurocentric feminist theorization.

Bama gives so exhaustive a discourse on food often running into a whole paragraph that she seems to be accepting hunger as an essential condition of the untouchables. Even her first acquaintance with this human evil comes in the form of a food item, vadais offered by their elder as a gift to a Naiker. The old man carrying the doubly wrapped packet by the string while himself doubling up meekly, reverently and shrinkingly makes the narrator when a child laugh — a laugh only to be transformed into terrible sadness, anger and fury. Four unspoken questions arising consecutively in the mind of the retrospective adult narrator reflect on the torment of unspeakability: "How was it that these fellows thought so much of themselves? Because they had scraped four coins together, did they mean they must lose all human feelings? What did it mean when they called us "Paraya" ? Had the name become so obscene? But we too are human beings" (13).

The response to this inhumanity, contempt and ugliness is in sharp contrast to that of the older generation. Patti's reply: "these people are maharajas who feed us our rice. Without them, how will we survive? Haven't they been upper caste from generation to

generation, and haven't we been lower caste / Can we change this?" (14). The negative rhetoric of the interrogatives is a testimony of the negativism, passivity and fatalism of the oppressed that renders them voiceless.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty while talking about decolonizing feminism raises the issue of "theorizing and practicing anticapitalist and democratic critique in education, and through collective struggle" (113). While both *Karuku* and *harum scarum saar* uphold the redemptive value of education, Bama uphold the spirit of resistance more through the resilience shown by women through collectivism in both the works. The story "chilli powder" can be cited as an example how the food item is used as a tool against the oppressor. The illiterate rural woman knows the need to speak out: "these days if you do not speak up, they will fart right into your mouth," (Bama 4) Bama's indictment of the convent that represents the two most sought after liberating/redeeming agencies / religion and education is severest so much so that the gender issue so essential an aspect of the work gets slightly decentred.

Bama shows how the church and the convent are in consensus with the society at large to keep the dalit at the lowest ebb and that it was not only the Hindu system but the Christian organizations that too were inhuman to the untouchables. Discrimination and exploitation of children on the ground of caste continued at all levels. They were publically humiliated. She narrates episode after episode to point out how the caste-based stereotypes were created and imposed to insult the untouchable. She seems to be exploding the conception that sees conversion of the Dalits as a way to form an alternate identity: "Although they (dalit christians) form a majority of the Christian community, they have been a suppressed majority" (Webster 118) "They have made use of Dalits who are immersed in ignorance as their capital, set up a big business, and only profited their own castes"

(69). While the adolescent Bama was able to resist in the public, she loses her voice in the convent school. Bama while acknowledging the governmental affirmative programmes, points out the isolationist tendencies among the school administration to humble the studious dalits: “All the same, every now and then our class teacher would ask all the Harijans to stand up either at the assembly, or during the lessons ... We felt really bad then...hanging our heads in shame, as if we had done something wrong. Yes, it was humiliating.”(18)At last Bama in rage said that she did not want special classes but realized she could “not get rid of the caste business *easily* wherever she went” (19, italics mine). She lost her temper and challenging them “head on” “stood her ground. I managed to get my way at last. ...” (19). The retrospective narrator sums up the whole situation: “because I had the education, because I had the ability, I dared to speak up for myself” (19). Soon she started taking pride in resisting. At her first place of work she enjoyed standing up to the authorities and teaching them with some skill and success. And it was in such a mood she decided to become a nun to help is notable that made her think the even after death caste difference does not disappear: “Wherever you look, however much you study, whatever you take up, caste discrimination stalks us in every nook and corner and drives us into frenzy,”( 23). Again, “Is there never to be any relief? It does not seem to matter whether people are educated or not” (24). Bama realizes that the worst part of this discrimination is that the oppressed has internalized their self worth. This is the worst injustice. “It is we who have to place them where they belong and bring about a changed and just society where all are equal”(24). Bama gives numerous examples to show how the upper class builds hegemonies and use both verbal and nonverbal languages to maintain them.

However she is well aware of the other shortcomings. In chapter three of the book through an account of the bloody conflict between the two low castes and through the projection of the petty

jealousies she explores the socio psychological factors and the reasons why the low castes remain low. The hierarchical caste order in the social system is self- maintaining. The lower caste would like to move up but the upper caste would resist this movement and thus the hierarchies remain unchanged. The police instead of maintaining law and order play a partisan role to safeguard and strengthen the cause of those who can fill their bellies and swell their pockets. Bama’s cognizance of the material conditions in the neocolonial setting is by subversion her plea for the economic betterment of the downtrodden, and education though rendered ineffective at times seems to be one of the most self actualizing remedies open to them. (Mental firmness does not match the influence and authority that money power wields. To continue their empowerment in spite of impediments, the subaltern require resilience, which would come neither from education nor from formal religious order. While the conformist oppressive religious order “orphaned “ her, made her a “mongrel dog” (67) “I could not act or speak or even eat independently” (96), “ nobody was allowed to think differently or speak differently”(98). She learns to identify with the poor and understands the problematic of “Dalit poor”, “poverty of the Dalits” and “the poorest of the poor Dalits” (68). Here she realizes the essence of “bhakti”. Her observation of the riches, greed and hypocrisy of the religious order and experience of the poverty of their mind and heart makes her realize that “God was not with them”, and that “we should speak up about what we believe. That is being true to oneself”(91). While the stifling system silences them, teaches them to shut their eyes, shackle their arm, “Dalits have come to realize the truth... they have become aware that they are too created in the likeness of god... urging them to reclaim that likeness” (94). The ninth chapter is the culmination of Bama’s new vision. Though with wings clipped she finds her self- resolved to move forward slowly, step by step. “I have courage; I have a certain pride. I do have a belief that I can live; a desire that I should live.” She concludes “it is possible to

live a meaningful life, a life that is useful to a few others. I comfort myself with the thought that rather than live with a fraudulent smile, it is better to lead a life weeping real tears” (104). “Dalits continue to revision and refashion their religions not only to make them more intentionally and fully liberative but also to tap their transformative therapeutic potential more fully” (Webster 118). Bama’s experiences as a woman and her observation of the experiential reality of women that includes the issues of girl’s education, wife battering, sexual exploitation and humiliation, women labour and wages, her restricted movements, the burden of motherhood etc. – all construct her feminist vision while at the same time her work seems to be highlighting the resilience, strong motivation and unfaltering spirit of women to overcome all the hurdles and survive through solidarity in the most unpatriarchal condition without male protection and man’s earning. Dalit women are doubly dalit. Her autobiography takes up the problematics of dalit both as a noun and adjective. Most significantly her feminist vision has the otherness as the primary attribute of self-fulfillment.

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Saurabh Kumar Singh & Gyaneshwar Pt. Singh

**Transgressing the Forbidden:  
A Study of 'A Friend's Story'**

In India sexuality is conceived strictly in terms of the binaries of heterosexual/ homosexual (gay and lesbian) beings. Living in a post-Marxian world we can not think of anything 'apolitical'. The dominance of heterosexist discourse which eliminates homosexuality to the extent of non-existence involves intricate web of sexual politics. Indians often observe homosexuality as perverse 'other' of heterosexuality. In a system of binary opposition (good-bad; right-wrong; constructive-deconstructive; nature-culture; black-white) the 'other' is the inferior opposite of the dominant discourse. It is abnormal, pathological, unnatural and abhorable. It is used as a justification to send them to mental institutions. Even those women who defy certain so called gender prescriptions regarding attire and dress and exhibit desire to perform masculine identified acts, and even those who find comfort in wearing pants are accused of being homo (in this case lesbian). The dominant entity through their heterosexist discourse constantly strengthens and perpetuates itself by self definition, often in opposition to 'other'. Needless to say that such discourses function as ways of legitimizing and validating some entities against some 'others' to silence, control, or domesticate certain elements which are seen as powerful threats to the very existence of dominant entity.

Lesbians are vulnerable to the violence faced by all women i.e. sexual harassment, rape, and child abuse. But the most important fact is that lesbians not only have to contend with violence as *women*, but also as *lesbians*. In this connection, in the specific Indian context, we find that epistemic root of the violence faced by lesbian is in the denial of their very existence. Lesbianism is often considered to be a "Western import", and allegedly restricted to the urban elite of the Indian society. Further, lesbian sexuality cannot be perceived from woman's name, physical features or social practices, and a woman can choose (or not) to reveal her sexual orientation. Some lesbians might indicate their sexuality by adopting masculine clothes and behaviour and thus subvert the gender equation. Some reveal it through impassionate friendship, and others do not exhibit their sexuality at all. These instances constitute the notion that lesbian women are not 'identifiable'. In a patriarchal society where heterosexuality and control over woman's sexuality have become the norms, how can one even imagine the existence of subversive force of lesbians? In this dire situation then, for a lesbian to assert her sexuality becomes difficult. It is obvious that a woman who has an intimate sexual relationship with another woman implicitly challenges male control over her sex life at least. And this leads to the emergence of violent misogynists. It does not mean altogether that other women do not face misogynist violence, but to state that when lesbian women 'transgress' the patriarchal boundaries on sexuality, the reason for violence differs.

But resistance to the power generated by the discourse and hence counter-discourse which erects a strong parallel discourse, is very much inherent in the very nature of discourse. In this connection all the lesbians and gays are highly indebted to Michel Foucault's multi volume *History of Sexuality* (1976-1984) and his powerful argument that especially 'deviant', that is non heterosexual, forms of sexuality play a prominent role in the organization of culture. Though any sort of

‘perversion’ is actively marginalized, it is discursively central in the sense that all the efforts to put this so called ‘perversion’ in negative light paradoxically keeps it in the centre of attention. Foucault gives more importance to body than the individual. He argues that “the individual is not to be conceived of as a sort of elementary nucleus... on which power comes to fasten... In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals” (quoted in Mills 2003: 19). Here Foucault’s emphasis is not to see individual as a stable entity, but the discursive processes through which bodies are constituted. Foucault, in an essay entitled “Nietzsche, genealogy and power”, suggests that the body could be seen as “the inscribed surface of events”, that is, political events and decisions have strong material effects on the body which can be analyzed. He views body as “the illusion of a substantial unity” and “a volume in perpetual disintegration”. In this way he points out that what seems most solid is, in fact, constructed through discursive meditation. For him the task of genealogical analysis “is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body” (Foucault 1991: 83). Body is historically and culturally specific entity. It is viewed, treated and experienced differently depending on the social context and the historical period. It leads to the assumption that bodies are always subject to change and can never be regarded as natural. Rather bodies are always experienced as potentially mediated through different social construction of the body.

Foucault further argues that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we witness an attempt to silence the discussion of sexuality and restrict sexual practices. But this repression was, in a way, ineffective. This seeming repression of sexuality and sexual discussion itself had an unintended effect: increase the desire to speak about sexuality freely and increase the pleasure gained from transgressing and violating these taboos. He writes:

...if sex is repressed, that is condemned to prohibition, non-existence and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself [/herself] to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he [/she] upsets established law; he [/she] somehow anticipates the coming freedom. (Foucault 1981: 6)

Obviously this is a paradoxical yet effective analysis of the repression of sexuality. Indeed it focuses on liberalized aspect of sexuality. It has motivated and paved the way for the people of 21<sup>st</sup> century to go for unfettered expression of sexuality.

Feminism can well be said to be the first movement that spoke about sexuality in specific terms. For the first time it seemed to raise its voice for all women folk in the world. It is a movement that raised a common female front against the overbearing patriarchal oppression. But, during 1970’s we find many voices expressing their dissatisfaction with this version of feminism that they saw as nothing but one more agency shaped by the interests of the dominant groups within the movement: heterosexual, white, middle class, and college educated. Consequently, many groups that could not comply with this, gradually broke away to formulate their own versions of isms. These isms included Black feminism, Chicana feminism, and, most importantly Lesbian feminism. To lesbian feminists the mainstream feminism did not take up the issues related to the traditional views of same-sex relations. As a consequence these lesbian feminists turned their back on mainstream feminism and pursued its own separate path. With the publications of Jane Rule’s *Lesbian Images* (1975) and Lillian Faderman’s comprehensive *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (1981) lesbian criticism definitively established itself.

Lesbian is a term that denotes to describe sexual and romantic desire between females. It refers to both: the women who identify themselves as having the primary attributes of female homosexuality, and to describe characteristics of an activity related to same sex desire. In this connection Lillian Faderman writes:

“Lesbian” describes a relationship in which two women’s strongest emotions and affections are directed towards each other. Sexual contact may be a part of the relationship to a greater or lesser degree, or it may be entirely absent. By preference the two women spend most of their time together and share most aspects of their lives with each other. (Faderman 1981: 17-8)

But the constitution of lesbian identity has been a debatable issue. Any woman’s emotional/erotic inclination towards other woman may be already firmly in place at birth, even though it might begin to manifest itself during or after puberty. From this perspective lesbianism is simply programmed into some of women in the same way as heterosexuality is installed into others. On the contrary, for the many radical lesbians of early 1970’s, lesbianism was a matter of choice. It has been hailed as a strong anti-patriarchal choice. It is also a matter of socialization “d of the individual experiences that some of women go through and that ultimately turn them into lesbian entities. This socially driven view of lesbianism, focusing on the power relations that inform, structure, discipline and adjudicate on sexual preferences, treats sexuality as part of a larger social identity. Thus sexuality becomes the subject of power-mediated power norms and cultural definitions. In Charlotte Bunch’s essay “Lesbians in Revolt,” we could clearly sense the echoing of anger against the cultural politics of her time and how she, together with her peers found hope by idealizing the whole notion regarding lesbian:

To be a lesbian is to love oneself, woman, in a culture that denigrates and despises women . . . lesbianism puts women first while society declares the male supreme. Lesbianism threatens male supremacy at its core. When politically conscious and organized, it is central to destroying our sexist, racist, capitalist, imperialist system. . . lesbians must become feminists and fight against oppression, just as feminists must become lesbians if they hope to fight male supremacy. (Bunch 1975)

This angered statement of Bunch clearly manifests its voice for that sort of lesbianism which was regarded as a “choice” the women should take in order to liberate themselves from the bloody clutches of male domination. It can well be considered as the best weapon to exercise full freedom.

Lesbian experiences are not singular but plural. This plurality of lesbian experience is well defined by Cheryl Clarke in these words: “However there is no one kind of lesbian, no one kind of lesbian behaviour and no one kind of lesbian relationship” (Clarke 1966: 156). Despite the seminal works written by Giti Thadani (*Sakhiyani*) and Ruth Vanita (*Same Sex Love in India*) which illustrate the recovery and discovery of lesbian histories from ancient texts and archaeological sites, same sex love is still considered to be an idea imported from west, thus a greater need is required to illustrate the inherent complexity of a lesbian experience from Indian literary text(s). In Indian literature we have several novels dealing with lesbian relationship” *Machali Mari Huai* (written in Hindi by a male author, Rajkamal Chaudhari, as early as in 1966), Geetanjali Shree’s *Tirohit* (2001), and Manju Kapur’s *A Married Woman* (2002), we have some stories written by Ismat Chughtai” *Lihaaf* and *Crooked Line*, but as far as drama is concerned we have a few literary texts to cite as an example and illustration. In this perspective kudos to Vijay Tendulkar who emerges as the first

ever dramatist after Indian independence who ventures to voice this neglected and unrecognized piece of human species i.e. lesbian in his master text *A Friend's Story*.

*A Friend's Story* is a unique play in the sense that it presents the male perspective of the 1940's on lesbianism. It emerges as a powerful text that depicts lesbianism with deeper insight. The statement of Rajkamal Chaudhari regarding his novel *Machali Mari Huai* can well be applied to it: "Lesbianism is not the subject of this novel, but only a subject proposal" (Chaudhari 1966: 11). Likewise the texture of this very drama aims to provide a very beginning point for lesbianism to begin with. For the subject matter Vijay Tendulkar takes recourse to the real story of a woman whose promising career came to an end after her affair with a young woman turned into a great scandal. Tendulkar's three-act play fictionalizes the life-changing moments in Mitra's struggle to cope with being "different" or "other." Here, Tendulkar chooses not to focus primarily on Mitra's love affair but rather on her friendship with the central character and sometime narrator, Bapu. Their friendship goes through a succession of quick, dramatic growth spurts that reveal the complexity of friendship and show that which Bapu ultimately comes to represent: a homophobic society that keeps its blinders on to naturalize straight relationships as the norm, even if this should lead to a tragic end.

Tendulkar's Mitra as a potential lesbian character does not account for any compulsion or choice or based on outer circumstances but it accounts for physical hormonal imbalance. While growing up she looks around and perceives herself to be different from other folks around her. As a lesbian identity is not necessarily immediately apparent from woman's name or physical features and she can choose or not to reveal her sexual orientation, Mitra chooses to exhibit her sexual inclination. She accepts it up to a point, then allows herself to flow with the spirit, and lets herself go. She is totally unlike any typical

female entity. She is stubborn in nature and desires to do whatever she wants to do. She is reckless. As Bapu the narrator of the story says: "The other girls were the helpless, touch-me-not kind. But there was a masculine vigour in Sumitra Dev's stride and speech. She was carefree; her laughter came in loud bursts. She had eyes which met you in straight combat. Her broad forehead suggested intelligence. Her entire personality had a natural, aggressive masculinity, but a figure irresistibly attractive to men" (Tendulkar 2007: 419).

Shrikant Marathe (Bapu) is the only character in the drama who tries to understand her. He tries to know her. In due course of conversation she reveals to him her sexual inclination. She says; "My mother used to say, I had hoodwinked God to be born a girl. I was always with the boys. Used to play all their games from marbles to gillidanda. Even kabaddi" (422). Right from the very beginning Mitra and Bapu cements a mutual bond. This bond is so solid that Mitra does not reveal her unique sexual orientation to anybody but to Bapu. She becomes philosophical in putting her dilemma. She puts it existentially: "Who makes us the way we are and sends us here? Why are we what we are? Why do we become our own slave? (424) She knows this bitter fact that she is an anomaly. When her family members are not accepting her how can such a hostile society validate her existence? But in order to survive one has to find somebody to share the deep personal feelings. And Bapu is there for her rescue. She discloses to him her own story in the form of another story. She says:

... knowing fully well that she yearned for the company of men, but not for 'that' kind of relationship. When she met that boy, she felt no physical thrill, no flutter of excitement, her heart didn't miss a single beat. But the boy felt it all and took it for granted that the girl did too. She found the whole thing rather bizarre. She asked herself why she didn't feel the way other girls did. Why did I feel so completely at home in the

company of men? Why did I never feel shy? Why did I feel so much at ease in putting my hand round their shoulders? Why did I find it strange when I sensed a man's excitement? Men were good company, but their ways with women seemed weird and unpleasant (431-32).

But this relationship is not as straight as it seems to be. Tendulkar in order to bring about the desired goal of his dramaturgy deliberately diminishes the background details of place and setting to intensify Bapu's and Mitra's tense and often contradictory interior states. When Mitra ultimately reveals him what she is, Bapu is lost in a reverie, "Do such women exist? Are they born like that or do they get conditioned as they grow to be what they are? Is it an ailment or a human trait of a particular kind? What would happen to Mitra? It was bizarre, repulsive and abhorrent" (434). This is a unique state of mind of Bapu. Bapu sincerely wants to be friends with Mitra, yet he is repulsed by her (*nature*). He helps her but his heterosexist idea never considers her love normal. Mitra's frustrated desire for fellow thespian Nama is the culmination of her longing, "That night, while the love scene was on, the love scene was on, things came to a head. I lost control. Her touch... her very desirable body in my arms... she moved away as if she sensed it... That night, I saw myself in a flash of lightning. I knew I didn't want a man. I need a woman. I'm different, different" (440). This naked confession feels like a slow suffocation that ultimately leads to self-destructive acts. Now the ending has begun.

Nama's involvement with Mitra is confusing. She is fond of Mitra, likes being with her, but the relationship is burden for her. She finds it difficult to cope with it. But she cannot totally reject Mitra. As she shares her unique predicament to Bapu, "Well, I like Mitra as a friend. I... I like many things about her. But Manya Dalvi is a different matter altogether. I mean, there is no comparison. What I mean is I'm not able to say what I mean... the truth is - I... I think... I don't

know what I mean. I'll go" (460). To me Nama can be taken as a potential bisexual. Nama beautifully casts herself in the theoretical formulations given by Adrainne Rich's conception of 'instinctive bisexuality' as opposed to 'compulsive heterosexuality' and Ann Koedt's scientific delineation of the fact that it is the clitoral sex instead of penetrative vaginal sex that provides orgasm. It is quite possible that Nama is enjoying clitoral sex in the company of Mitra and penetrative vaginal sex in the company of Manya Dalvi. In a way she is 'doubly privileged'. Whatever be the matter, but this much is clear that Nama's case is very strong for bisexuals, lesbians and pan sexuals.

The invisibility of lesbians finds its full manifestation in the narrative technique of the "ghosting of lesbians" or "apparitional lesbianism" a term used by Terry Castle in her work, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* published in 1993. Here she gives the concept of "self-ghosting" through which a lesbian can disguise herself in her private space in this homophobic society. Certainly Mitra does not fall in this category as she is not the victim of self-ghosting. Mitra can well be implanted in the category as suggested by Shormishtha Panja in her essay, "The Ghost Who Talks: Terry Castle's *The Apparitional Lesbian* and Gender Discourse":

The lesbian threatened the moral, sexual and psychological authority of men and the response of hostile men (and patriarchal women) was to 'ghost her'. Hence, the conjunction between lesbians and apparitions seemed apt----- they were both seen as diabolic. The ghost's image also drained the lesbian of her carnality and denied her erotic force" (Panja 2006: 47).

After Mitra rejects the Hindu-identified character Pande's advances, he calls her variously "frigid" and "lesbian bitch," thus revealing the deep hypocrisy embedded in a religious system that at once worships women deities and also cultivates same-sex (male)



bonding and platonic love. Other male characters (including Pande and Dalvi) reveal the deep contradictions inherent in patriarchal society; they don't know what to do with their simultaneous desire and fear for an independent, strong woman like Mitra, so they violently assault and demonize her. In her vertiginous descent, the play reminds its audience that there is no place for Mitras (lesbians/others) in a violently homophobic world.

Unfortunately, while the friendship between Bapu and Mitra is central to the play, it often feels forced. Bapu's many audience asides tell too much and take away from the power that a more subtle showing might have realized. Bapu's asides unnecessarily sidetrack from a story already filled with complex psychological details that are apparent in the character's actions: hesitations, uncontrolled rages, and humiliations, to name a few. And, while Bapu clearly stands for that part of society that is more willing to understand a woman like Mitra, the audience is never sure why he really sticks around her. She constantly assails him with contemptuous words, calling him at different times a "worm," "Milksoap!," "poor Bapu," "poor thing" and a "Chickenheart"; and after he has been beaten to a pulp defending her, she barely blinks, asking condescendingly, "Did the baby get beaten up?" (452) Tendulkar never really shows why Bapu invests in a one-sided friendship, leaving the audience with a skeleton of a friendship that seems only to serve the purpose of reducing complex emotions to an essentialized critique of patriarchal society. Perhaps, however, Tendulkar only sketches the friendship precisely to show more dramatically Mitra's plight: no one, not even the person who is faithful as a friend, will understand her. Perhaps, too, Tendulkar's play must tell more than show to open audience's eyes more dramatically to a society that enacts violence against those deemed unworthy of belonging to it.

Finally, *Mitrachi Goshta's* message is bold, but not overly rendered as an ideal. Whereas the real Mitra lived as a spinster into old age, the fictional and tragic Mitra reminds us that the world still isn't ready to shelter human life in all its diversity and complexity. The emerging lesbians and lesbian discourses and their visibility is a barometer of any society's openness. They are not merely alternative identities but they are a great impetus for social reconstruction. Though they are marginal but they forcefully remind the fact that any sort of forced conformity should be resisted. They voice the possibility of human lives as multiple; selfhood as several; communities as voluntary and various. The slogan 'unity in diversity' must involve not only the coexistence of plurality of groups, but also by the plurality of identities it allows individuals to assume. Otherwise we should be ready to face the tragic consequences of losing many (others) Mitras by accomplished acts of committing suicides.

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### **Gynocritical Perspectives on Bapsi Sidhwa's *the Pakistani Bride***

The feminist issues of unbalance and inequality between the sexes was first discussed by Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Virginia Woolf in *A Room Of One's Own* (1929) too surveyed and raised similar questions. Feminist wave became more powerful with the release of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* (1970) emphasised that sex is biological and gender a social construct. Significant contribution in this direction was made in the works of Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (1979). Feminism as a stream of study became specialised and systematic. Phallogocentric and gynocriticism became demarcated. Phallogocentric premises based on 'woman' presented in literature by male writers from their point of view. It is presumed that feminist era ended in the 1970's and post feminist era began in 1980's. Women's closeness to nature cannot be denied since ancient times. The affinity between women and environment developed into ecofeminism. Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* create this type of specialisation. The French coined 'écriture féminine' for feminine writings.

According to N. Krishnaswami et. al. gynocriticism is, "a french term that refers to criticism exclusively preoccupied with the motivation, production, and analysis of writing by women on women" (p.153). In the essay, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness' Showalter manifests that, "the first task of gynocritic criticism must be to plot the precise cultural locus of female literary identity and to describe the forces that intersect an individual woman writer's cultural field" (Lodge 343). Thus a gynocritical reading of *The Pakistani Bride* would be 'palimpsest' (1) in nature. Patrocino P. Schweickart says, "today, the dominant mode of feminist criticism is 'gynocritics', the study of woman as writer, of the 'history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity..." (Lodge 445). A gynocritical reading of *The Pakistani Bride* reveals that women are prisoners and victimised in the sex-role paradigms of Islamic society. Feminine feelings of powerlessness and subjugation paver way for revolt. The locale at the beginning and end of the novel is 'an isolated hill town inhabited by Pakistani Islamic tribes. The tribal code of laws and punishment prevail here. Cut off from progressive civilization the way of living, conduct and thinking is archaic. The society, phallogocentric(2) or patriarchal.

The novel opens up, sensitively depicting the subordinate position of women and epitomising the male (even as a child) the controller of sexual, and physical power. Resham Khan, unable to pay back the loan hands over his daughter, Afshan to Qasim's father. Afshan is treated more like a commodity than an individual. First Qasim's father thinks of marrying Afshan as he had only one wife but in a "twinge of paternal conscience" (Sidhwa 8) he gets Afshan married to Qasim who was only 10 years old. On the wedding day she discovers that she was married to a boy, "Are you my husband?" (Sidhwa, 9) she asked unbelievably and Afshan did not know whether to laugh or cry. She accepts her fate and her relation towards Qasim

was more like a mother than a spouse. Here marriages are decided by the menfolk and the women have no say in it. They silently accept and harmonise with the situation as if destined to.

Marginalisation of females is a regular feature of Pakistani society as males prefer to keep their women away from the eyes of menfolk. Qasim snubs Nikka, "don't ask a hill-man anything about his womenfolk, understand? I would slit your throat...." (Sidhwa, 36). Strangely all vulgar and disgraceful terms are connected to one's mother and sister, "... incestuous lover of your mother, lover of your sister, son of a whore..." (Sidhwa, 42).

In the ambience of the city of Lahore watching Zaitoon Miriam says, "she'll (Zaitoon) be safe only at her mother-in-law's... a girl is never too young to marry" (Sidhwa, 53). Thus, the moment a girl reaches adolescence, marriage in the eyes of the society, is the *summum bonum* of a woman's life as Simone de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex*, "marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society" (Beauvoir, 445). The man is supposed to be the possessor of a woman. A woman is discouraged from developing her individuality. She is reminded that she is different from men. Miriam instructs Zaitoon after her menstruation, "you are now a woman. Don't play with boys and don't allow any man to touch you. This is why I wear a burkha..." (Sidhwa, 55).

In Islamic tradition a woman is not even allowed to enter a mosque to offer prayers. "the men... Gathered in mosques... the women... prayed silently for the duration of the call carrying on with whatever they were doing, stirring the pot in the kitchen or breast feeding the baby" (Sidhwa, 58).

Qasim on his visit to a brothel witnesses an inhuman scene. A pimp was forcing a prostitute to do contortions for dance movements. The tired and fatigued woman unfortunately could not display her

sexuality, “the woman continued her monotonous, mechanical spasms, one hip jerking higher, jaws dribbling spittle . . . . A man obscenely shaking his body called to her as to a monkey (Sidhwa, 65). Infact this instruction is not to guard her honour but for extorting money.

Chapter 10 opens up with the statement, “marriages were the high points in the life of the women” (Sidhwa, 88). The Islamic houses have the *zenana*, exclusive quarters for women where they can roam around freely without veils and burkhas. It is during a wedding Qasim gives his word to Misri Khan, his friend from his native place. Without even asking for Zaitoon’s opinion he fixes up her wedding. Miriam was sensitive to realise it, she quips, “how can a girl, brought up in Lahore, educated – how can she be happy in the mountains? Tribal ways are different, you don’t know how changed you are . . . . They are savages. Brutish, uncouth, and ignorant! She will be miserable among them” (Sidhwa, 93).

In spite of constant warnings from Miriam about Zaitoon’s unhappy future Qasim goes ahead with his decision. Even Zaitoon complies without putting up a question. Zaitoon repected her father’s decision and, “a blind excitement surged through her” (Sidhwa, 96). On Miriam’s advice, “tell your father you don’t want to marry a tribal. We’ll help you” (Sidhwa, 98). Zaitoon expresses her inability to cross her father.

Carol, the American wife of Farukh wrote to her friend Pam, “I love Lahore . . . . I don’t feel programmed! The people are kind and hospitable. I ‘m having a ball” (Sidhwa, 108). But this was a veneer. Farukh often accused Carol of, “displaying your honky-tonk pedigree! You laugh too loudly. You touch men . . . . Don’t you know if you only look a man in the eye it means he can have you?” (Sidhwa, 108). Farukh’s jealousy touched madness. He always asked her, of her routine in his absence. Farukh’s reactions show the vulnerability of

a woman without a male’s presence to shield or protect her. He suspected other men of taking advantage of Carol’s westernised lifestyle in his absence. A “. . . male is fortunate in having opportunities for releasing his impulse to domination and the fury of his frustrated ego, because he always has a wife whom he can treat as an inferior” (Mill, John Stuart, 40).

Mushtaq, another officer was attracted to Carol. Watching them in a compromising position the three tribesmen broke out into boisterous laughter and mischievous catcalls. Carol feels humiliated at the male gaze. “The obscene stare stripped her of her identity. She was, a female monkey, a gender opposed to that of the man – charmless, faceless, and exploitable” (Sidhwa, 120).

Farukh hurts Carol for her brazen behaviour. Carol while interrogating Zaitoon about marriage in the officer’s mess is struck by Zaitoon’s diffidence. Farukh’s unkind remark, “our women, particularly the young girls, are modest, you know” (Sidhwa, 133). This remark not only hurts her but also alienates her, the phrase ‘our women’ definitely excludes non-Pakistanis and in this particular context Carol. Zaitoon begins to cry as Qasim reveals about her separation from real parents during partition days. Carol builds up a female bonding and sisterly concern for Zaitoon and tries to comfort her by giving her a shawl and eatables.

Mushtaq, who was familiar with the tribal culture was aware that for tribals, “a wife was a symbol of status, the embodiment of a man’s honour and the focus of his role as provider. A woman is seen only in relation to a man. She has no existence of her own as Gilbert and Gubar comment in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead.

Zaitoon, instinctly senses the ‘savagery and harshness’ of the tribal people. Her background and education in Lahore makes her

revolt and she tells Qasim, ``that jawan at the camp, Abba, I think he likes me. I will die rather than live here'' (Sidhwa, 157). Qasim's severe reprimand quietens Zaitoon and she becomes 'selfless'. She is ready to marry and live with Sakhi. After marriage a girl cannot maintain her individuality, ``there is a unanimous agreement that getting a husband – or in some cases a 'protector' is for her the most important of undertakings.... She will free herself, from the parental home, from her mother's hold; she will open up her future not by active conquest but by delivering herself up, passive and docile into the hands of a new master'' (Beauvoir, 352). Zaitoon's tantrums and reclusive behaviour are unwelcome in the family. Yunus Khan warns Sakhi, ``she requires a man to control her'' (Sidhwa, 170). Wife battering is accepted, Sakhi not only beats Zaitoon, ``you are my woman! I'll teach you to obey me!'' (Sidhwa, 172-173) but also Hamida his mother. After this particular incident Zaitoon was convinced that she may not live long.

A woman's existence is discerned in accordance to the service she can render to a man. A pathetic phase of women's marginalisation begins with marriage. A woman is visualised as a medium to gratify sexual pleasures to a man. ``Slowly Carol had begun to realise that even among her friends, where the wives did not wear burkhas or live in special, women's quarters, the general separation of sexes bred an atmosphere of sensuality. The people seemed to absorb it from the air they breathed'' (Sidhwa, 112). Though Carol came from a highly liberated background but she also understood that, ``men here expected subtlety from women'' (Sidhwa, 112).

During Carol's affair with Mushtaq, she never realises that, ``he was having a fling, merely killing time'' (Sidhwa, 179). But she least realised that his attraction towards her was due to, ``long separation from his family, his need for a woman in the loneliness of his remote posting'' (Sidhwa, 180). In spite of being slapped by Carol, Mushtaq's

attitude does not change. For Mushtaq, Carol was only a sex object. He no longer found her sexually provocative. ``... in every age, woman has been seen primarily as mother, wife, mistress and as sex object in their roles in relationship to man'' (Ferguson 4-5).

In the hills Zaitoon did not have the freedom of moving around unwatched. Sakhi furiously beat her up abusing her as, ``you dirty, black little bitch, waving at those pigs ...'' (Sidhwa, 185). Zaitoon had to beg for mercy and on that particular night Zaitoon resolves of running away as, ``she knew that in flight lay her only hope of survival. She waited two days, giving herself a chance to heal'' (Sidhwa, 186). Nothing cannot be pressurised and sublimated beyond a certain point. Here Zaitoon's life takes a U-turn, courageously she runs away in a land totally unfriendly to her. Instead of showing concern for the agonised lonely woman, the society adds fuel to the fire. In society a woman is respected only if there is a husband to stand beside her but the runaway zaitoon antagonises her husband and unsupported in this particular situation is raped in another village. She was cornered like a 'flustered hen' and a man whispers to her, ``you can't escape us, my dove'' (Sidhwa, 214). Even at this point Zaitoon does not give up she continues her chase in search of her promised land. After her own rape at Lahore, ``abandoned and helpless, she had been living on that charity of her rapists ... and on theft'' (Sidhwa, 231).

Meanwhile Carol in her room with Farukh feels, ``women the world over, through the ages, asked to be murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, to get importunately impregnated, beaten-up, bullied and disinherited. It was an immutable law of nature. What had the tribal girl done to deserve such grotesque retribution?'' (Sidhwa, 226). Carol remembered her Pakistani women friends who were superficially westernised but looked sad perhaps this sadness is due to the staunch narrow mindedness of Islamic societies towards women. Zaitoon was miraculously saved and only the news of her death makes

the tribal men swell with pride. "Misri Khan's massive shoulders straightened. He thrust his chest forward and his head rose high. It was as if a breeze had cleared the poisonous air suffocating them and had wafted an intolerable burden from their shoulders" (Sidhwa, 244).

Through the story of Zaitoon, Sidhwa poignantly reveals that a man in the society is not only physically strong but also a master manipulator in the power game. Though a woman is neither physically stronger nor manipulates the power game but, the grit and courage shown by Zaitoon's *khudi* (will power) might be a harbinger of a change in society. Here Sidhwa seems to reiterate Iqbal's philosophy of life based on will power which says:

*khudi ko kar buland itna -  
ke har takdeer say pahalay-  
khuda banday say poochay -  
bata teri raza kya hai? -*  
(Heighten yourself to such majesty  
That before every turn of fate  
God himself asks man  
Tell me what do you wish?)

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>A women's fiction can be read as a double voiced discourse containing a 'dominant' and 'muted' story. Gilbert and Gubar call a 'palimpsest' Showalter Elaine, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', *Modern Criticism and Theory*, Ed. David Lodge and Nigel Wood, New Delhi: Pearson, 2007.

<sup>2</sup>In literature the term phallogocentric (coined by Jacques Derrida) can be applied to novels in which male characters have the upper hand and the female characters are sex objects. The more macho features of Hemingway novels might be called phallogocentric.

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Sudhir Nikam & Madhavi Nikam

**Undermining the Conventional Trends:  
A Study of Satish Alekar's *The Dread Departure***

Satish Alekar is one of the most innovative playwrights who have shown a new direction to the contemporary Indian theatre. Alekar's Marathi play *Mahanirvan* was translated by Gauri Deshpande as *The Dread Departure* in 1989. The play deals with the death of the breadwinner of a middle-class family and its impact on his wife, son, and the neighborhood. The death is presented on ceremonial, psychological, and social level. Alekar has lived in Shanivar Peth, a Pune locality which is very close to a crematorium. Watching the funeral processions passing his house over the years, he experienced the sick atmosphere of the locality. He saw the people imprisoned in their vicious conservative circle. Through *The Dread Departure*, Alekar has raised questions against the conservative rituals, human relations, and social establishments touching the stark reality of the society.

The play begins with the death of Bhaurao in the early morning. Listening to the cry of his wife Rama, the neighbors excitedly show a special interest. As Bhaurao's son Nana is out of the city, they have to wait for him. The soul of Bhaurao talks with Rama and Nana. The dead Bhaurao denies to be cremated in the electric crematory, insisting on the old and the traditional method. With the great difficulty, Nana

secretly keeps the dead body on the loft and proceeds for the ritual for the thirteen days. Meanwhile, it is discovered that Rama has fallen in love with a man whose identity is not yet revealed. Just like Hamlet, Nana is hunted with the identity of the person. Discovering Bhaurao's body rotting, Nana cremates it in the old crematory by giving bribe to the watchman.

Alekar has introduced a new sensitivity and thoughtfulness in his analysis of changes in values, life-style and culture in the society. He has presented the society trapped in the conflicts of tradition and modernity. The gap in two generations is psychologically analyzed. *The Dread Departure* is like a journey of a man from his death to his funeral. A person dying in his sleep is natural fact but telling about his death to the living one and consoling his wife is shocking and serious. A widow's yelling after the death of her husband is natural but singing on such occasion is unnatural. It is a custom to tell the news of death to the relatives but telling it with delightful face is surprising. The play gives shocks to the readers by introducing the events like the widow eating an apple in presence of her dead husband, neighbour's singing while tying the pyre, decorating the pyre with balloon, a dead body complaining about its inconvenience, gossiping, singing, fighting of the neighbors while waiting for the relatives, entry of the son playing prison's base to see his dead father, dead body denying to be cremated in the electronic crematorium, keeping the body on the loft for thirteen days, the dead person eating rice balls as a crow, stitching the finger of the dead person all these incidents break the conventional norms of the society.

Bhaurao is physically dead but although the neighbors are alive, their conscience is dead; their senses are frozen. While dancing around Rama, they describe themselves as, "We are upright folk and neighbourly / Who'll be eating their bread with honey" (09). They do not understand the contradiction in this description. These so called

gentlemen while instructing the duties to the widows also mention to see her 'convenience'. Although their life style is modern, their thoughts are rotten, conservative and backward. They believe in male domination. The middle-aged neighbor while telling about the necessary things for funeral, shows materialistic attitude. The intention behind his instructions is that the body should be burnt early so that they can take bath before the water disappears. They are never ready to go out of the track of their daily routine. Their consolation of Nana is nothing but a dry, emotionless formality.

Traditionally, after the funeral, there are two rites to be performed: one is offering the rice balls to a crow and the other is the thirteenth day feast. If the crow touches the rice balls, only then it is considered that the dead's wishes are fulfilled and he has left this world satisfactorily. This event has an ironic connotation in the play. The son, who does not care for his living father, is keen to feed the crows so that the father's soul could get a release. On the thirteenth day feast, all the neighbors enjoy and it becomes a kind of celebration. Alekar thus criticizes the contradiction, hypocrisy and hollowness in human behaviors.

Alekar makes psychological analysis of man-woman relation in the specific age with declining sexual power. Bhaurao realizes his declining sexual power. In the same night, he experiences intense sexual urge of Rama. He becomes restless to know this truth and dreams as if he is slipping over the mossy road, while Rama is supporting him. Although Rama realizes the physical and psychological changes in Bhaurao, she does not make him conscious of it. However, Bhaurao accepts the fact. While Rama tries to support him, he says, "How can you hold me after my end? ... you aren't there" (03).

Rama always tries to understand Bhaurao's emotions and makes him comfortable. In the morning when she realizes that Bhaurao does not wake up, she says, "Now you are being naughty! ... You

wait! I'm going to tickle you now!" Then Bhaurao reacts, "What! You're going to tickle me? Now? Bright and early in the morning?" (06) Their dialogue consists of hidden sexual urge which is expressed in form of words. The neighbor who peeps in at the window says, "Look at that! Now that's what I call true love! Right in the open, in bright daylight!" (06) The remark made by the neighbor expresses the problems of the couple living in a small house supporting their physical needs.

The play mocks the traditional belief about unique and sacred relation between husband and wife. Rama sees in her empty square a man younger than Bhaurao immediately after ten days of Bhaurao's death. Rama even does not protest against his frequent visits to Bandu's mother. Bhaurao imagines Rama as Mrs. Joshi while making love to her. He is always obsessed with various kinds of fears. Always worried for his beautiful wife, he suspects her character and dreams of the relation between Rama and the neighbours. The reason behind such fear is his relation with Bandu's mother. Rama who has leaded a suppressed life gets a great mental relief after his death.

Nana is very possessive of his mother. When he realizes his mother's attraction for the 'third-from-the-left', he becomes restless to realize the presence of other man in Rama's heart. Nana expresses his mental conflict, "I am afraid, Bhau. Afraid of us becoming Hamlet. This 'suit and shade's uncle', O my prophetic soul, is going to be your bane" (47). Rama asks Nana to invite the man for the thirteenth day feast. She does not mention the man as one who has picked up and carried the bier. Just as Shakespeare's Hamlet suffered from 'Oedipus Complex', Nana also goes through the same emotions. He utters with rage, "Let me track down this murderer, this assassin, and I will burn you both on the same pyre! Bloody pimp! Kill my father and marry my mother, will you? You wait" (48). Nana always tries to get rid of



this complex. The play makes a brilliant analysis of the changing ethos of the twentieth century middle class family.

Although some critics have found the impact of Brecht on Satish Alekar's plays, but Alekar makes it clear that he had read Brecht after writing *The Dread Departure*. In spite of Alekar's clarification, one finds a number of elements of epic theatre in this play. Brecht rejects the Aristotelian concept of tragedy as an imitation of reality with a unified plot and a universal theme which establishes an identification of the audience with the hero. He proposes that the illusion of reality should be deliberately shattered by an episodic plot, by protagonists who do not attract the audience's sympathy. By producing 'alienation effect', he jars the audience out of their passive acceptance of modern capitalist society as a natural way of life, into an attitude of critical understanding of capitalistic shortcomings. In the play, the audience is not involved with the characters and events. Alekar has deliberately used theatrical devices to shatter the illusion of reality so that the audience may think objectively about the events and episodes on the stage. The play follows narrative mode rather than the traditional. Narrating after his death, the central character is trying to know the reactions of his family members about himself, which is very shocking. Just as Bhaurao starts thinking objectively about the world around him, the audience is also alienated to think independently. Alekar has effectively achieved the alienation effects by using various technical devices. Hence Alekar's claim that he read Brecht after writing this play is not convincing. It is not a mere coincident to use all the parallel technical devices of epic theatre and absurd theatre in his play.

At the end of the first act when Bhaurao is not ready to burn at the new crematorium, Nana says, "Burn! Burn! Some one burn this heavy load of my dead father off me. Let his skull crack in the fire like a rifle shot. Relieve me. Release me. Help me, someone! At least, drop the curtain" (28). Immediately the curtain comes down and the

drumbeat begins. The audiences suddenly become conscious with Nana's dialogue. Their illusion of reality is immediately shattered and they become aware of watching a play. In the second act, when the curtain is raised, a tambura is strummed as Nana's face is illuminated by a single small oil-lamp. Nana sings, "May darkness be dispelled / from the farthest. / May the world be illuminate / by the sun of its essence" (29). With this song while the audiences become conscious, Bhaurao further says, "There's the bell, folks, / of a man's demise" (29). Bhaurao makes the audiences conscious that they are watching a play. Illusion is considered a soul of drama. Alekar makes use of anti-illusionist devices to bring the audiences out of traditional belief. He makes them conscious that they are sitting in the theatre and it is not an event from real life.

As the interruptive device, Alekar makes uses of hymn songs so that the audiences might interpose their judgment on the episodes presented dramatically. Instead of identifying with his part and losing himself in it, Bhaurao helps destroy stage illusion by putting himself at a distance both from the character he portrayed and the situation in which he was involved. Since human being is the object of inquiry, Alekar wants to show man not as a consistent or integrated whole but as contradictory and changing. His concern is not a gesture or set of gestures in which a whole social situation can be read. He makes the audience aware from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible into something peculiar, striking and unexpected. Alekar wishes to accentuate the contradiction or the tussle and tension of opposing forces in every sphere of life- the individual, family and society.

*The Dread Departure* presents contradictions of contemporary life in different shades. Although the play seems to be holy outwardly, it is, in real sense, a womb of diverse ideologies. On every step, one finds a harsh criticism of religion, tradition, social norms and system of various human tendencies. The location of the play is a

lower middle class locality in Pune and the characters represent their class. It projects a panorama of hollow society, outdated values, and cruel bureaucracy.

Satish Alekar has taken a revolutionary step by writing a play on the much neglected topic like death. His anti-established mode is reflected through depiction of hollowness in personal and social contradictions, meaningless values and religious conservatism. The play gives a feeling that Bhaurao is singing a song of this nation and the neighbors who are enjoying the feast of basmati rice on 'thirteenth day' are the representatives of opportunist and mean tendencies in the society. The death of Bhaurao spreads a mood of celebration. When the neighbors sing a song on the thirteenth day feast, it gives a feeling that Bhaurao is a symbolic representative of the common masses of India and the neighbors are the representatives of the mean and shrewd politicians.

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Syed Ali Hamid

### Rooted Cosmopolitanism: A Note on Tagore's Contemporary Relevance

It is difficult to write on a cult figure like Tagore; a man who was the first Asian to get the Nobel Prize and the only Indian to get it for Literature; the founder of Santiniketan, a man who wrote about a thousand poems, eight short story collections, a dozen plays, eight novels and, of course, writings on religion, philosophy, education and society; one feels overawed and weighed down with the burden of existing work on him. In addition to this, are the various labels applied to him; a humanist, internationalist, educationist, a mystic carrying the stamp of approval of W.B. Yeats, a philosopher who tried to evolve a synthesis of the East and the West, one of the pioneers of the inclusive concept of India and much more. But no Indian can be ignorant of Tagore; after all, our national anthem has been written by him.

It is quite fashionable to call Tagore an internationalist. I'm not sure if the label fits him. Tagore, I believe, always remained rooted in the Indian ethos. Let us not be carried away by his translation of *Gitanjali* which perhaps was done with the western readers in mind who saw India as the land of mysticism. His use of words like 'thou', 'thy' to address God was also a product of this intention, resulting in making the tone formal and less open to multiple interpretations than

the original Bengali version. In our own tradition of Kabir, Meera and the Sufis, God is addressed in rather intimate terms. In the ghazal, for instance, it is sometimes difficult to say whom the poet is addressing, the beloved or God. The idea was that one could achieve union with the creator through love, not fear. Tagore belonged to the Indian tradition but he was aware of two things. First, that in the western tradition, love for the beloved and divine love are two distinct things. Second, he was also aware of the problems and, if I may say so, the demands of translation. The act of translation does not only involve linguistics and culture, it is also a political act. These two factors, accompanied by the historical situation of his time, as well as the liberties one may take while translating one's own work, contributed to the end result. Had his tone been informal, and the poem could carry the multilayeredness in the English translation, our dear friend Yeats would definitely have been baffled by it, to say the least. It definitely goes to Tagore's credit that at a time when the British empire was going strong and people in the colonies were being influenced by western ideas and ideals, he made our philosophy and mysticism popular in the west.

Let me return to the label of internationalist that has been applied to Tagore. Bhalchandra Nemade in his essay "Sahityateel Deshiyata" (translated as "Nativism in Literature" by Arvind Dixit) observes:

An "international" literature without native reference does not exist. Even in Comparative Literary Studies such internationalism is not acceptable. In these studies one native style, movement, or trend is compared with another native style, movement, or trend. If native elements are ignored, the comparisons become trivial. Comparatists often remind us that there are no universal literary systems. Even theoretically, internationalism without nativism as its basis is impossible because nativism is a multi-layered, descriptive and real

concept, whereas internationalism is an artificial and parasitic concept. (Paranjape, 246)

He goes on to say that "Right from the days of Nehru, we are hatching the egg of such an 'internationalism' that only such chickens as designed by the western countries come out of it" (253). It is true that Tagore imbibed western ideas, but his attempt was to bring about a blend of the east and the west. Tagore was influenced by Rammohan Roy, Brahmo Samaj and the national movement. He was a nationalist without the accompanying rhetoric of patriotism; a person who was against the traditional orthodoxy and the caste system and one who also realized the importance of science and scientific temper in order to build a modern India. In *Four Chapters (Char Adhyay)*, the hero (Atin) remarks, "The patriotism of those who have no faith in that which is above patriotism is like a crocodile's back used as a ferry to cross the river. Meanness, unfaithfulness, mutual distrust, secret machination, plotting for leadership—sooner or later these drag them into the mud at bottom. That the life of the country can be saved by killing its soul, is a monstrously false doctrine that nationalists all over the world are bellowing forth stridently. My heart groans to give it effective contradiction". He was as much attracted to Shakespeare and the romantic poets as he was to Kalidasa. His national spirit did not make him denounce everything western. His attempt was to project Indian society and culture as inclusive; to discover some similarity in difference. It would, therefore, be more appropriate to call him cosmopolitan, a person who believed in the notion of *vasudhaivakutumbakam*. Perhaps, that is why he named his university 'Visva Bharati'.

I would not like to succumb to the current trend of studying past writers, and that too Indian, from the point of view of postmodernism. Such blind application of western concepts only lead to superficiality and can, at the most, be confined to those Ph.D theses

that are being churned out only for the sake of getting degrees. In the west, postmodernism evolved out of modernism and there were certain factors responsible for it. In the Indian context, we cannot jump directly into *uttaradhuniktavaad* without passing through *adhuniktavaad*. So, I will not talk about the postmodernist elements in Tagore.

Now, the question at hand: What is the relevance of Tagore today? How did Tagore address the fundamental issues and dilemmas facing India and the modern world? Questioning the relevance of Tagore is like questioning the relevance of Shakespeare or Premchand or Ghalib. That Tagore has withstood the test of time is sufficient proof of his contemporary relevance. While talking about Ghalib, a friend of mine remarked that had Ghalib lived today and wrote the following couplet, a fatwa would have been issued against him:

*humko maloom hai jannat ki haqeeqat lekin  
dil ke khush rakhney ko Ghalib ye khayal accha hai.*

(I know the truth about heaven  
It's a good ploy, Ghalib, to keep us happy.)

The problem of religious orthodoxy leading to intolerance has become even more pronounced in our time and it is the shrinking liberal space that is the cause for concern, as even some of the so-called liberals have their own hidden political agenda. It is at such junctures that writers like Kabir and Tagore assume greater importance. His idea of, what Uma Das Gupta calls “compassionate humanism and culture in India and the world”, an inclusive culture based on coexistence of opposites, is what we need today. His portrayal of religious conservatism as a reaction against western ideas and its conflict with the reformist Brahma Samaj in *Gora* is a case in point. When, at the end of the novel, truth is revealed to Gora, he realizes that “Today, I am really an Indian. In me there is no longer any opposition between Hindu, Mussalman and Christian. Today every caste is my caste, the food of all is my food”.

In one of the most oft quoted songs, prescribed in the syllabus of many schools in our country, Tagore defined his idea of freedom. “Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls”, is sufficient proof of his vision not only about free India but a free world which has transcended the confines of narrow and false nationalism; where we move forward ‘without fear’ towards perfection; where we devote ourselves to the search for truth accompanied by the ‘clear stream of reason’, coming out of ‘the dreary desert sand of dead habit’. Real freedom, according to Tagore, was not merely political freedom, but an inner freedom—from prejudices, from fear and from, what he calls, ‘dead habit’. Such thoughts remind us of Gandhi's concept of real swaraj, or real home-rule, which according to him is ‘self-rule or self-control’.

Writers have responded to social problems in different ways. A poet like Faiz Ahmad Faiz, whose centenary is currently being celebrated, took the path of strong protest against injustice and oppression. He advocated the path of revolution and overthrow of the despots to bring about social change. Other writers have focused on human suffering and pathos of the oppressed. Tagore is a reformist, who wanted to free India from the narrow confines of religious orthodoxy and expand the liberal space which was, and is, the need of the hour. While the path of revolution can be considered to be more relevant and applicable to countries under the rule of despots, dictators and monarchs (as is being witnessed in some countries of the middle east), it is the reformist path which is more suitable for nations like India, where democracy has established itself and has become a way of life. It is in this context that the poetry and ideas of Tagore assume greater significance. His faith in Hinduism did not prevent him from appreciating the positive aspects of other religions and his respect for all religions is also how we define secularism today. He demonstrated through his writings that our ancient philosophy and

culture is basically inclusive and secular. It is this concept of 'Indianness' that in the true sense defines the Indian spirit.

It is as undesirable to blindly ape the west as it is to mindlessly condemn it. It is, however, rather unfortunate that these are the two ways in which we largely respond to the west. There are some for whom all the ills of society, esp. our changing sexual morals, are the result of western influence and they denounce it in no uncertain terms. This has also led to the revival of religious orthodoxy, both Hindu and Muslim, which has, in turn, led to conflict between the two communities instead of confrontation with the west. There are others who are so much carried away by the west that they blindly imbibe and adopt western attitudes and way of life to the extent of considering their native tongue as inferior to English. In this context also, the ideas of Tagore are very much relevant today. Tagore had his feet firmly planted in the *terra firma* of Indian philosophy and spiritualism, but he was open to the dynamism of the west. He was aware of the dehumanizing effect of industrialization and that is why he emphasized the importance of man's harmonious relationship with nature. He was of the opinion that one should have an open mind for accepting the truth, whatever its source. His concept of 'Visva Bharati' or a world university was based on these two principles: man's harmonious relationship with nature, and the interaction between different cultures, including those of the east and the west. It is this approach towards the west that would be most desirable in this era of globalization and rapid advances of science and technology. His 'rooted cosmopolitanism', as I would prefer to call it, is perhaps the answer to contemporary man's existential dilemmas and search for identity in this largely capitalistic world, where the cult of the individual has taken a heavy toll on human relationships and where consumerism is fooling us to live in a world of make-believe.

Ezra Pound once remarked, "Literature is news that STAYS news" (165), and the literary output of Tagore amply demonstrates

this statement. A good and genuine writer is always ahead of his time. The Urdu poet Majaz said:

*zamaane se aage to badhiye 'Majaz'  
zamaane ko aage badhana bhi hai.*

(Move ahead of the times 'Majaz'  
The world has to be moved forward.)

It is, undoubtedly, Tagore's faith in Indian spiritualism, his fusion of the ideas of the east and the west, his revolt against religious orthodoxy and belief in secularism that contribute to his contemporary relevance. The poetry, plays and ideas of Tagore are not only relevant to our nation today, they continue to appeal to readers all over the world and it is his 'rooted cosmopolitanism' that is the main factor for the timelessness of his literary output.

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Randeep Rana & Preet Saxena

**Problematizing Diasporic Identities:  
A Study of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*.**

The paper is an attempt to critically analyze how the issues related to identity, culture and empowerment in the representations of diasporic experience in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. Diasporic writing is the outcome of variance between dislocation and relocation, a lost sense of belongingness and alienation, not only from the original home but also from the self. Almost all the Diasporic writers have exhibited an irresistible concatenation to their homelands. These writers often feel deprived and alienated from their roots, language and culture. They, "straddle two cultures; ... fall between stools, suffer from a triple dislocation, comprising the loss of roots, the linguistic and also the social dislocation" (Salman 15). Simultaneously, their writings exhibit an ardent avidity to assimilate and belong to their adopted culture and society.

During the 1980's, under the impact of globalization and liberalization there was a rapid increase in human migration and expatriation to both, developed and developing countries across the world. Diasporic writings, an offshoot of migration and expatriation, search for the lost roots in dislocation, alienation and homelessness. The thrust of this genre is to derive consolation or to experience

empathy with the vanished homeland or a strong craving to reclaim the lost homeland.

Diasporic literature, intends to probe the loss that has occurred, acceptance and rejection suffered and a perpetual struggle of the immigrants to establish identity in the host country and at the same time, to preserve the lost contact. These immigrants experience, "pain and agony of homelessness, displacement and relocation, the split between the native homeland and the adopted nation, the bicultural pull between the donor and recipient cultures and the emotional fragmentation between two identities" (Sharma 127).

In the postcolonial context the dilemma of identity returns as an importunate questioning of a hyphenated, decentred and fractured existence in the frame and space of representation. According to Deepkumar J. Trivedi, "Problems of nation, identity, national identity, individual identity etc. are the recent needs, that have emerged, which were never experienced by the mankind in the past" (20). Identity, thus, becomes the central part in the investigation of diaspora, particularly diasporic identity which, being multilayered is based on the history of immigration. Diasporic literature investigates identities forged in the crucible of multiple cultures, cities and races rather than just 'home' and the 'alien land.' Diasporic literature as Meena Alexander avers, "is writing in search of a homeland" (4).

Jhumpa Lahiri, a diasporic writer, born of immigrant Bengali parents and settled in USA, shot into fame with the award of Pulitzer prize for her *Interpreter of Maladies* (2000), a magnificent collection of short stories, exemplifies her dilemma of dual identity in her debut novel, *The Namesake* (2003). In this work, she encapsulates the socio-cultural dilemma, conflicts and complexities of assimilation suffered by an Indian Hindu Bengali family, the Gangulis, living in America for a span of over thirty years. Lahiri has artfully delineated the, "cultural

and emotional dislocations suffered by them in adopting to their new environs”( Mehrotra 149) .

The present paper aims to highlight the dilemma of divided identity experienced by Gogol, son of immigrant Indians, Ashok and Ashima Ganguly, who goes through an ordeal of living a double life that is illusory and self deluded. To add to it, the awareness of his leading a double life makes him all the more insecure and uncomfortable.

Apart from Jhumpa Lahiri, other diasporic writers such as David Dabydeen, Hanif Kureshi, Bharti Mukkerjee and Timothy Mo, to name a few, have discussed the problems of dual identity and roots. Their writings articulate the two invariables of their experience, exile and homeland.

Gogol, faced with a paradox, seems to be oscillating between two locations, the country of his origin i.e. India and his birth place i.e. America. He is trapped between, “a de-territorialization (the loss of place) and a re-territorialization (finding a new place)” (Nayar 193). The problem with Gogol is that, he cannot disconnect from his root and at the same time cannot assimilate in his place of birth and feels lonely even amidst the ocean of human beings. Quite often the ‘new land ‘ or new cultural environment doesn’t accept him fully and he is left in a state of limbo or nowhere. Victor Ramraj has rightly commented that, “ though linked by shared homelands and shared history of uprooting, these diasporic communities are not homogeneous or monolithic entities” (216). Gogol negotiates a new space, caught between two cultures.

Identity in diasporic writing means a split-consciousness. This split consciousness creates an interesting condition for Gogol, who, standing at the border of two cultures ,Indian and American, looking critically at both, neither assimilating nor combining either of them , is

,what Abdul JanMohamed called the, “specular border intellectual” (Nayar 199).

Gogol, a perplexed and ambivalent young man, is averse to all that is Indian, particularly to his pet name ‘Gogol’ given to him by his parents. In Bengali practice, the “pet” name is used within the family, the “good” name in the outside world. But, Gogol is ignorant of its significance. As a young boy he doesn’t detest his name, but as he grows older his name becomes for him an abominable cape. His pet name, “Gogol sounds ludicrous to his ears, lacking dignity or gravity. What dismays him most is the irrelevance of it all “( Jhumpa 76).

He hates any questions pertaining to his name. His misunderstanding is further complicated by the enigma of his name. He detests his very name because it is neither American nor Indian:

He hates having to tell people that it doesn’t mean anything “in Indian .” He hates having to wear a nametag on his sweater at Model United Nations Day at school. He even hates signing his name at the bottom of his drawings in art class. He hates that that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. He hates having to live with it, with a pet name turned good name, day after day, second after second.... At times his name, an entity shapeless and weightless, manages nevertheless to distress him physically, like the scratchy tag of a shirt he had been forced permanently to wear. (Jhumpa 76)

He was unhappy with his name because children taunted him, teachers in the school mispronounced his name and the name that defines a person’s individuality and identity ultimately becomes a burden for him.

After discovering that his namesake was a severe depressed man, mentally unstable,” queer, and sickly creature”(Jhumpa 91) who,” starved himself to death.”(Jhumpa 100) Gogol feels betrayed by his very parents. His name torments him with feelings of ‘difference’ and embarrassment.

Ironically as he grows older, he doesn’t want to go to the kindergarten after knowing that he will no longer be Gogol but ‘Nikhil. Now, he is angry because he doesn’t want a new name. “He can’t understand why he has to answer to anything else. “Why do I have to have a new name?” he asks his parents, tears springing to his eyes... He is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn’t know”(Jhumpa 57). Finally, he manages to be called as Gogol at the school. But, his happiness is short lived as he encounters a grave question regarding his sense of belongingness.

On his visit to a graveyard on a school tour regarding a project, he comes across tombstones of certain immigrants to America. Like his class fellows he too desperately searches for an Indian name but fails to find one. He is shocked to discover that his name is not even a Bengali name and condemns his parents. “How could you guys name me after someone so strange? No one takes me seriously”(Jhumpa 100). This reminds the reader of Draupadi in Meena Alexander’s *Manhattan Music*, where, Draupadi asks: “ Why couldn’t they have named me Dorothy? That name would have hung better on me” (8).

According to Parmod K. Nayar, “Dorothy/Draupadi is here expressing an anxiety- of merging unobtrusively into her new landscape. Her name isolates her as ‘different’, while what she seeks is assimilation”(206). This is applicable to the sorry state of Gogol as well.

Gogol is brought up in two cultural backgrounds; he is taught and familiarized with Indian customs, beliefs, food habits. Similarly, he

is brought up in the American cultural environment. His upbringing is bi-cultural. In the occasional family get together he is reminded of his Indian cultural background and heritage despite his trying hard to free himself from this stiffening Bengali environment. His parents expect him to lead a life based on Indian values and customs and maintain his Indian identity. According to his parents he could not be an American, no matter how hard he tried. Due to his twin cultural environment, Gogol suffers from a sense of emotional and sociological dislocation as he can neither completely engross himself in American culture nor rupture ties with his inherent Indian mores.

This sense of estrangement is evident on his school trip to the graveyard. Here he rues the absence of his the graves of his ancestors. He is shocked and , “ old enough to know that there is no Ganguli here. He is old enough to know that he himself will be burned, not buried, that his body will occupy no plot of earth, that no stone in this country will bear his name beyond life”(Jhumpa 69). Gogol appears to be sailing in two boats sailing in the opposite direction. Each of the boats pulls him in and he is always torn between the two.

Gogol, a bye-product of twin culture craves hard to escape his own past and his desire to escape his past becomes more obvious. Manjit Inder Singh states, “The attachment to one’s centrifugal homeland is countered by the yearning for a sense of belonging to the host country and its culture, thus triggering a process of moving from one cultural existence to another, albeit ambivalently in an attempt to assimilate and integrate”(53). But Gogol, instead of assimilating and integrating in his adopted culture is trapped between the pulls of two opposite cultures and doesn’t know to which he belongs. He is unable to embrace American culture due to the confusion arising from two opposite worlds.

Even his parents, having espoused the American culture are not completely assimilated rather, not allowed to assimilate, into the



fold of the host country. Time and again they have to tolerate the burden of the Indian Lineage of their parents and grandparents. There are plentiful incidents in this narrative that reflect the egotistical outlook of the Americans. Mrs Merton mocks at a painting drawn by Gogol of his mother with a 'bindi' on her forehead and calls it a 'spitting image'. Similarly, during their visit to an American departmental store, the salesman disregards Gogol's parents, as they speak Indian English and prefer to direct his discussion to Gogol, who speaks American English. Kallen rightly states, "it was not only unrealistic but cruel and harmful to force new immigrants to shed their familiar, lifelong cultural attributes as the price of admission to American society"(qtd in Salins 1).

It is relevant to mention that Gogol is not a displaced citizen or an immigrant; He is the son of immigrant parents. He is and will be an ethnic minority in the states. His name doesn't make any difference and he is referred to as ABCD or an Asian-American. This makes him to hate his dual identity.

Jhumpa Lahiri, in one of her interviews with *The Atlantic* stated:

The question of identity is always a difficult one, but especially for those who ... grow up in two worlds simultaneously... I think that for immigrants, the challenges of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, the knowledge of and longing for a lost world are more explicit and distressing than for their children. On the other hand, the problem for the children of immigrants that with strong ties to their country of origin- is that they feel neither one thing nor the other.

His name constantly reminds him of his alienation from the American society as he cannot be assimilated in the American culture for he is and will be an ethnic minority here.

Gogol appears to be torn between two nations, India and America, between two names, Indian and Russian, two value systems, traditional Indian and Modern American. Jhumpa Lahiri poignantly portrays the pain of the second generation immigrants, who are without any 'land' of their own. They only live in a land, which they own by birth, but to which they never belong.

Similarly, Gogol is leading a divided life engulfed between dual personality, he is Gogol for his parents, who want him to inculcate and incorporate Indian culture and traditions. It is only when he changes his name to 'Nikhil' he feels to be the part of American society. Now as 'Nikhil' he for the first time feels as an American and becomes a part of its culture, his birth place. Once 'Nikhil' he ceases to be an Indian.

His sense of belongingness to America is so strong that he is willing to lead a dual identity i.e. he remains Gogol for his parents at home and is 'Nikhil' to the world. As he is 'Nikhil' therefore, it is easy for him to avoid his parents. His twin names affirms the multitudinousness of his diasporic identity and it is easier for him to ignore his parents, "to tune out their concerns and pleas"(Jhumpa 105). He feels like a perpetual outsider. During his high school days he distances from his Indian roots and avoids other Indo-American students, does not accept India as his 'home' but as 'India' as viewed by his American friends.

As Nikhil, he is more and more fascinated towards American society. The window of this glittering world is now open to him :

It is as Nikhil, that first semester that he grows a goatee, starts smoking camel lights at parties and while writing papers and before exams, discovers Brain Eno and Elvis Costello and Charlie Parker. It is as Nikhil that he takes Metro-North into Manhattan one weekend with Jonathan and gets himself

a fake ID that allows him to be served liquor in New Haven bars. It is as Nikhil that he loses his virginity at a party at Ezra Stiles, with a girl wearing a plaid woolen skirt and combat boots and tights. (Jhumpa 105)

He is swayed by this glitterati and he shirks work, tells lies, makes excuses, feels like a free bird and detests his very home. "He didn't want to go home on the weekends, to go with them to the pujos and Bengali parties, to remain unquestionably in their world" (Jhumpa 126), rather he prefers New York, the place his parents fear. His alienated self dissuades him from his family.

He is fascinated by the American lifestyle of Maxine's family, and becomes so deeply immersed in them that he tends to neglect his own family. The only thing that holds him back is his Bengali instinct that makes him realize that, "his immersion in Maxine's family is a betrayal of his own" (Jhumpa 141).

Gogol always feels stretched and straddled between twin identities in his effort to adjust as Gogol or Nikhil. For his parents Gogol could never be an American as in front of them he doesn't feel like Nikhil. There was constant feeling of a lost sense of belongingness which made Gogol believe that he was not American or Indian and was persistently spanning fences stretching identities. This dichotomy of belonging to nowhere is central to diasporic literature. This duality develops in him a sense of insecurity of being exposed. Though he asked his parents not to address him Gogol, "the fact of it troubles him, making him feel in that instant that he is not related to them, not their child" (Jhumpa 106).

Despite an ongoing physical and psychological conflict of being grilled in the counterpulls of dislocations and locations, one ray of hope for Gogol is always there, i.e. his parents, whose significance he

realizes only after the sudden demise of his father and his mother's decision to return to India.

The reversal in his life takes place only after his father's death as he is a born Indian. His social or psychological condition may change according to the conditions but, one condition he could never change was his lineage. After facing many hiccups in his relationship with Moushumi and emotional setbacks in life he feels dejected, rejected, isolated towards the end of the novel. The thought that his parents are to perish one day and with them he would also lose his name and identity makes him apprehensive. He cannot expunge the reminiscences of his past- his name, his parents and his Indian legacy because these realities have formed his persona.

He wonders:

The givers and keepers of Gogol's name are far from him now. One dead. Another, a widow, on the verge of a different sort of departure, in order to dwell, as his father does in a separate world.... Without people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives, Gogol Ganguli will, once and for all, vanish from the lips of loved ones, and so, cease to exist. Yet the thought of this eventual demise provides no sense of victory, no solace. It provides no solace at all. (Jhumpa 289)

In the end Gogol feels the metamorphosis in his inner self which urges him to recover his lost sense of belongingness.

Gogol, a second generation immigrant, nee Lahiri, could never assimilate; he became an exile in the country of his birth. That is what haunts him again and again. His is a frustrated effort to make reasonable contact with any one of the cultures in which he finds himself, Indian

by birth ,American by education, he remains unable to relate to any one culture.

He is constantly moving about in search of an identity and is a victim of a sense of loss, disintegration and displacement. . He is, “haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back” ( Rushdie 10).

Gogol, living a dual life, amidst the swirl of meaninglessness all through the novel realizes towards the end that he is part and parcel of an Indian heritage by birth, accordingly, his parents have a right to give him a name be it a pet name.

After his father’s unexpected demise he comes across Nikolai Gogol’s volume and his act of reading this volume is indicative of his reassimilation to his familial past and realization of his lost self by redeeming his lost sense of belongingness. He endeavours to propitiate the implied strain experiencing in the gambit of his anew composed self by the climax.

In an interview with Washington Post, Jhumpa Lahiri remarked, “Naming is everything, a way to claim identity, to pass on notions of love tradition and hope.” Jhumpa Lahiri empathizes with Gogol in his homecoming. In spite of the physical and psychic struggle involved in being dislocated and relocated across the two continents, the ultimate feeling Gogol gets is positive i.e. to move forward. His homecoming signifies the relationship of an individual to a community and the manner in which family/ community cohere through social rituals and practices.

Thus, through Gogol’s predicament, Lahiri is able to present and reflect the twinge, the agony and inadaptability particularly of the second generation immigrants to adjust in an alien environment. This twin identity she encountered is reminiscent of the emotions of children

born in an alien land. With penetrating insight she reveals not only the defining power of names and expectations bestowed upon us by our parents, but also the means by which we slowly, sometimes painfully, come to define ourselves in this fine world.

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Nidhi Handa

### **Kâtyâyan and Sulbasutras: A Study in Identity**

There has been a debate among the scholars over the issue of the identity of Katyayan and *sulbasutras*. The scholars have various views and opinions formed in their own ways on the basis of the material available scriptures. To some scholars Kâtyâyan was the son of Sage Yajnyavalkya and his second wife, Kâtyâyani (Eastry 02). They hold that it was he who wrote *Ātōsutra* of the *Yajurved*. The *Skandpuran* holds that Maharishi Kâtyâyan was the author of *Vedaōstra*. It has also been mentioned that he had perfect knowledge of *yajña* which especially abounded with his views on *yajña*. There is one more reference in *Skandpuran* which states that Maharishi Kâtyâyan wrote many relevant books not only for his own *āakha* but for other *āakhas* also. It was for writing for other *āakhas* he became famous by the name of Parasar, the performer of good deed for others. For this very reason, he was also known as Brahabricharya Singh (Eastry 02). There are other references which establish Maharishi Kâtyâyan's identity. In *Ashvalayansrvanukram Bhasya* at a place it has been stated that he was the disciple of six gurus (Eastry 02). This has been reaffirmed in *Sarvanukram Bhaeya* also. In this regard the *Skand Puran* states differently. It unfolds that Maharishi Kâtyâyan was the disciple of a single guru (Eastry 02).. It

also unfolds that it was he who founded Vastupada Tirth and Mahaganapati Pith in the region of Vatnagar(Varodra). On the basis of above opinions and references, it can be concluded that there were three Kâtyâyan. The account of Kâtyâyan's identity given by R C D Sharma and Brij Behari Chaubey in their respective works also confirm this view.<sup>1</sup>

As far as the time of Kâtyâyan, the writer of *Ārotasûtra* of *Yajurveda* is concerned, it is uncertain. However, according to the Sutragraôth of Gemini and *Ārotasûtra* graôth of Kâtyâyan, these writers belong to two different periods. Their common styles and explanations bring them very close. There are many *sûtras* of Gemini which merely look like the translation of the *Ārotasûtra* of Kâtyâyan. For example Kâtyâyan first formulated the *sûtras* of various opinion and thereafter, with the help of the proved opinion or theory he, in order to have the knowledge of the *aôusthan*, wrote the *sûtras* without opinion or theory. Gemini too formulated the *sûtras* in the same fashion. Thus, in spite of the fact that they have common features, there is no definite answer to the question: who is ancient? However, taking into account the *sûtras* of Baûdhâyana and , pâstamb which lack seriousness of meaning, it can be said that they do not belong to the ancient time. The scholars hold that they belong to the tenth or eleventh century before Vikram Samvatsar. This lack of seriousness of meaning would not have been in the work of Bhagvan Kâtyâyan. Hence, Kâtyâyan, who was known as Vatrik, was a different thinker. Bhandârkar and Vilvalker ascertain that he was in the fourth or fifth century before Vikram Samvatsar.

It is now obvious that there can be no similarity between the Kâtyâyan of fourth or fifth century and the Kâtyâyan of the tenth or eleventh century B.C. (Āestri 07) This shows that there were two different persons. According to the above argument it becomes evident

that the *sûtrakar* was before three thousands year. His works are as given below:

- |                                  |                                    |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1- <i>Ārotasûtra</i>             | 2- <i>Āradhakalpa</i>              |
| 3- <i>Paraskargrh sûtra</i>      | 4- <i>Riskasarvânukarma sûtra</i>  |
| 5- <i>Āuklayajuh Sarvânukram</i> | 6- <i>Yupalaksana</i>              |
| 7- <i>Chhâgalaksana</i>          | 8- <i>Pratigyâ sûtra</i>           |
| 9- <i>Anuvâkasamkhyâ sûtra</i>   | 10- <i>Caranavyuh</i>              |
| 11- <i>Ārâddhkalpa</i>           | 12- <i>Āulbam</i>                  |
| 13- <i>Istakapurana</i>          | 14- <i>Pravrâdhyâya</i>            |
| 15- <i>Mulyaddhyaaya</i>         | 16- <i>Unchhœastra</i>             |
| 17- <i>Nigam</i>                 | 18- <i>Yajnaparœeve</i>            |
| 19- <i>Hotra</i>                 | 20- <i>Prasvotthnam</i>            |
| 21- <i>Trikandika sûtra</i>      | 22- <i>Katyayan Smrti</i>          |
| 23- <i>Upgrantha sûtra</i>       | 24- <i>Pratipadam</i>              |
| 25- <i>Anupada</i>               | 26- <i>Kratusañkhya</i>            |
| 27- <i>Manik sûtra</i>           | 28- <i>Mantrabhrantihar sûtram</i> |
| 29- <i>Yajurvedhân</i>           | 30- <i>Ukthauâstram</i>            |
| 31- <i>Karmpradipa</i>           | 32- <i>âigyajuâam</i>              |
| 33- <i>Parisañkhya</i>           | 34- <i>G<sup>o</sup>haysangrah</i> |
| 35- <i>Pratihârâ sûtra</i>       | 36- <i>Swaravyaâñjanm</i>          |
| 37- <i>Sâvitra</i>               | 38- <i>Mantrajyoti</i>             |
| 39- <i>Mantradipikâ</i>          |                                    |

Let me here take into account the time of the composition of Kâtyâyan's *Úulbasûtra* also in order to ascertain the age of Kâtyâyan. Vagiúa Úastri in his preface to Baúdhâyana's *Úulbasûtra* says, "It is indisputable that Baúdhâyana was not the first propounder of *Úulbasûtra*, rather -before him there were many acaryas who had already composed *Úulbasûtra*" (bag and Sen03).

The interpretation of Âpastamb sûtra also decide the age of Kâtyâyan's *Úulbasûtra*. The king of Karvind is of the opinion that there are many *sûtras* like those of Kâtyâyan in the composition of other Acaryas. He holds that there are *acaryas* who accept the series of contents in the same fashion as Kâtyâyan has done. Unlike Kâtyâyan these *acaryas* have described the *sûtras* in accordance with their own age and tradition. For example *suparnaciti*, one of the *sukla yajurvedis* and *droða* are such important *vedis*. In *droðas*, the author of *citi* wrote in the *úrotasûtra* as is described in *úulbasûtra* for existence. They are described in the same way in *úrotasûtra* as in *úulbasûtra*. In the same way, Baúdhâyana and Âpastamb have done it.<sup>2</sup> Thus taking into account the above discussion it can be concluded that Kâtyâyan is the propounder of *úulbasûtra* and belongs to much earlier time than that of the other *acaryas* of *úulbasûtra*.

### **Úulbasûtra and Kalpasûtra:-**

In Vedic literature the Kalpsûtra possesses an important place. It contains actions and describes them serially. It has theoretical knowledge and this is why it is called *kalpana œastra*. In Kalpasûtra, we have *prayogaœastra* also which has practical knowledge. They have fortnight *yajnas*. Here the author includes 18 appendices separately which deal with the subjects unexplained before. The author had an apprehension in his mind that the inclusion of these appendices in the main text could spoil the order of the contents. Hence, he composed them separately.

The Kalpasûtra can be divided into four parts-*úrota sûtra*, *g°ahasûtra or smârtasûtra*, *úulb sûtra* and *dharma sûtra*. In his introduction to, Baúdhâyana *úulbasûtra*, Vagiœa (Eastr) also divides *kalpasûtra* into four parts. He holds that there are four types of *kalpasûtra*—*œrota*, *grha*, *dharma* and *œulb* - in relation to each *veda*. There *sulbasûtras* are considered under *úrotasûtra*. Later in his introduction to Âpastamb *úulbasûtra*, Acarya Narsingh also comments upon *kalpasûtra* and holds that it has practical knowledge. In Kapardibhâya the word '*kalpa*' is replaced with the word '*úulba*'. This is discernible in the form of *œrota*, *sulba*, *grha*, *pitra* and *megha*. Here it is palpable to think that *úulbasûtra* too is a kind of part of his composition.

In fact, the *úulbasûtra* are under *kalpasûtra*. They are the integral part of the text like the appendices of Paòini. Paòini's appendices—*gaðapath*, *dhâutupath*, *uòâdikitasûtra* and *linganuúâsan* are in no way separate from the main text and it is fitness of things to call these five of *sûtras*, *vârtik* and *bhâya*, the grammar. The appendices of *sûtras* should be considered a the very part of the text everywhere and so *úulbasûtra* falls within *kalpasûtra*.

By encountering the *sutras*, as has been done above, it is estimated that there are three *sûtras* – Kâtyâyan's *sûtras*, Baúdhâyana's *sûtras* and Âpastamb's *sûtras* and each branch has *úulba sûtra*. *Vadhul*, *mânava*, *metrayaða*, *vârâh*, *maúak*, and *úulbasûtra* are also available there. (Sharma 10)

In fact *úulbasûtra* facilitates the performer. This we can explain by the giving the example of the practical knowledge of mathematics which is important in the *yoga* part of *yajña*. There are three branches of Mathematics- Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry. Unless a person knows mathematical device, he cannot make *yajñakund*, it is a general conception. But by composing *úulbasûtra*,

Kâtyâyan has made this performance so easy that a person without knowledge of mathematics can perform the *yajna*.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The first Kâtyâyan was one who propounded Kâtyâyan *œakha* in the Úukla Yajurveda. He was the propounder of the Úrutarisi and Vedaúakha. The second Kâtyâyan was the son of Sage Yajñvalak and Kâtyâyani. He wrote 18 appendices. He was the Vaiúvamitra Katyakail of Viúvamitrageòa within Katageòa. In the appendix of the third. *sûtras*, “Pratijansûtra” he says about himself to be the disciple of Kausik tradition. Kâtyâyan, the propounder of úakha is the chief Angirasabrahhaspatya kâpeya of Angirageòa within Kapigeòa The third Kâtyâyan is one who gave (*v°atti*) commentary on Panini’s *sûtras* and is therefore known as *vatrik* which means commentator. In the *Kathâsaritasâgar* he is mentioned by the name of Vararuci. There is a reference in which Kâtyâyan of Yajñvalakya and Kâtyâyani is treated as an incarnation of Sankara’s gana, Puspadanta. He is also treated by the name of Úrutadhara there. Here it is worth noting that there is difference between Vararuci and Vararuci, the son of Kâtyâyani. This means that they are two different persons. This clearly shows that Kâtyâyan, the writer of the appendices is different from Kâtyâyan, the commentator who belongs to Bhragugeòa of Vatasayanageòa. Dr. R.C.D. Sharma, *Kâtyâyan Sulbasutram* (New Delhi, Nag Prakashak 1994). 05

The personality of Kâtyâyan has been a matter of great controversy among the scholars. There is no difference of opinion regarding Kâtyâyan’s authorship of KSS and the Vajprat. Therefore to a person like Kâtyâyan, a reputed Yajurvedin, it was an imperative to lay down the rules of accentuation and grammarian. (Svaraskaratisthapaita) Kâtyâyan’s ealier than Panini a great grammarian. In the colophons of the three bare MSS of the tent.

Vrdhacarya is said to be the author of Bh.S (इति व द्वाचार्याप्रवीत त्रिकुण्डिकाभाशिक सूत्रम्). Here it certainly refers to Kâtyâyan who was esteemed as a great Acarya among his disciples. Due to his Excellency in the science of accentuation and grammar he was also reverently called as Bhagvan among his disciples. Prof. Brij Behari Chaubey, *Bhasikasutra of Maharsi Kâtyâyan with the commentaries of Mahasvamin and Anantabhata*”, 36.

<sup>2</sup> It has been in the *pariîta*,” *K<sup>3</sup>ty<sup>3</sup>yana sulbs ÷trem sutrantraiah sah samyatravlokan.*”

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Charu Sharma

**Paulo Coelho's *Veronika Decides to Die*:  
A Renewed Perception of Life**

*Veronika Decides to Die* (Portuguese: *Veronika decide morrer*) is a novel by one of the world's most distinguished author Paulo Coelho. Like all Paulo Coelho books this book too teaches its reader certain things about life, things that we always knew but never really thought would matter much. In this book *Veronika Decides to Die*, the topics Paulo Coelho deals with are of the kind which our society finds unacceptable and unmentionable, such as insanity and suicide. Coelho deals with these issues with such excellence that makes his readers take a closer look at and re-evaluate their own lives and urges them to consider how fragile and short life is. Even though the title invites the reader to consider why Veronika decides to die and how she attempts to kill herself, the novel actually depicts how after her failed suicide attempt Veronika learns to live.

The main character of the book Veronika isn't happy with her life, not because she is deprived of something in her life: "She was not killing herself because she was a sad, embittered woman, constantly depressed" (Coelho 6). She had everything she could wish for. She is a young girl in her twenties, having boyfriends, loving family, a good job but still she finds her life full of endlessly meaningless routine which she hates like anything but still follows as she has nothing else to do.

She realizes that nothing is going to change for her and life is the same yesterday, today and would be tomorrow too. To her life somehow has lost its meaning. She values her beauty, and yet deep inside she knows that it has no real value. She knows that as she grows older her charms will gradually fade away; she would suffer from various illnesses every now and then, and even her long-cherished friends would leave her: "She would gain nothing by continuing to live; indeed the likelihood of suffering only increased" (Coelho 6). She believes that she had spent her life to the full extent: "At twenty-four, having experienced everything she could experience – and that was no small achievement – Veronika was almost certain that everything ended with death. That is why she had chosen suicide: freedom at last. Eternal oblivion" (Coelho 7).

So one cold November morning she takes an overdose of sleeping pills in order to stop her life which, according to her, is not worth living. But her suicide attempt fails and she is taken to Vilete, the most controversial local mental hospital in Ljubljana the capital of Slovenia. As she regains consciousness, she realizes that her suicide had not been successful and after recovering she would have to go back to her routine life and live it on the terms of others, spend it for pleasing all and meeting their expectations. But later she is told that although she is alive, her heart is now irreparably damaged and she has only seven days to live. Waiting for her death to come, she realizes that time has lost all meaning. All that is left for her to do is to wait for the day, the minute and the second when she will finally close her eyes forever. It is here that Veronika discovers waiting for death is immensely harder than taking her own life. But then she feels that as she has nothing more to lose or gain so she should to live the next seven days or the last seven days of her life to the fullest. And it is during this period she realizes that life is vibrant and invaluable.

But there is one thing that Veronika does not know that she is the subject of a psychiatric experiment conducted by the Vilete's head



psychiatrist Doctor Igor “to discover a cure for insanity” (Coelho 67) because “he knew that failed suicides tend to repeat the attempt sooner or later. Why not use her as a guinea pig, to see if he could eliminate the Vitriol, or Bitterness, from her organism?” (189). He considers Veronika “a heaven-sent opportunity in the shape of a would-be suicide; he was not going to lose this opportunity for all the money in the world” (Coelho 67). Therefore he fakes upon her the news of her near death i.e. when he tells her that she is about to die in a week. To add the colour of reality to his prophecy he uses some drug with which he manages to stimulate the effects of heart attacks and impress upon Veronika, the shrinking days of her remaining life. Actually there had been absolutely no damage to her heart and no problem with her health, but Dr Igor makes up this story to make Veronika realize the meaning and lost importance of her life. He wants her to find the lost thirst for life. He wants to prove that the cure to bitterness, the cure to the apathy, the indifference people feel towards life lies in an awareness of life itself because he knows “the great problem with poisoning by Bitterness was that the passions – hatred, love, despair, enthusiasm, curiosity – also ceased to manifest themselves. After a while, the embittered person felt no desire at all. They lacked the will either to live or to die” (Coelho 81). And so he observes how Veronika behaves, and how she lives from that point onwards. Dr. Igor’s trick works and gradually Veronika starts seeing the world around her with new eyes. In the constant awareness of life, she begins to re-evaluate her life. During her confinement in Villette, she realizes that she has nothing more to lose and can therefore do what she wants and be who she wants without having to worry about what others think of her, because nobody criticizes a madwoman: “She was now experiencing something she had never dreamed of: a mental hospital, madness, an insane asylum, where people were not ashamed to say they were mad, where no one stopped doing something they were enjoying just to be nice to others” (Coelho 35-36). So in her last few days she indulges in all that she

had deprived herself of, like playing the piano, her desires, openly displaying hurt, anger, love and frustrations that she kept contained inside for her twenty-four years. In this state of being alive, with each second passing, she discovers what was wrong with her past life.

During her stay at Villette, Veronika’s life changes to a great extent. She begins to question her existence and ideas about life. Her presence there, especially the fact that she just has a week to live, affects all of the mental hospital’s patients. She meets several other inmates who unknowingly make a big impact on her life, and as her spirit awakens she in turn, though unconsciously, begins to make a visible difference to their lives. Every person Veronika meets at Villette changes her view of life; since her life is changing and she is gaining a new vision of life, her wish to die gradually disappears. Now Veronika wishes to have a chance to live in an altogether different manner compared to the way she lived in her past, because meeting Villette’s patients taught her something important that she didn’t know living around normal people, people who have become so habitual of behaving in a typical customary way that they have forgotten their uniqueness. She finds new sense of freedom, independence, free from any compulsions or duties, commitments which did not exist in the sane world. In the asylum she gets a chance to meet three most important characters of her life who serve as a medium for her self-reflection: Zedka, the depressed housewife; Mari, the lawyer who gave up her dreams when she came to suffer from panic attacks; and Eduard, a schizophrenic artist who has spent his life denying love. All these three people have their own stories of coming to Villette and after reader their story the reader certainly feels and shares their experience and realizes that these three are just normal, while the outside world identifies them simply as mad people. These three persons become the reason where Veronika understands that the every second of existence is worth living; it is a choice that we make between living and dying.

During her first conscious night in the asylum, she meets Zedka. Though married with children Zedka had become obsessed with a former lover, frantically but unsuccessfully searched for him, and was even prepared to give up her family, her children, everything for him. She was convinced that he was also desperately looking for her. Veronika learns from Zedka that some patients pretend to be mad in order to do exactly what they want. But Zedka's futile search led to depression and finally she was admitted in the asylum. She experiences "astral" (Coelho 45) journeys during the course of her treatment and explores the world around herself in a way that was strange by all standards. She becomes a friend to Veronika and on the day of her release, she leaves her with the thoughts of inexhaustible and reasonless love. She makes Veronika realize that the deep inner desires that are rooted within us form a hidden but an essential part of our personality. Such desires should be understood and analyzed without fail. The fear of things going wrong, reaction of others, of society, parents, husband, wife etc should not prevent one's soul to enjoy freedom and do whatever he likes. So during the last days of her life Veronika decides to discover herself, her dreams, her joys, her desires, her love, her sorrow, her pain, her hatred. She allows herself to live completely because she might not have another chance: "She felt like going over to the piano in the lounge, and celebrating that night with a lovely sonata she had learned at school. Looking up at the sky, she had an indescribable sense of well-being, as if the infinite nature of the universe had revealed her own eternity to her" (Coelho 57). On the other hand, Zedka decides to leave her depression in the asylum but carries with her all other sorts of madness which now will be normal for her and others. She says:

When I came here, I was deeply depressed. Now I'm proud to say I'm mad. Outside I'll behave exactly like everyone else. I'll go shopping at the supermarket, I'll exchange trivialities with my friends, I'll waste precious time watching

television. But I know that my soul is free and that I can dream and talk with other worlds which, before I came here, I didn't even imagine existed. (Coelho 148)

Veronika also meets Mari, a member of the Fraternity (a group of longer standing members, who could have left several years ago, but stay at the expenses of the state due to the hospitals familiarity, and who behave like dangerously violent insane persons whenever there is a government inspection). Mari, a successful lawyer, enters the asylum as a panic attack patient. Though her state is completely curable, she decides to stay back at Villette which she had avoided earlier due to her illness. Before coming to Villette Mary had "decided to give up the tedious, unending job of being a lawyer in order to dedicate the rest of her days to working for some humanitarian organization" (Coelho 103). She wanted to go against the norm of being a successful lawyer and live life to the fullest by fulfilling her cherished desires. She wanted to work for the starving children of El Salvador who "were forced to live on the streets and turn to prostitution" (Coelho 103). As she says: "When I was still a young lawyer, I read some poems by an English poet, and something he said impressed me greatly: 'Be like the fountain that overflows, not like the cistern that merely contains'" (Coelho 180-81). But when she couldn't stand up against the societal norms she started having panic attacks and consequently bowed down before the societal pressure and prevalent beliefs. And thus she was thwarted from becoming "the fountain that overflows" (Coelho 180-81). But now learning from her own experience she teaches Veronika to push herself beyond her boundaries and urges her to experience highest pleasure. She urges her to be true to her own self instead of getting bogged down by other people's opinions and fancies. She makes Veronika understand that "her parents would still have loved her, but, afraid of hurting them, she had not dared to pay the price of her dream, the dream that was buried in the depths of her memory. . . ."

“Veronika had known since childhood that her true vocation was to be a pianist” (Coelho 85). Through her own story, Mari helps Veronika recognize “the hundreds of other Veronikas who lived inside her and who were interesting, mad, curious, brave, bold” (Coelho 62), Veronikas she could love. In the end, inspired by Veronika’s courage to live each day as it comes, Mari decides to leave the asylum and follow her heart and free her soul by working for the children of war-torn Sarajevo. She asks: “‘Where is my soul?’ Mari asked again. ‘In my past. In what I wanted my life to be. I left my soul captive in that moment when I still had a house, a husband, a job I wanted to leave but never had the courage to.....the death of that young girl made me understand my own life’” (Coelho 155).

Veronika’s life changes when she meets Eduard, a schizophrenic, whose madness was, according to the doctor’s report, beyond cure. Being the son of a diplomat, he had seen all comforts in life but his road accident changes his life. He gets inspired by the lives of great visionaries such as Jesus Christ, Darwin, Freud, Columbus, and Marx “whose ideas had shaken the world, people with their own vision of an earthly Paradise” (Coelho 165) and desires to create his own visions of paradise through his paintings. But this leads him to have “endless arguments with his family” (Coelho 132) because his parents want him to become a diplomat while he desires to become a painter. Finally he is enveloped with such “powerful feeling of guilt that he had felt incapable of doing anything” (Coelho 132) and ultimately ends up in the asylum as a schizophrenic. When Veronika meets Eduard he is seen as inching towards the point of dying of hunger because he has stopped eating. But when Veronika creates music on the piano, he listens to her as if he is under some magical influence. On her part, Veronika “had finally realized her dream: to play with heart and soul, for as long as she wanted and whenever the mood took her. It didn’t matter to her that her only audience was a young schizophrenic; he seemed to understand the music, and that was what mattered” (Coelho

102). Each night Eduard waits for her to play and loses all his sorrows and worries in the rhythm of the notes. The playing of the piano by Veronika in a starry night with only Eduard for company is touching. Eduard falls in love with Veronika and the story gets more interesting for us to know if she would live. Eduard is the person who incites the understanding of life in Veronika. Though he doesn’t do anything, Veronika gets sexually awakened before him and surrenders herself completely before him. Unlike others, Eduard does not judge her and it is only the feelings of love and tenderness that she could see in his eyes. Veronika had concealed her hidden desires even from herself till now and now with this newfound freedom of Vilete she begins to experience all the things she never allowed herself to experience. And when she has just about twenty-four hours left for death as per Doctor Igor that she realizes life. She says to the doctor:

I want to ask two favours. First, that you give me some medication, an injection or whatever, so that I can stay awake and enjoy every moment that remains of my life. I’m very tired, but I don’t want to sleep. I’ve got a lot to do, things that I always postponed for some future date, in the days when I thought life would last for ever. Things I’d lost interest in, when I started to believe that life wasn’t worth living. (Coelho 127)

And her second favor would be:

I want to leave here so that I can die outside. I need to visit Ljubljana Castle. It’s always been there and I’ve never even had the curiosity to go and see it close to. I need to talk to the woman who sells chestnuts in winter and flowers in spring. We passed each other so often, and I never once asked her how she was. And I want to go out without a jacket and walk in the snow, I want to find out what extreme cold feels like, I, who was always so wrapped up, so afraid of catching a cold.

In short, Dr Igor, I want to feel the rain on my face, to smile at any man I feel attracted to, to accept all the coffees men might buy for me. I want to kiss my mother, tell her I love her, weep in her lap, unashamed of showing my feelings, because they were always there even though I hid them.

I might go into a Church and look at those images that never meant anything to me and see if they say something to me now. If an interesting man invites me out to a club, I'll accept, and I'll dance all night until I drop. Then I'll go to bed with him, but not the way I used to go to bed with other men, trying to stay in control, pretending things I didn't feel. I want to give myself to one man, to the city, to life and finally, to death. (Coelho 127)

By convincing that her death is eminent, Doctor Igor has managed to shock Veronika making her want to live, respect life and above all enjoy it, something which life is actually meant for. She always wanted to do things which fascinated her and now she wants to go out of Villette to taste them all and to know what life all about is. She not only falls in love with Eduard with all her heart and emotions for the first time but also enjoys it. When she sheds her sexual inhibitions and bares herself and her innermost desires to Eduard she manages to free him and meets a Veronika she did not know all her life, yet it existed in her all this time. On the other hand Veronika's tragedy inspires Eduard to enjoy what life had to offer today and he starts believing that her appearance in the asylum is a signal to him to return to Belgrade. Later he sets them both free by escaping from the asylum and embracing love thereby finally "drawing Veronika back into the world" (Coelho 100). And this is evident when Veronika expresses her heartfelt thanks to Eduard for giving meaning to her life as he swears that he will paint her before she dies. She says: "Look at my face. . . . Remember it with the eyes of your soul, so that you can reproduce it one day. If you like that can be your starting point, but you must go back to painting.

That is my last request'" (Coelho 185-86). Veronika now fully grasps the meaningfulness of her life.

At all points in the book the reader identifies with Veronika. Everyone in this world is so busy playing safe and so busy keeping others happy by doing things that are required of them that they stop living for themselves, lose the essence of life: Wanting to be different, according to Dr Igor, becomes a serious illness only when "you force yourself to be the same as everyone else. . . . It's a distortion of nature, it goes against God's laws, for in all the world's woods and forests, He did not create a single leaf the same as another" (Coelho 153).

But everyone around wants to be like everyone else, to go with the ongoing trend, when it comes to mannerisms, looks, and even pattern of thinking. People are so busy being like each other that they cease to have an individual identity. As Dr Igor says: "when everyone dreams, but only a few realize their dreams, that makes cowards of us all" (Coelho 129). The book establishes this fact. As each character comes face to face with his or her own mortality, they are forced to look back on their lives and scrutinize their failed dreams:

Deaths in Villette tended to happen suddenly, without giving anyone time to think about it, or after a long illness, when death is always a blessing.

The young woman's case, though, was dramatic because she was so young and because she now wanted to live again, something they all knew to be impossible. Some people asked themselves 'What if that happened to me? I do have a chance to live. Am I making good use of it?' (Coelho 101)

Readers gain a renewed perception of life after going through *Veronika decides to die*. Through the story of Veronika's remaining days Coelho encourages the reader to believe in hope and follow his or her own dream without the fear of being seen as mad. He presents

a cruel reality that sometimes life does not seem to be worth living: “Any drastic change in life could trigger depression – moving to another country, losing a loved one, divorce, an increase in the demands of work or family” (Coelho 49). People get married for love but at the end get divorced. Everyone gets old and everyone gets afflicted by several illnesses and finds oneself incapable of taking care of one’s self. But in spite of all of these, Coelho makes us believe that there are still small wonders in life like falling in love, stopping to smell the roses and playing with a baby that make all the other miseries and complexities of life bearable. As Mari says: “everything that happens in our life is our fault and ours alone. A lot of people go through the same difficulties we went through, and they react completely differently. We looked for the easiest way out: a separate reality” (Coelho 138). And even though everything in this world must come to an end, it is the journey and not the ending that counts. As Dr Igor says about Veronika: “She would consider each day a miracle, which indeed it is, when you consider the number of unexpected things that could happen in each second of our fragile existences” (Coelho 191). Coelho encourages readers to look within to find our real selves we have forgotten or hidden from ourselves to keep pace with the hustle-bustle of our lives. Veronika learns this fact when she lies in Vilete, waiting for her date to die. An awareness of death encouraged her to live more intensely.

#### Works Cited

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#### Arab Chameleons: Transnational Identity in *The Cairo House*

Identity is an extremely complex concept and a simple definition of what it refers to is difficult to find. However, definitions are provided here. Identity is “people’s concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others” (Hogg and Abrams 2). “Identity,” Parekh writes, “basically refers to how one identifies and defines oneself in relation to others” (132). As it is clear from these two definitions, identity often refers to a sense of belonging to a social category or group. This understanding of identity as relational means that identity is not something fixed as one’s relation in the society is always changing. In other words, identities are constantly producing themselves anew under political, religious and social circumstances, which, sometimes, are not chosen deliberately.

Writers on Arab American identity differ enormously in their perception of Arab American identity. Some, to quote Lisa Suhair Majaj, believe that the “Arab-American identity is in essence a transplanted Arab identity” that is supposed to preserve its Arab culture and language and remain involved in the Middle Eastern affairs. Another group believes that “it is intrinsically American and should be understood in relation to the American context and American framework of assimilation and multiculturalism” (Hyphenated Author). It is true that

an Arab American can manage to work both sides but, according to Majaj, “there tends to be a discernable orientation towards one or the other side of the hyphen” (ibid). In this paper, I argue that there is another type of Arab American identity that belongs and at the same time does not belong to either side of the hyphen and assumes a cosmopolitan or transnational dimension and Serageldin’s *The Cairo House* is a case in point.

The well-known theorists in transnationalism are Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Blanc. They admit that in the recent years there has been a change in the nature of immigration. This change is mostly attributed to globalization which has resulted in advancement in communication and other technologies. This implies that unlike before, immigrants today are in a position to maintain links with their home country. Their identity is, therefore, a product of both the home and the host country, which means that they exhibit characteristics that span multiple national boundaries. Transnationalism is a concept that has developed in immigration scholarship as a result of these changes in immigration.

Transnationalism has been defined differently by different scholars. But the one that Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Christina Szanton Blanc offer is relevant to support the cultural conditions that postcolonial theorists have been delineating as multiplicity of identities. They define transnationalism as:

the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. . . . An essential element of transnationalism is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies. ( Basch 8).

In other words, transnationalism is a simultaneous sense of connection to multiple countries, cultures and national identities. In a transnational perspective, the focus is on how contemporary immigrants maintain familial, economic, cultural, as well as political ties across international borders making home and host society a single arena of social action.

Taking into considerations these definitions, the present paper examines Serageldin’s *The Cairo House* from a transnational perspective. It also attempts to expand the definition of transnationalism beyond the idea of an immigrant merely maintaining simultaneous ties to more than one national identity to capture those moments in which the immigrant does not feel a part of either. The significance of this analysis comes from the deviation that Serageldin conducts from other Arab American writers. In other words, while most Arab American writers still explore the themes of cultural dislocation, the conflicts of assimilation, and portray their characters as torn between respecting their family traditions and the freedom that America provides, *The Cairo House* goes beyond this conventional portrayal of immigrant experience to explore immigrants’ allegiance to more than one culture, language, and nation. Consequently, she deterritorializes the definite national and cultural identities suggesting that individuals cannot confine themselves within the narrow concept of national and cultural boundaries in this globalized world. Her novel demonstrates that identities, due to the development of technologies, transportation, and global connections between people, are becoming more transnational, cosmopolitan and global.

As mentioned above, transnationalism is a process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement through the creation of cross-border, and inter-continental networks. Serageldin’s novel stresses the flow of people coming and going on the borderland and thus blurring the national boundary and suggesting hybrid and

transnational identities. It emphasizes not only the experience of immigrants who leave somewhere called home to make a new home but also the endless process of comings and goings that create familial and cultural ties across national borders. Her characters find themselves part and parcel of the two homes and at the same time they feel alienated in both. The novel's movement across multiple geographical locations, including London, Paris, Cairo, Jedda and finally New Hampshire, renders the borders between these locales fluid and permeable, and, by extension, makes the concepts of national belonging malleable and open-ended. By depicting an ongoing and inconclusive suspension between several locales *The Cairo House*, through dealing with the in-between world of immigrants and negotiating questions of identity and belonging in a transnational context, shows how transnationalism facilitates the articulation of dual and in-between identities for some Arab Americans.

Samia Serageldin was born in Cairo, educated in Europe and immigrated to the United States in 1980. She lived through, and witnessed, first-hand, the political and social turmoil of the Nasser's regime and the disruption that followed. Her novel, *The Cairo House*, follows the life and memories of her protagonist, Gigi, through those years and the ones that followed when she moved to France and then to America. Gigi's life has been divided between Africa, Asia, Europe and America and, therefore, seems to be a compelling representation of a transnational identity. The fact that the novel opens and ends on the board of aeroplane explains this type of identity which, paradoxically, lives nowhere and everywhere and exemplifies the current ease in the movement of bodies and information across the globe.

Serageldin divides her novel into three parts. The first one is entitled "Photographs," the second "Exile," and the third, "Return." The first part narrates Gigi's childhood in 1960s Egypt. When she

was nine years old, her family was subjected to sequestration decrees by Nasser's regime. Her family's properties, money and jewelry were all confiscated. Thus, Gigi is seen as a character whose background is very complicated. Like many of the first generation of Arab-Americans, she suffered from political and social oppression and alienation in her own country.

The second part of the novel narrates her life in exile bringing to the fore the fragility and shallowness of her cultural attachment to the West. After her marriage to Yussef, both leave for London to study. However, her marriage with Yussef was not successful. After coming back to Egypt, she could not stand her life with Yussef and, therefore, runs a way to France and marries Luc. Both leave to New Hampshire hoping that in this neutral place they can build their new home. The third part recounts Gigi's life during her last visit to Egypt in 1990s. Everything has dramatically changed since Sadat's introduction of Open-Door Policy. Most of the family houses have been rented to American companies that turned them into offices. She, now more than before, finds herself a foreigner in her own home. Unable to adjust in new Egypt, she goes back to America. Throughout the chapters of the last part, Serageldin portrays the dilemma of becoming a stranger in one's home—a common phenomenon among immigrants returning homes.

Gigi's description of her childhood shows her as a sheltered child who lived in an idealistic world of her own. Her "memories of early childhood," writes Serageldin, "are those of a happily hybrid culture: Egyptian cuisine and French governesses; English schools and Nubian doorkeepers; celebrating the Muslim Feast of the Sacrifice and licking Italian ices on the beach" ("The Coming Out of the Chameleon" 134). Gigi also asserts that the cuisine in the family house "may have been more or less cosmopolitan, but the spirit of hospitality was an uncompromisingly Egyptian" (25). It is clear that the first seeds

of Gigi's transnational identity have started a long time before the beginning of her wandering life. In other words, her foreign education and multicultural upbringing have surely helped shaping her new identity. For this reason, she felt alienated in her homeland in her childhood. Unlike her strong relationship with her French nanny, Gigi was alienated from the Egyptian servants who worked in their house. She even was weak in Arabic. Moreover, she used to read only in French. When advised by her father to read Mahfouz, she could not identify with his characters or settings and found them "depressing" (45). In fact, one can feel the big cultural gap between her world and Mahfouz's, which is a true representation of the Egyptian society. She remarks that on passing by "some of these back alleys," she would bury her nose in a French novel "avoiding the sight of the beggars; of the carcasses of meat hanging on hooks in front of the butcher shops; of the flies on children's faces; of the peasant woman sitting cross-legged on the railway station platform, suckling a baby on one swollen bare breast" (45). The social and political situation of her family made her, to use Mona Russell's words, "retreat into the world of books" (Russell 2), a world that exists only in her imagination. Thus the description of her childhood shows her as an alienated subject at odds with the surrounding world and without any attachment to her original home.

The issue of home and belonging is provoked in the novel's prologue in which the questions "*where do I belong? Where is this chameleon's natural habitat?*" (2) are posed by the protagonist. From the beginning of the novel, the reader discerns Gigi's feeling of uncertainty related to where her true home is. Gigi, a first generation Arab American, struggles to figure out which world she belongs to. She is not quite sure where she belongs or where she wants to belong. These questions reveal Gigi's dilemma: she is at midway, standing at a dividing line. They also show that her ties to a specific home have started to wear away. Transnationalism thus sets the tone for the novel as a whole.

The setting immediately shifts from the aeroplane to the airport, the perfect meeting point of different worlds, cultures and nationalities. According to Gigi, it is the most suitable place for those who assume various identities:

For those who have more than one skin, there are places where the secret act of metamorphosis takes place, an imperceptible shading into a hint of a different gate, a softening or a crispening of an accent. For those whose past and present belong to different worlds, there are places and times that mark their passage from one to the other, a transitional limbo: like airports. (1).

The airport symbolizes the flow of people coming and going on the borderland that blurs the national boundaries and suggests hybrid and transnational identities. The development of new technologies and transportation play a vital role in mobilizing people from one world to another and in negotiations between different cultures. Here the connection between different peoples, ideas and ideologies are faster. By representing her characters at the crossroad where both local and global spaces meet and constant negotiation between different aspects of lives appear, Serageldin depicts a transnational space for the Arab immigrants in the United States.

Gigi's transnational identity is embodied in the image of the chameleon—an image that occurs throughout the novel and makes the transnational identity one of the leitmotifs in the text—that attracts the reader in the first page of the novel. Defining the true chameleons, Serageldin writes:

But the true chameleons are the ones who straddle two worlds, segueing smoothly from one to the other, adjusting language and body language, calibrating the range of emotions displayed, treading the tightrope of mannerism and mores. If it is done



well, it can look deceptively effortless, but it is never without a cost. There is no hypocrisy involved, only the universal imperative underlying good manners: to do the appropriate thing, to make those around you comfortable. For the chameleon, it is a matter of survival. (1-2).

The perfect symbol suggests invisibility, changing skin and the idea of metamorphosis. Whenever Gigi goes, she tries not to be known or recognized like a chameleon that hides itself in a bush when danger is expected. She uses this technique more than once in America and describes herself as one; for she “had tried to blur her edges and lose her accent” since she came to New Hampshire (142). Serageldin, herself, admits certain elements in common with her heroine. She writes:

There was no room in this brave new world for my memories of jasmine and dust. I locked away my photograph albums of Egypt in the attic and blended into my new environment like a perfect chameleon. Friends who knew me for years barely knew where I was born. There was no hypocrisy involved; only the imperative to compartmentalize in order to survive. (“Live in Interesting Times” 8)

The image of blending and mixing is significant here. Like a chemical solution that results from heterogeneous mixture of two or more substances in which the molecules or the atoms of the substance are completely dispersed. Hence blending suggests fusing of the past and present identities to produce one that belongs to neither, an identity which has its own characteristics and qualities. Furthermore, the image of the chameleon does not mean assimilation in the new environment but rather an embrace of all cultures and identities as the chameleon changes its skin to match the different colours of the surroundings. That is what Gigi has done during her movements between the four continents—Africa, Asia, Europe and America. Wherever she finds

herself, she starts to wear a new skin that match the new environment. This experience has led Serageldin to write: “you shed your skin as you shed your clothes. The French express it so well, that the skin is one more garment like any other: one can be comfortable in one’s skin, or not. I am comfortable in my skin, only I have more than one, and sometimes I try them on one at a time, feeling for the best fit” (Love is Like Water 80).

In fact, Gigi is the epitome of what one may call the transnational subject. She cuts across the cultures of London, Paris, Cairo, Jeddah and finally New Hampshire, but is nevertheless displaced in—and belongs completely to—all. When asked by a couple from Minneapolis, who were with her on the plane, where she comes from, she answers “I live in New Hampshire” (2). She comments on her answer saying: “It is not evasiveness, nor even the instinct to resist being pigeon-holed. It is only that any answer I give will be just as incomplete and misleading, so this is as good—or bad—as any other” (2). In other words, she knows that she has no home and whatever answer she may give is insufficient. It becomes clear that she neither belongs to America nor to Egypt but rather her home is an imaginary one situated in “no-man’s-land” without defined geographical boundaries.

To be at home and not at home at the same time is a permanent feature of the transnational world as it seems to be of continual concern to writers like Serageldin who neither complain about homelessness, nor offer nostalgia as a way to cope with the feelings of loss. Homelessness, thus, becomes a necessary condition of life in a transnational world. Though, in New Hampshire, Gigi has “made friends, even made a place of sorts for herself in the community. . . . There was no place in this world of snow capped steeples and ice hockey for the memories of dust and jasmine” (141). In another place she says, “I could never feel at home in a land-locked place without a great river or a sea, a waterfront” (174). This shows her inability to

adjust in the new surrounding as well as her longing for her original home. But when she reaches Egypt, she feels alienated. “It feels strange to be home and yet not home, to be the guest and the landlord at the same time; to look out of the window at a familiar view and then return back to an unfamiliar room” (149). “I felt as if I didn’t belong here, as if I spoke the language but didn’t understand it” (212). Again she yearns for New Hampshire. “Suddenly, for no special reason, I was homesick: for snow, rain, changing skies, pure air, for a long walk on a fall day... for freedom from watchful eyes, for anonymity, an uncomplicated existence” (211).

This way Serageldin has been able to break down the conventional notions of home and national belonging to depict a more complicated version of contemporary identity. Gigi’s ambivalent attitude towards her home leaves her shuttling constantly between the USA and Egypt, enacting physical and ideological negotiations of both cultures. Her nostalgia for the other side of the hyphen, as well as her discomfort in both, has left her a foreigner in both. This shows how Serageldin has revised the concept of a stable home, replacing it with a more fluid and flexible form of cultural and relational identification, indicating in the process why these concepts are valuable to transnational Arab-Americans. It also shows how Serageldin revises the concept of home with its characteristics of comfort, rootedness, and security to invest it with more complex and problematic properties such as inconvenience, displeasure and hollowness. For Gigi, home is where she is not and this is one of the main challenges of a transnational identity. Gigi’s irreversible fragmentation is deeply rooted in the geographical, manifesting itself in her sense of not fitting in either cultures or countries despite the apparent ease of her transnational movement. In this way, transnational unbelonging replaces a secure and unproblematic national belonging, creating a space of negotiation that constantly revises traditional notions of diasporic identity.

Immigrants’ transnational identity is usually displayed through the exhibition of behaviour that connects them to two or more nations. A good example is when immigrants perceive their sense of belonging to both the host country and home country to be similar. During her last visit to Egypt, Gigi starts getting the same old feelings as if she had never gone away. Like true Chameleon, she realizes that once she has blended into a new environment, it becomes difficult to imagine herself anywhere else. Her life in New Hampshire “seemed so far away, another world,” (182) and “*The past ten years seem like an interlude, a sharp zig in the flat line of experience, a detour around an insurmountable bump in the road*” (201). However, with the approach of the end of her stay in Egypt, she wonders: “How can I give up what I have been looking for, waiting for, for so long? How can I leave, now that I feel I have come home?” (202). But this does not last long for she suddenly feels an urge to leave for America. Despite her feelings of belonging in Egypt, Gigi finds her bed in America. Resisting her cousin’s insistence to stay, she confesses, “I would go back because I had made my bed, I must lie in it” (230). Though “a few days before I could not imagine leaving; now I felt there was no place for me here. I had been gone too long. I should claim what was mine, tie up loose ends, and leave” (213). What is strange about her is that her intention of returning to Egypt is to claim what was hers. Now she is going to America to claim what is hers. However, she never severs her ties in Egypt completely. This is shown by her disagreement with her uncles and cousins to sell the Cairo house. “It did not occur to anyone that, precisely because I had been uprooted, I needed to know that the house would be here for me to come home to” (222). Despite the availability of multiple physical homes for Gigi, she avoids committing herself to one location, thus, as mentioned earlier, finding in her transnational identity a means to negotiate multiple homes.

For a transnational person national boundaries are always invalid. The original and host societies stop to be two different entities and rather become the same. So at the end of the novel, when Gigi is on the plane going to America, she declares: "I can neither say that I am going home, nor coming from home" (232). Gigi's declaration reminds one of A. D. Hope's poem "The Death of the Bird" in which he writes: "Going away she is also coming home" (70). The two sides of the hyphen become the same. "There is no destination; 'here' and 'there' are the same" (232). She becomes "like one of those weeds that do not develop deep roots; they grow everywhere and are native nowhere, You are a human weed without the roots, You are a piece of human trash that America collects from all over the world" (Karlin). So Gigi's case heralds the formation and development of a new home characterized by transnationalism that does not necessitate choosing either here or there but instead facilitates transitions between the two and enables a character like Gigi to simultaneously connect with and be connected to both worlds. The statement: "There is no destination; 'here' and 'there' are the same" (232) is the first sign of Gigi's acceptance of her transnational identity and her full understanding of herself within/without each of these homes.

Finally, Gigi's transnational identity provides her with the critical powers to assess each of the two cultures from a detached, more objective vantage point. In her last visit to Egypt, she surveys the new political and social conditions with a sharp eye. She criticizes "the terrifying cacophonous chaos of Cairo traffic" regarding it "a microcosm of the Egyptian society" where rules are observed only when enforced by the authorities (152). She expresses her dissatisfaction with the social obligations and engagements she has to fulfill every day if she lives in Cairo and regards them as obstacles to her success to achieve an autonomous identity. She "could not imagine keeping up on that frantic treadmill.... So much of it appeared unnecessary to me, a cycle of escalating social obligations that could

not be broken without throwing the slacker out of the social orbit altogether.... I knew I could not live that way" (212). She criticizes Egypt's lack of "freedom... anonymity, an uncomplicated existence" (211). Finally, she admits that there is no future in Egypt.

Gigi's criticism extends to include her dissatisfaction with her second home, America. She criticizes the racist attitudes of Americans towards Arab embodied in her colleague Toussaint. During a trip to Luxor, Toussaint's behaviour with souvenir vendors irritates her. He assumes a haughty character and plays "the role of great white tourist" (200). Being with the poor vendors gives him the opportunity to "rise above his real-world self and feel his existence justified merely as a member of a taller, fairer, finer altogether superior race" (200). At the same time, she is annoyed by the persistence of the vendors to sell their goods. The situation confuses her: "I cannot decide which I wish to disassociate myself from urgently: Toussaint's obnoxious sense of superiority, or the grinning vendors' lack of self-restraint that fuels it" (200). This shows that her detached critical perspective of the two cultures is the outcome of her cosmopolitan overview that furnishes the viewer with the space to pose probing cultural questions, thus reaching a higher level of self-understanding in the process.

It can be concluded that transnationalism offers Arab American immigrants, at least Serageldin, a form of resistance to the hegemonic discourse of American nationalism. In this sense, transnationalism may open up opportunities for ethnic individuals and communities to move beyond the either/or options of assimilation or non-assimilation in order to survive. The novel, therefore, is a call for Arab Americans to avoid being the victims of discrimination by adopting a multiplicity of identities. Furthermore, by comparing *The Cairo House* with other texts by Arab Americans, one finds that Serageldin, while sharing many of the same thematic concerns as her contemporaries, is departing from them. Although assimilation, return to the homeland, home, and identity

remain central focuses in her work, her rendering of these themes is completely different.

So, *The Cairo House* is a novel that celebrates the cultural hybridity resulting from globalization and the interconnectedness of the modern world providing a new vision for conventional immigrant experiences. Serageldin is aware of the existing problems of cultural diversity in the multicultural United States, and she argues that the struggle to grasp a transnational identity becomes an urgent issue for Arab immigrants. While she presents Gigi as someone who is confused about her identity, she also presents her as a prototypical transnational agent who lives between two different worlds with the possibility of creating multiplicity of identities. In other words, by presenting Gigi at the crossroad, Serageldin depicts a transnational space for the Arab immigrants in the United States. The novel also reveals Serageldin's attempt to construct for her character an identity that transcends national and cultural borders. In order to achieve her goal, she positions her characters in-between different cultures where transformation takes place, deconstructing the fixed notion of identity. Her method in doing so is very simple: portraying her protagonist as a 'transmigrant' who maintains multiple relationships with different people that connect them to two or more nations. The novel also adds a new dimension to the Arab American identity. Its depiction of this transnational connection widens the scope of the Arab American identity which is constantly pushed towards either side of the hyphen.

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Renu Shukla

### **Traces of Democratic Ideals in Vedic Polity**

Being citizen of the largest democracy in the world and being fascinated by the modern ideas of equality, liberty and fraternity, freedom of thought and speech it has been a subject of keen interest for most of us to look back into the vast canvas of History and find out the origin of such ideals in Ancient Indian Polity. There are number of scholars, who believe that monarchy was the only form of government known to Indians in Ancient period. They credited west for the light of democratic ideals to the people of this world but a careful survey of the Ancient Indian Administration completely explode this theory and make it clear that refined democracy of today is a product of History-an outcome of centuries of political thinking, experiments and experiences.

Democracy as it is known is a government of the people, by the people, for the people. In such a government public participation in state administration is desirable. Unlike the monarchical states in republics people play a vital role in the administration of the state and their approval is the most determinant factor in policy matters. Thus any form of government in which participation of public in state affairs is ensured can be defined as a republican state. In such government

people may delegate power to a single man or to a group of selected men (Laski, H., 1968, 210). Therefore different form of non-monarchical government such as oligarchy, aristocracy, democracy etc. can be labelled as republic (Altekar 112). Today India is the largest democracy in the world but in general monarchical system had been prevailed here throughout the ancient period. Vedic age is not an exception. The historic battle of ten kings with Sudâs, frequent occurrence of the term 'Râjan' in Vedas prove that monarchy in which *gana* (Sharma, R.S., 1959, 89-90; TM, XIX.14.2; SB, II. 5.1, I.1.2; RV, IV.35.3; VII. 96.8; TB, I. 62.3; TB, I.8.6.4; SB, XIII.2.8.4. In every case members of *gana* are descendents of the same ancestors.) was a political unit being under a single ruler, was the most prevalent form of government.

It is quite true that Vedic resources do not provide any clear-cut evidence of Democracy or Republics but a careful study of Vedic literature suggest that republican ideals were known to Vedic people and even the monarchical form based the enthronement of royalty on popular acceptance which indicates towards their own distinctively democratic character. The objective of this paper is to make an attempt to seek the seeds of democratic traditions deeply embedded in the monarchical system of Vedic polity.

In *Rigveda* we come across terms like *gana*, *ganapati* or *jyeshtha*, which are considered as the non-monarchical terms in later times. The use of these terms in Vedas clearly indicates that there are some elements which can be regarded as republican in this monarchical system. ¼RV, II.23.1. x.kkuka Rok x.kifra gokegs A dfoa dohukeqieJoLre~ AA T;s”Bjkta Ckzã.kka czã.kLirA vk u% ‘k’.oéwfrfHk% lhnlnkue~AA) The word ‘*gana*’ has been used 46 times in *Rigveda*, 9 times in *Atharvaveda* and at several places in the Brahmanas.) The chief of Jana was known as *janasya goptâ*, *vishpati*, *janasya râjâ*, *ganânâm ganapati* and *grâmni* (Jha, & Shrimali 126)

Every title is reflective of the importance of general public in Rig Vedic polity.

When we proceed further hereditary kingship (AB, II.12; SB, V.3.1-3) seems to be the normal system but there is clear evidence that when the situation demanded it, *viæah* (settlements), who constituted the *râshtra* (national unit), could elect a worthy monarch of their own choice from among the members of the royal family or of the nobility (the *râjânyas*) (AV, III.4.2). In Vedic literature representatives of the people like the charioteers, the smith and the *grâman* is have been designated as King makers (*Râjaksita*) (AV, III.5.6-7). These representatives and *samiti* elected the king in all probability (AV, V. 19. 15; VI. 88. 3). As the time went on gradually in Vedic period itself kingship was becoming hereditary but even after the establishment of the hereditary principle of succession, the election was held, when the regular heir was afflicted by some disease (N, II. 10) or when the regular line had become extinct.

The spirit of the constitutional monarch in ancient India, which contained the flame of democratic light can be visualised in the subtle metaphysical concept of ‘*rita*’, ‘*vrata*’, ‘*satya*’, ‘*dharma*’ and ‘*danda*’ (Mishra, S.N., 1976, 255). The protection of the people was the sacred duty of the king. He was expected to rule according to Dharma and was known as ‘*Dharmasya Goptâ*’ i.e. the protector of the Dharma (law) (AB, VIII). In *Rigveda*, *dharma* is used for custom (RV, III.17.1), moral, law (RV, VII.89.5) and duties in general (RV, X.56.3) and in the sense of what is right (RV, VIII.98.1). The *Brihadâraanyaka Upnishada* says- ‘*Dharma is the Kshtra of the Kshtra; therefore, there is nothing higher than Dharma*’ (BU, I.4; II.15). Vedic god, Varuna was said to be the regulator of their conduct according to Dharma (RV I.25.10). His temporal counterpart i.e. the king was expected to do and speak only which is right (TB, I.8.10).

'Rita' is another wonderful concept of *Rigveda*, which designates "Order" through the meanings "truth" and "right". It governed and regulated the nature, Gods and men (RV, I.1.8; I.2.17; I.23.5; III.1.18; III.2.26; IV.2.23; IV.51.52; IV.23.8; IV.51.7-8). Sin resulted from the violation of 'rita', or 'order'. Rita was binding on Gods and mortals alike including King. 'Vrata' was the divine ordinance (AV, XVIII.1.5) and the king was its upholder (*dhrita vrata*) (SB, V.4.4.5). The power of learned Brahman as *Ārotriya*s was also an important check on the royal authority. Brahma has been described as the source of the *kshatra* (SB, I.4.11; AB, VII.19). The king had no authority over them as Soma was considered as their king (VS, X.18; TS, I.8.12; KS, XVI; MS, I.6.9; SB, V.3.3)

In *Rig-Veda* three important administrative authorities are described as *purohit*, *senâni* and the *grâmani* (RV, X.62.11; 107.5). A king could not rule without their assistance. Purohit was the most prestigious one and was a cognizable check over the authority of the king down to the later Vedic period (AGS, III.12). Ratnins have also become very important during this period and were given the same title-Râjkrita which was given to workers of metal, the charioteer, and the Grâmani earlier (TB, I.7.3). They were also described as the bestower of state (*Râshtrasya Pradâtâran*) (AB, XII.9; ADS, II.10.25.10). In later Vedic literature we come across the terms like 'sachiva' and 'amâtyas' which have been used in the sense of ministers (Pa, III.2.95). All these authorities exercised a powerful check on the authority of the king.

In an attempt of revealing the existence of the republican elements in Vedic polity one has to keep an eye over the role of some important assemblies called 'vidatha' 'sabhâ' and 'samiti'. *vidatha* seems to be the earliest of the Assemblies, with a wide range of activities including secular (RV, II.1.4) religious (RV, I.60.1; II.39.1; III.1.1) and martial (RV, V.59.2) functions. Although the constitution and

powers of the *vidatha* are not clear (Sharma & Sharma 43-56) but it has ensured the autonomy to the people of *gana* by its multifarious activities.

*Sabhâ* and *samiti* were two more prominent and powerful bodies in the Vedic Period. These assemblies formed an essential feature of the government and stood beside the King as the mode of expression of the will of the people. Though, the scholars like Ludwick and Zimmer have different opinions regarding the structure and functions of the 'sabhâ' and 'samiti' but the Kings presence in the 'samiti' clearly referred to; and there seems to be no doubt that both the organisations possess an important place in the Vedic polity. Numerous passages referring to them clearly indicate that both these assemblies exercised considerable authority and must have acted as healthy checks on the power of the king. They have been regarded as daughters of Prajâpati (AV, VII.12,1).

From Vedic Literature we gather clear impression that *sabhâ* was an independent institution. It was a gathering of the elect, probably the elders (SYV, XVI.24) and the privileged nobles (RV, II.24.13; VII.1.4; X.71.10; IV.2-5). The 'sabhâpati' (VS, XVI,24) and 'sabhâpâla' (TB, 7.4.6) were its president and marshal respectively. To a king the co-operation of the 'sabhâ' was equally desirable. It was attended by the king feudatories (CU, V.3.6; SB, III.3.5-14), Great importance was attached not only to concord between the King and the Assembly, but also to a spirit of harmony among the members of the Assembly (AV, 7.12)

*Samiti* was the Central political assembly and was larger than *sabhâ*. It was the regulatory assembly of the political power (Gopal 42) and was closely associated with the king. The *samiti* could elect a king (AV, VII.88.3), banish him and re-elect him (AV, V.19.15). The king was duty bound to attend the deliberations of *samiti* (RV,

IX.92.6) and it seems to be a great challenge for him to keep the Samiti pleased and of one mind with him (lekukseU= % Ifefir% lekuh lekua eu% lg fpRres" kkaA lekua eU=ekfHk eU=;s o% lekusu oks gfo"kk tqgksfeAA RV, X.191.3; AV,VI.64). There are prayers for eloquence and outshining the rivals in the *samiti* by its members (AV, VII.12.1; XII.1.56). In the concluding hymn of *Rigveda* great importance was attached not only to a concord between the King and Assembly, but also a spirit and harmony among the members of the *samiti* (la xPN/oa la on/oa la oks eukafl tkurkEk~A nsok Hkkxa ;Fkk iwosZ latkukuk miklrsAA RV, X.191.2). It is not impossible to argue that the hope and the desideratum expressed in the hymn refers to the deliberative and administrative activity of a republican state (Altekar 116).

Besides monarchies there are traces of the existence of republics in the Vedic period. As Drekeimer points out whole India was not monarchical in Vedic age. There were some republics also (Drekmeir 277). The existence of republics in sixth century B.C. suggests that they have originated centuries earlier. In the *Aitareya Brâhmana* (AB, VIII. 14) there is a reference to different types of states like *râjya*, *bhaujya*, *vairâjya*, *sâmrâjya* flourished in different provinces of the country, with different titles used for their king. According to Altekar, *vairâjya* denoted a republic, a state which had no king. Pânini and classical writers have mentioned the existence of number of republican states in North-west part of India (Number of Âyudhjivi *samghas* and other communities are mentioned in *Ashtâdhyâyi*, Sutras and in the writings Greek writers. (Mishra, 20-38, 72-89). The numerous references of republics *Ashtâdhyâyi* proves that the *sangha* form of government was popular in North-west region at the time of Pânini and as it was the most Aryanised region of India it supports the idea of Aryan origin of Democratic ideals.

Viewing together all these things clearly reveals that there are traces of republican trend in the monarchical governments of the Vedic age. The Vedic king did not possess unlimited powers. The references of administrative authorities like *purohit*, *senâni* and the *grâmni*, the concept of *rita*, *vrata*, *satya*, *dharma* and *danda*, the title *râjkrita* which was given to chariot builders, the workers of metal, the charioteer, the *grâmani* and later on to *ratnins* suggest that they have acted as healthy checks on the power of the king. The dynamic role of the assemblies like *sabhâ* and *samiti* in the Vedic polity can be regarded as an inclination towards the republican trend. However in the later Vedic period with the geographical expansion of the state power and the king's direct participation in administration, the role of the people's importance in deliberations and policy formation could not continue.

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Sanjiv Kumar

### Excruating Portrayal of Humanity in Upamanyu Chatterjee's *Way to Go*

The new world order characterized by a marked emphasis on globalization and multiculturalism, has largely transformed entire sociology, economy and polity at global as well as national level. The concept of *vasudhaiva kutumbkam* has now got a different connotation when it is appreciated in terms of opportunities of economic growth irrespective of the threats it poses to the integrity of humans. In the wake of globalization, human advancement is now measured through newly defined parameters which take into consideration all material assets and objects an individual possesses and ignore the essential element of humanity. The external as well as inner construct of humans is now guided by seemingly fascinating but afflicting consequences of globalization i.e. growth in the reforms period of economic liberalisation, Information and Communication Technology, and unrestricted movement across boundaries. Indulgence in the blind race of upward social mobility leads the people to ignore the traditional moral and ethical codes, cultural practices and a life style marked with austerity and sacrifice. The present generation is hypnotized by the dark spirits of economic globalization to the extent that the darker side of the picture is generally backgrounded so much so that the glamour of page 3 celebrities, soap opera, mall culture, BPOs and

soaring apartments take precedence over the real issues like poverty, human trafficking, missing children, sexual harassment at work place, the wider gap between rich and poor, plight of farmers, violation of human rights and displaced people. Today, even literature and media have equally been glamourised as in the race of Target Rating Point (TRP), TV channels are more obsessed with the reality shows devoid of any fraction of reality than with the programmes highlighting the concerns of larger citizenry. Ironically, the popular programmes like *Big Boss* (where the triviality predominates), *Comedy Circus* (where comedy signifies vulgarity), *Crime Reporter* (with sharp focus on love, sex and murder), *Rakhi ka Swyamvar* (ridiculing the practice of personal choice in marital affairs) and intermittent commercial breaks to advertise the products of MNCs, hardly ever appeal to the millions of poors, underprivileged sections and subalterns in general. Detailing the negative effects of globalization through television, Kameshwar Singh remarked "it is having an adverse impact on our family life, mainly through television and technology. Television lessens the amount of time that families spend together. It also exposes children to new value systems, makes them grow up faster and gives them a thirst for consumer goods. Its disturbing impact on family and the drastic erosion of traditional social life is a matter of concern for all of us." (*The Times of India*)

Similarly, the postmodern Indian English Literature which generally foregrounds the scintillating picture of modern humanity, identifies itself with glitterature, twitterature or chick-lit. However, the rich heritage of Indian novel in English is somehow kept alive by the new generation of novelists like Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Chetan Bhagat, Aravind Adiga and Upamanyu Chatterjee. The present paper attempts to study Upamanyu Chatterjee's *Way to Go* as a novel portraying disorientated Indian society where individuals follow the contemporary idiom of growth and ignore the sanctity of social institutions like family and marriage.

The sequel to Upamanyu Chatterjee's novel *The Last Burden, Way to Go* is a just account of humanity devoid of warmth, love, sacrifice, fellow feeling and made-for-each-otherness. Starting with the catchy sentence "FOR NOT HAVING LOVED ONE'S DEAD father enough, could one make amends by loving one's child more," (Chatterjee 03). The novel portrays the degeneration of the people in the age of globalization, urbanization, consumerism and economic liberalization. Jamun, the protagonist of the novel, is preoccupied with the search for his lost father whom he misses a lot—sometimes out of love and at other times, out of sense of duty of a son towards a father. Though his stay with his father had never been pleasant, he comes to realize as to how his father's presence engaged and absorbed him. On being left alone in his father's house, he reminisces the moments when "they had all (his entire family) lived together under one roof as one large, unhappy family. . . on Jamun's return to the city of his mother's death—for that is how he had come to think of it, forever polluted." (29)

The novelist introduces Jamun as the representative of wastelandish character of lower middle class characterized by the obsession with upward mobility, erosion of traditional values and diluting sociological institutions like marriage and family. The increasing urbanization and consequent dirt, squalor, congestion and unhygienic living conditions form the setting of the novel. In his seminal book, Sunil Khilnani brings to the fore the disasters of extensive movement of people towards the cities either for employment opportunities or for the better education of their children. Khilnani comments:

India's cities are hinges between its vast population spread across the countryside and the hectic tides of the global economy, with its ruthlessly shifting tastes and its ceaseless murmur of the pleasures and hazards of modernity. How this three-cornered relationship develops over the next decades

will decisively mould India's future economic, cultural and political possibilities (Khilnani 49).

For him, India's cities present the panorama of the entire historical compass of human labour, from the crudest job of stone-breaking to the most sophisticated financial transactions, export-import transactions, services and corporate ownerships. Similarly, *Way to Go* brilliantly puts forward the contradictions of growth by highlighting the sordid environ of emerging India at the wake of our entering into the select nations priding themselves on resisting financial recession and volatile market practices. The novel touches upon the successes and failures, hopes and despairs, past and present, traditional and modern, and nature and culture. Present day Indian scenario reflects upon the contradictions which are "...intimately and abruptly pressed against one another, and this has made the cities vibrate with agitated experience. All the enticements of the modern world are stacked up here, but it is also here that many Indians discover the mirage-like quality of this modern world." (Khilnani, 109)

The disillusioned denizens of the suburban slums are pictured in the novel with a set of imagery symbolizing darkness, gloom and frustration. Upamanyu Chatterjee presents the stark realities of contemporary urbanizing India when he gives an account of the disappointed people opting to commit suicide by putting their necks on the railway tracks. He satirises the essential gloominess prevailing among the present generation posed with the new set of challenges in the context of globalization. He observes:

How couldn't they recall the shitters on the tracks, two hundred million of them every morning? Surely, just when it was too late, at the last absolute nanosecond, realizing that they'd been resting their chins on month-old turds, they changed their minds; just before their skulls became blood

and mincemeat, they wept and climaxed out of fear and depression at how sinfully they had abused the gift of life. (16)

*Way to Go* is generally regarded as a novel marked with dry humour and emotionless extravaganza of crumbling institutional structures—social, economic, familial and individual. The novel exhibits a country of a billion plus with a quarter of a million people who are really insignificant and non-existent. Jamun's tale represents the odds of locating an individual in the meandering complex of human existence. Individual identity has become as scarce and rare as the attempt to locate the rudiments of demolished structures. The picture that the novel creates before our eyes is that of an over-populated metropolitan city where traffic has doubled, neighbours have changed and older houses have been destroyed to make way for apartment blocks. The people like Shyamanand who have volunteered to disappear from the mainstream of life, could hardly survive in a sprawling city taking the shape of the concentration camp where “gates had been walled up, walls topped by barbed wire and everyone had looked permanently apprehensive.” (17)

Jamun's father invested all of his resources in constructing a house which he could call his own, which he both liked and disliked. On the one hand, Shyamanand took immense pride in the house that he had built on his own crumb of earth while on the other hand; he could sense the absurdity of his decision to sink his life's savings in choosing to live in a housing estate that had become a sort of concentration camp. He relished the partial pleasure in the house for having the company of a 'son of his own blood' and the barbed wires and the cementing up of the gate giving him the feeling of security which he considered as rare accomplishments not many of his contemporaries could boast of. “It (house) was the grandest material remains of his family, it was his family made concrete... both a dream

realized and an idea of the family idealized and then made real brick by brick.” (201)

Taking a departure from contemporary Indian novelists in English, Upamanyu Chatterjee gives due space to the themes concerning poors and other underprivileged sections of society. In the novel, the characters like Tekla, Vaman, Dhan Singh and Budi Kadombini represent the millions of poor inhabiting India. In spite of their low birth, status and restricted access to the opportunities of globalised India, they “have a deep and immediate understanding of power and power relationships. They know their own powerlessness in the context of deep-rooted inequalities in economic, social, and political structures.”<sup>1</sup> Despite the suffocating and hostile environment, they display a strong internal sense of power, self-confidence, and will to persist, through various means—fair or foul. In the novel, Tekla, maid-servant's son, runs a brothel house in a “three-storey shack from base to roof completely illegitimate—from electricity connection and water pipes to building plans, as illegal and inevitable as prostitution” (44). Similarly, Budi Kadombini's habit to steal from kitchen also reveals the tendency among the poors to rise high. Even the newly emerged lower middle class consisting of the people like Jamun, Burfi and Lobhesh Monga are observed compromising their essential human dignity for short-term material gains. Monga, the builder, performs certain religious rites only to beguile others. He organizes the bonfire on the occasion of Holi festival and partakes frequent pilgrimages only to divert the attention of the people from the crimes he commits. He is a hypocrite who goes away soon after the bonfire (burning Naina dead or alive) to Nasik or Ujjain or Puri, a religious journey necessitated by some business requirement. “He (Monga) never said no to anything; like the successful amoral businessman that he wanted to be, he viewed every situation as a potential source of profit” (43). With the soaring real estate business in post-reforms India, Monga

represents the lacs of property dealers and builders who have dreamt to rise overnight from huts to sky-touching apartments. It happens so because the value of real estate has appreciated about two thousand per cent in the last two decades. So, the builders like Monga believe in the fact that, “time is money and thinking a waste of both” (49). For Monga, “the two (religion and crime) for him were indistinguishable, artha and dharma strolling hand in hand into one of his pilgrim resthouses...” (110)

The title of the novel is quite relevant and significant as it largely centres around the theme of life and death. At the time when human values, ethics and traditional norms are losing their sanctity, Death... was a topic that bonded together father and son. They couldn't most of the time tell the difference between it and suicide (34). Dr. Mukherjee's committing suicide, Shyamanand's leaving the house forever and his two sons' contemplating to meet the death, seem to be the only alternatives left with them. Human beings speckled mainly by painful maladies and their expensive treatment, it is best for these characters to think of themselves as already dead. The entire social setup is in the grip of varied influences of globalization—be it commoditization, consumerism, westernized life-style, mall-culture and the widening divide between rich and poor.

The spell of economic growth has even blinded the people to the sanctity of social institutions like family and marriage. The pious familial relationships like parents, brother, sister, husband, wife, son and daughter seemed to have lost their commanded reverence in the contemporary society. *Way to Go* by Upamanyu Chatterjee lays bare the stark realities of the existing socio-economic scenario, though sometimes with an indigestible brutality. The disappointing expression of sexual encounters in the novel add to the pervasive gloominess of the novel. In the novel, “Jamun's sex life dwindled to a sort of dry, rotting peanut... the wretchedness of his carnal life and how demeaning

it had always been. It was hurried, silent, stinking, dry and gave more dissatisfaction than pleasure to its participants.” (36-37) Even Jamun's relationship with his own daughter delivered by ‘Kasturi to whom he had lost his virginity,’ (29) remains vague throughout the novel. In Kasturi's serial called *Cheers Zindagi*, Chunmun the fictitious equivalent of real Mithi, has two fathers—Sidharth, her mother's husband and Uncle Ashwamedha Ponytail (Jamun himself), her biological father. While Jamun liked himself to be addressed by his daughter as Babua or Popten, Mithi calls him Donkey Uncle. What agonises Jamun is the fact that though he is living a barren life in the absence of his daughter, “his character in the soap... enjoyed a sizeable following; which his TV programme was, what he had been doing on the morning of the last heavy downpour, what he ate and how he maintained his health were regularly the subjects of articles in the daily newspapers.” (92)

The mockery of human relationships is exposed when Monga introduces Naina as his cousin whom he exploits sexually only to burn her body in the bonfire. Similarly, Burfi, Jamun's brother has severed his ties with his wife and stays away from his children. He “hadn't touched his wife in five years except to beat her even though he loved her very much. He loved her most when she was beaten and bleeding” (219). The father-son relationship is shown to have become an old myth as instead of seeking pleasure in the company of father, “Between the brothers, whoever stayed with the father usually felt that the other had duped him into it, had won and escaped” (61). Ironically, Shyamanand was so excited about his sons that he “... had had painted, in crimson capitals, the details of the apex of his life's achievement, namely, the names of his sons, their educational qualifications and professional designations... (331). After getting disillusioned by his own sons, Shyamanand considers villainous Monga as his third son mainly because he found Jamun and Burfi quite unfilial.

However, it is only after Shyamanand's disappearance that Jamun exhibits his sensitivity to the undying bond with the father and rethinks his approach to his father when he deliberates not to let his father feel small. In such a hostile familial environment in Shyamanand's household, laughter was rare enough. Madhumati, A tenant in Shyamanand's house, is taken aback to learn that Jamun's—and Burfi's—ties with the extended family were so fragile that “they didn't even know the names of their maternal grandparents or their paternal grandmother, or the proper names of even one of their dozens of uncles and aunts. . . .” (186)

At the time when we are all the time engaged in debating the issues like 2-G sandal, black money in Swiss Banks, effective Jan Lokpal Bill and role of Civil Society in initiating positive changes, *Way to Go* rightly depicts the corrupt practices in government offices. The non-seriousness and consequent failure of police to search out Shyamanand, makes one comment that “I don't think the police will do anything until they have a corpse. Preferably an influential one that can breathe down their necks (153).” With a serious crisis of basic amenities in the densely populated cities (facing largescale encroachments and cases of illegal construction), the novelist remarks that “the state has simply failed to provide in the taps of its citizens safe potable water. I personally believe that potable is a terrible word. I immediately think of having to drink the water from a toilet bowl. But this purifier is equipped with ultraviolet rays that—you know—treat the water . . . ultra-violetically” (64). The red-tapism and rigid license rule still prevails Indian bureaucratic system captured by Upamanyu Chatterjee when he says that even death could not slip free of paperwork. Burfi's decision to sell off his paternal house makes him undergo the trauma of complex administrative barriers just to create avenues for the corrupt officials to make money. Burfi observes:

The last two offices (notary's and sub-registrar's) resembled Third World railway stations from which several hundreds are trying to escape some awful, typical Third World calamity—a communal conflagration, say, or the plague. At both he expected the crowds, fed up of having to pay bribes at every window and see their papers move only to disappear and later reappear only upon the handing over of some more grease—he expected the crowds at any moment to lose their tempers and burn the hideous buildings down. (323)

The ostentatious and flirtatious life of the westernized Indian urban population is portrayed by the novelist when birth anniversary of Mithi who is born in November, is celebrated in March. The girl is nourished in a way that she has no feelings either for her biological father or his preferences. Jamun wanted to see either Mithi or Kasturi on the eve of Holika bonfire but he consoled himself by thinking that “Mithi wouldn't because the bonfire clashed with her dance class or maths tuitions or something; and Kasturi certainly wouldn't be able to get away from work, not for a piffling, middle class, neighbourhood community event” (162). Jamun found that Kasturi's world of make believe was so remote and insulated from her own that they simply did not connect. He was not in favour of his daughter being made excessively fashionable. He feels irritated to observe that “it was fashionable in school for Mithi and her friends to detest Hindi, to find it dull and contemptible and incomprehensible” (94).

The corporatized but exclusive education system is ridiculed by the novelist when he asserts that in spite of India taking pride in being the largest democracy in the world and provision of Right for Free and Compulsory Education, a large number of children are still deprived of better education. Besides, the children are discriminated in the schools where “some parents and their cars were clearly more

equal than others. The larger and more air-conditioned, the more outrageous, the automobile, the closer to the school gates to deposit its charges. . . Security and Identification. If you were a very important parent, you didn't. . ." (172). Committed to present the panoramic view of contemporary India, Upamanyu Chatterjee mulls over the issue like homosexuality and lesbianism, besides the most common practice of extra-marital relationships. While finding a teacher for the girl, the parents agree upon a female teacher in the pretext of the Supreme Court's recent decision that 'women cannot rape' (178), which seems more a satire than a realized fact.

In *Way to Go*, Upamanyu Chatterjee seems to have been caught in an intricate trap where it is difficult to foreground one issue and background another. The collapse of institutional structures—social, political, economic and legal, is annoying, but equally crucial are the consequent maladies like corruption, widening gap between rich and poor, fatal diseases like AIDS, human trafficking and prostitution, crimes against women, familial bond, and social and financial security. Utterly disillusioned, Madhumati rightly passes her observation about life in the contemporary India when she remarks: "C'est fait, done, it's done. . . . Marriage, c'est fait. Children c'est fait. Relationships, c'est fait. . . life too c'est fait. . ." (123). However, Upamanyu Chatterjee seems to have shed some of his burden when he proposes a way to go, though towards a gloomy future guided by the witchcraft of globalization and its allied forces.

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Ramit Samaddar

#### Darwinism in George Meredith's *The Egoist*

A substantial amount of modern scholarship on George Meredith's magnum opus *The Egoist* (1879) has either implicitly or explicitly bypassed the ubiquity of Darwinian motifs in the novel. E. A. Robinson, conceding that 'in *The Egoist* the Comic Spirit and the evolutionary philosophy are organically united,' cites at length the novel's 'Prelude' to argue that 'science taken in itself . . . is no cure-all for Meredith' (863). Leo J. Henkin espouses that 'passing references to the theory of evolution and to Darwinism are to be found in [*The Egoist*]', but the novel falls short in effecting an 'assimilation of [these] ideas' (205, 208). Norman Kelvin acknowledges Meredith's proficiency in several contemporary empirical epistemologies, yet he overlooks the centrality of *The Descent of Man* in *The Egoist* (219-39). John Goode's opinion on the 'evolution of egoism' is based, improbably enough, on a declaration that Darwinism plays a relatively insignificant function in *The Egoist* (230). Donald D. Stone, while labelling the protagonist Willoughby Patterne a 'Darwinian prehistoric man', comments that '[t]hose who would seek answers in Science will be informed but not enlightened' (133). Even Carolyn Williams's brilliant reading of Meredith's deployment of natural selection as the novel's *modus operandi* is concerned more with the 'transformative

powers of nature and less with Darwinism' (53). And Patricia O'Hara's recent analysis emphasises the collaborative impact of Victorian anthropology and mythology on *The Egoist*, but remains silent as to the presence of Darwinian elements in the novel (1-24).

The key objective of the present essay is to plausibly demonstrate what the above-mentioned critics almost unanimously dismiss: Meredith's indebtedness to Charles Darwin in *The Egoist*. Biographers of Meredith frequently discuss his optimistic welcoming of the precepts put forward by Darwin (Lindsay 26-58; Collie 5-8). When *The Origin of Species* appeared in 1859 – that *annus mirabilis* of Victorian letters which also saw the publication of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and the consolidation of Meredith's powers as a novelist – Meredith immediately and enthusiastically embraced the theory. Partly because they paralleled ideas he had already begun to articulate on ethical and social levels, he accepted Darwin's conclusions without agony or even debate. He was never concerned, as so many of his contemporaries were, with wringing faith from doubt and redefining the relation of God to humanity in the cosmos. Viewed in this context, it is not extravagant to claim that *The Egoist* was designed by Meredith as a tutorial lecture on Darwinian thought. My aim is to explicate how in *The Egoist* the notion of Darwinism is given its full play, so that it becomes a unifying force which infiltrates every stratum of the novel, enmeshing its narrative artifice, *dramatis personae*, linguistic machinery, and philosophical axis in the webs of 'regression', 'mate choice', and 'hereditary laws'. These are three fundamental concepts popularised by Darwin in his scientific bestseller, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871). Regression, in evolutionary biology, denotes the backward trajectory of a 'character' to one of its previous ancestral states; mate choice is distinguished as a key Darwinian idea that acts on an organism's ability to successfully (often by any means necessary) copulate with a chosen partner; and

hereditary laws are a set of genetic tenets relating to the transmission of inherited characteristics from parent organisms to their children. (Endersby 69-91; Gayon 240-266).

Scripted in imitation of the five-act neoclassical drama (Kelvin 106), the novel revolves around Sir Willoughby Patterne, a baronet and amateur scientist obsessed with finding a wife whose physical constitution will insure the production of a male heir and thus the continuation of the Patterne line. The main action involves Constantia Durham's jilting of Willoughby, followed by Clara Middleton's desperate efforts in extricating herself from an engagement with him, her subsequent love affair with the sagacious academic Vernon Whitford, and ultimately a disillusioned Willoughby's marriage proposal to Laetitia Dale. It should be noted that Meredith's integration of Darwinian strains within the diegesis of the novel never, however, diminishes his avowed objective of offering the readers an opportunity to comprehend what 'pure comedy' is. Rather the comic vision, steeped in irony, and Darwinism work together in the novel, testifying Meredith's cherished belief that there is always a possibility of observing a true dialogue and reciprocity between the spheres of literature and science.

*The Egoist* dovetails a number of plot events documenting Meredith's consistent propensity to characterise Willoughby as the agent of regression, the 'original savage,' 'male in a giant form' (232). Willoughby is a 'civilized Egoist' who inadvertently enacts a deteriorating drift to 'the early principle of our being':

The Egoist is our fountain-head, primeval man: the primitive is born again, the elemental reconstituted. Born again, into new conditions, the primitive may be highly polished of men, and forfeit nothing save the roughness of his original nature. . . high up the stream, and back he goes, "in pejus," to the early principle of our being. . . . He has become the civilized Egoist;

primitive still, as sure as man has teeth, but developed in his manner of using them. (398-99)

The premise for such a portrayal of Willoughby, Jonathan Smith surmises, comes from Meredith's understanding of Darwinism (54-55). Although the ostensible focus of *The Descent of Man* is its radical argument for the common lineage shared by both human beings and the apes, within the purview of that argument Darwin also furnishes a fascinating evolutionary parable about the growth of the human ethical faculty. Darwin rightly speculates that the advancement of mankind is predicated on the curbing of egotistical impulses and the cultivation of the altruistic ones. Partially modelled on the ideologies of Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, Meredith's evolutionary schema simply extends this Darwinian teleology of human evolution to the social domain, positing his famous hypothetical triad of 'blood-brain-spirit'. In the 'blood'/primordial phase man is monitored by animal, selfish impulses. When he begins to exercise his powers of reasoning and contemplation, to operate sensibly for the collective welfare of the society, he moves into the 'brain'/cultured phase. The 'spirit'/salvation phase is the final phase left to be attained by man. While the passage through these interlocked phases is by and large progressive in nature, regression is always a menacing possibility. Meredith's depiction of Willoughby as outwardly striking but ethically bankrupt is a case study in this idea of regression; in Willoughby the narcissistic impulses of 'blood' has eclipsed the judicious impulses of 'brain'.

As a representative of the species that he feels bound to perpetuate, Willoughby thinks of himself the blueprint of all that is better, the metonymy of Englishness and of aristocracy, and he is as beguilingly compelled to defend and broadcast his species' traits as to defend his own identity. For example, in America he preens the chauvinism that he wears like a second skin, carrying 'his English standard over that continent,' and acting the part of the 'splendid young

representative island lord' (23). This inordinate hubris, snobbery and class prejudice hints at the morbid prospect of Willoughby's misreading of the precarious signs of regression. Concentrating on the physical atavism of others, he is oblivious to his own moral atavism. He is incapable of understanding that the continuation of the dysfunctional Patterne family depends on the implementation of the egoism of 'brain,' instead of egoism of 'blood' merely concealed with a veneer of fineness. He oddly privileges the screen of urban sophistication, monetary opulence and bodily magnetism rather than the construction of ethical wellbeing. And according to Mrs Mountstuart Jenkinson, a social butterfly in the novel's fashionable world, this screen of refinement is itself a symptom of regression: 'Growing too fine is our way of relapsing upon barbarism' (449). This is pellucid in Willoughby's condescending attitude towards the father-son duo – Lieutenant Crossjay Patterne and young Crossjay, both of whom are pigeonholed by him as anathemic forces of regression.

After learning about his daring nautical adventures, Willoughby happily invites Lieutenant Patterne to the gala banquet celebrating his betrothal to Constantia Durham. The Lieutenant arrives but is elderly and loathsome. Worse, he is devoid of 'the stamp of gentleman': 'The visitor was repulsive. [He] carried a bag, and his coat-collar was up, his hat was melancholy; he had the appearance of a bankrupt tradesman absconding; no gloves, no umbrella' (8). Having imagined a handsome young man, Willoughby is almost petrified by his intrepid cousin's physical appearance:

He had been disappointed in the age, grossly deceived in the appearance of the man claiming to be his relative in this unseasonable fashion; and his acute instinct advised him swiftly of the absurdity of introducing to his friends a heavy unrepresentable senior as the gallant Lieutenant of Marines, and the same as a member of his family! He had talked of the man



too much, too enthusiastically, to be able to do so. A young subaltern, even if passably vulgar in figure, can be shuffled through by the aid of the heroic story humorously exaggerated in apology for his aspect. Nothing can be done with a mature and stumpy Marine of that rank. Considerateness dismisses him on the spot, without parley. (8)

Willoughby thus right away sends him home before anyone can steal a glance of him. But in his fixation with Lieutenant Patterne's symptoms of physiological regression Willoughby is ignorant of the intimidating symptoms of his own moral regression, vanity and garrison mentality. His omission of Lieutenant Patterne from his social circle, which he considers as necessary to avert regression, is regarded by the comic imps of the novel's Carlylean 'Prelude' as an indication of that very regression: 'They perceived in him [Willoughby] a fresh development and very subtle manifestation of the very old thing from which he had sprung' (9). Identical feelings are harboured by Willoughby vis-à-vis young Crossjay, Lieutenant Patterne's son. Interestingly, the boy's Christian name 'Crossjay' links him to the horticultural procedure of hybridity, which Darwin states in *The Descent of Man* 'in itself gives an impulse towards reversion' and often renders crossbreed varieties susceptible to their 'primitive disposition' (16). Young Crossjay's many bestial traits are hence a source of acute mental despair for Willoughby. Vernon Whitford jestingly dubs Crossjay a 'half monkey,' and when Crossjay injures himself by falling from a tree, Vernon says that the boy 'is not so prehensile as he should be. He probably in extremity relies on the tail that has been docked' (120). This dictum is reminiscent of Darwin's contention that our pelvic *os coccyx* is a vestigial organ which connects us with mammalian primates possessing tails:

In man, the *os coccyx* . . . though functionless as a tail, plainly represent this part in other vertebrate animals. At an early

embryonic period it is free, and projects beyond lower extremities . . . of a human embryo. Even after birth it has been known, in certain rare and anomalous cases, to form a small external rudiment of a tail. The *os coccyx* is short, usually including only four vertebrae, all anchylosed together: and these are in a rudimentary condition, for they consist, with the exception of the basal one, of the centrum alone. They are furnished with some small muscles, one of which . . . is a rudimentary representation of the extensor of the tail, a muscle which is so largely developed in many mammals. (38-39)

Willoughby relentlessly endeavours to impede the surfacing of devolutionary simian features in Crossjay by casting him into a country gentleman after his own image rather than permitting him to follow his natural instincts (that of his Marine father). But in his attempts to mould Crossjay into an aristocratic dandy Willoughby ends up nurturing his rowdiness, a characteristic which patently indicates the boy's primordial descent.

The evolutionary protocol of the novel thus presents Willoughby as the exemplar of a species – a biological sample examined under the magnifying lenses of 'the Comic Spirit' (1), a paradigm, not of the survival of the fittest but of extermination of the anachronistic, the effete, and the unfit. Cultivating his egoism and secluding himself from the common mass, the self-opinionated Willoughby removes himself almost entirely from the natural order. In this sense Willoughby is, like the double-blossom wild cherry tree, beautiful but sterile; he is, what Carolyn Williams claims, the Vestal of civilization (73). He is indeed, as he says, a 'rara avis,' (317) but within the context of evolution this obsolescent status is not fortunate. Darwin proclaims that rarity is the precursor of extinction and that each variety is pressed hardest by a new variation within its nearest kindred. Willoughby, who in his egoism

had presumed to extinguish those who vary from him, is himself that *rara avis* for whom extinction is a factual danger.

Every muted or direct allusion to the onslaughts of regression in *The Egoist* is located within the framework of romance: 'The love-season is the carnival of egoism, and it brings the touchstone to our natures' (110). The narrator rhetorically characterises this 'love-season' as a charged occasion when men are inexplicably vulnerable to the dynamics of primitive desires; they act like animals, frantically striving to outsmart other men for the gratification of their erotic appetites:

Jealousy of a woman, is the primitive egoism seeking to refine in a blood gone to savagery under apprehension of an invasion of rights; it is in action the tiger threatened by a rifle when his paw is rigid on quick flesh; he tears the flesh for rage at the intruder. The Egoist . . . had no bleeding victim beneath his paw, but there was the sex to mangle. (232)

Competition in love therefore converts man into a 'raging beast' (231), signalling his kinship with members of less advanced species who are likewise devoured by the monster of egoism during the breeding cycle. For example, Willoughby behaves like 'so complete a donkey' (217), displays a claw, and becomes a wild fiend when tortured by that 'foreign devil,' jealousy (230); he knows that if his egoism fails, he will feel 'less than man,' and when he is 'not able to preserve a decent mask,' Willoughby himself is 'amazed at the creature he had become' (288); he feels like a 'beaten dog' when his schemes are thwarted by women (185). Tellingly, Darwin uses the dog as 'an emblem of degradation', of less than human states in an extensive comparison of the dog to savage man in *The Descent of Man* (110).

Most of the leading periodicals of the day collectively agreed that the two chapters on mate choice in *The Descent of Man* constitute the fulcrum of Darwin's thesis on human evolution (Smith 60). Broadly

speaking, mate choice is defined as the struggle between the members of one sex, usually males, for the possession of a member of the opposite sex of the same species, following intra-sexual combat (male to male rivalry) and inter-sexual selection (female's optimal choice of the potential male). Illustrating this two-prongedness of mate choice, Jonathan Smith rightly points out:

When the antlers of a buck, the spurs of a cock, or the pincers of a lobster are better adapted for battle, that male will be able to defeat his male rivals and to breed more frequently with the healthiest females. . . . There is another type of competition, which, though non-violent, is frequently of equal or greater importance. In this competition the male tries to impress the female with his more brilliant colour, more handsome plumage, or more beautiful voice. Here it is the female who selects her mate, or at the very least has the option of rejecting those who do not please her. (61)

Moving up the evolutionary rung from unicellular organisms to multicellular ones, Darwin discovers that male enmity is sustained largely by exhibitions of colour, voice, and performance instead of fighting, and consequently that the female's importance in the choice process is duly accentuated. According to Ruth Bernard Yeazell, Darwin's representations of 'nature's courtship plots' are 'stories in which deliberate choice leads to a satisfying conclusion – stories in which modest females successfully exercise their peculiarly female powers of taste and discrimination' (36-37). This mode of behaviour is normally exemplified by birds, a group which Darwin examined more comprehensively than any other genus. In case of mammals, conflict among the males is more recurrent, and the female action is much more restricted. All the same, Darwin strives to include mammals within his project, enunciating that it would be a bizarre incongruity if

a female mammal, with her superior cerebral prowess, did not have the same alternatives available to female birds.

*The Egoist* catalogues an entertaining fictionalization of Darwinian mate choice in terms of Willoughby's romantic liaison with Clara. An oft-cited instance of Meredith's exploitation of the lexicon of mate choice to frame Willoughby's rumination on the courtship process is as follows:

A deeper student of Science than his rivals, he appreciated Nature's compliment in the fair one's choice of you. We now scientifically know that in this department of the universal struggle, success is awarded to the better most. You spread a handsomer tail than your fellows, you dress a finer top-knot, you pipe a newer note, have a longer stride; she reviews you in competition, and selects you. . . . In complimenting you, she is the promise of a superior offspring. . . . Consequently a successful pursuit and a wresting of her from a body of competitors, tells you that you are the best man. (36)

Willoughby may be 'a deeper student of Science than his rivals,' but Meredith is a deeper student still. The veiled satire of this excerpt is directed not against the discourse of Darwinism but against Willoughby's complacent vulgarizations of it. For Willoughby courtship is a sport in which the coveted trophy – that 'fairest female' chosen to be mate – is conferred to the fittest. That is, Willoughby's fatuous appropriation of mate choice depends on a set of complementary equations: male = active, female = passive.

Explaining intra-sexual combat between males, Darwin in *The Descent of Man* writes: 'Man is the [adversary] of other man; he delights in competition, and this leads to ambition which passes too easily into selfishness' (586). Each of these traits – competition, ambition and selfishness – is the personality hallmark of Willoughby

and his companion Horace de Craye. Willoughby's zeal to surpass others is so prominent that even in love 'it was commonly the presence of rivals which led him to the declaration of love' (13). He is wholeheartedly interested in Laetitia when the company of other young suitors provokes him to propose to Constantia, just as he is impelled to ask Clara for marriage when he finds himself among a pack of eager rivals. Horace too 'was of the race of amorous heroes who glory in pursuing, overtaking, subduing: wresting the prize from a rival . . . . Moreover, he had been matched against Willoughby . . . two or three times' (219). The belligerence that develops between the two friends over Clara is therefore a sort of a tie-breaker in a best two-out-of-three (Smith 63).

Centrality of intra-sexual selection in the process of mating is encapsulated by Meredith through his portrayal of Clara. Like Darwin, it is perplexing for Meredith to gauge the degree of a woman's ability to elect a partner or, having elected, to alter her decision. Although Darwin perceives that throughout the animal kingdom it is the female who wields her authority to choose a mate, there is some uncertainty as to just how influential the female's authority is. The male, Darwin admits, is the more active consort, first in vanquishing his rivals and then in displaying his charms; the female with the rarest exceptions, is less eager than the male and, though comparatively passive, generally exerts some choice and accepts one male in preference to others. The female must choose some male, even if he is merely the one which is least distasteful to her. While the females in most of the orders have the option of rejecting any particular male, they do not have the option of rejecting all males (Darwin 237). However, for Willoughby the female has no right to exercise her individual will in his case because she will be mesmerised by his charisma: "The superlative is magnetic to her. She may be looking elsewhere, and you will see – the superlative will simply have to beckon, away she glides. She cannot help herself;

it is her nature, and her nature is the guarantee for the noblest race of men to come of her” (36). Here Willoughby swings from the idea of being praised by the ‘fair one’s choice’, with its oblique implication of feminine autonomy and power, to the idea that Clara has been picked for him, offered to him as an award for his ‘suitability’ in a dog-eat-dog world. As a matter of fact, he yearns for a female Willoughby. This is best evident when rather than perceiving her real nature, Willoughby reads Clara’s countenance ‘as the mirror of himself,’ the kind of womanly beauty sculpted to complete his own masculine type (44). According to his idea of the essentially feminine, she must be an overwrought inanimate vessel, a chalice, a ritual cup to decorate and contain his ‘I’. He ‘desired to shape her character to the feminine of his own,’ and he deems his desire is capable of achieving its flesh-and-blood manifestation because to him the female is totally malleable, the ‘waxwork sex’ (150).

Furthermore, the conceited Willoughby does not rely solely on the magnetism of his superiority to bind Clara in wedlock. He gains leverage by impressing her father, susceptible as the latter is to Willoughby’s riches and wine-cellar, and by using the pretext of his mother’s sickness. Overwhelmed by these solicitations, Clara reluctantly agrees ‘to enter the state of captivity’ by means of ‘a binding ceremonial’ (38). The third-person omniscient narrator wryly remarks that ‘thus did Miss Middleton acquiesce in the principle of selection’ (38). Other characters, especially Vernon, also employ the vocabulary of mate choice, but in applying it to characters other than Willoughby they challenge Willoughby’s rationalised, self-interested, warped version of it. A case in point is the conversation between Vernon and Laetitia when the former tells the latter that ‘science condescends to speak of natural selection. Look at these! They are both graceful and winning and witty, bright to mind and eye, made for one another’ (310). Here the threat to Willoughby is quiet vivid for Vernon is referring to Clara and Horace, not Clara and Willoughby.

Darwinism appears tempting to Willoughby primarily because it can be used as a shield to vindicate the preservation of the Patterne’s socioeconomic position. As Darwin in *The Descent of Man* notes, if mate choice operates anywhere in civilized human societies, it is in the patrician upper classes of Europe (609). For Darwin aristocracy is a singular case. In the rest of the human world mate choice, viewed exclusively in physical terms, no longer operates: the battle for women has ceased, and class consciousness has become a superseding factor in nuptial negotiations. But aristocratic men, particularly elder sons like Willoughby, are fortunate in their mating habits as they are free to choose bourgeois women like Clara for their corporeal allure. The ‘three mighty qualifications for a Patterne bride’ (15) are money, health and beauty, but Willoughby is willing to sacrifice some of the money for the health and beauty that insure present and future confirmation of his own superiority. The conspicuous absence of mental acquirements and moral virtues from Willoughby’s list further indicates that he is reading Darwin at the surface level, for Darwin categorically argues that the attraction of elite men for the mental charms, wealth, and social standing of women actually interferes with the action of mate choice.

The 1870s and 80s witnessed the publication of a plethora of scientific texts penned by anthropologists, physicians, psychologists and biologists who unequivocally placed women on a lower evolutionary scale in comparing their mental abilities to those of men. Anthropologist J. McGrigor Allan, for instance, declared that ‘man’s realm is the intellect – woman’s the affections. In reflective power woman is utterly unable to compete with man and will always fall short of man’ (ccvi). He went on to sputter, ‘No distinction in the minds of men and women! Nature flatly contradicts the absurd assertion’ (ccvii). Reiterating a similar point of view, physician Henry Maudsley observed that ‘women cannot rebel against the tyranny of their organization . . . they do not and cannot stand on the same level

as men' (467). And psychologist George Romanes avowed that 'on merely anatomical grounds we should be prepared to expect a marked inferiority of intellectual power in women' (654-55). Darwin too made brief but censorious pronouncements on female cognitive abilities. Elaborating upon the elementary tenets of hereditary laws, Darwin in *The Descent of Man* avers that certain 'characters' which develop, like secondary sexual traits, during a person's adulthood are duly transferred by that person to the 'offspring' of the same sex. Since the 'masculine features' of determination, reason and pugnacity emerge during a male individual's adulthood, they are more successfully transmitted to his male progeny than to his female progeny, and hence 'man has become superior to woman' (588). Nevertheless, Darwin also professes that these 'characters' are present in a mature female individual but in a dormant form, adding: "It is indeed fortunate that the law of equal transmission of characters to both sexes prevails in mammals; otherwise it is probable that man would have become as superior in mental endowment to women as the peacock is in ornamental plumage to the peahen" (588). Such perspectives on the issue of biological inheritance would seem to mean that gender disparities could be expunged by educating women in a specific manner and at a specific time. Darwin's response is noteworthy for its clarity: "In order that woman should reach the same standard as man, she ought, when nearly adult, to be trained to energy and perseverance, and to have her reason and imagination exercised to the highest point; and then she would probably transmit these qualities chiefly to her adult daughters" (588). Thus, while Darwin buttresses many gender stereotypes of his age by offering scientific warranting for the same, he also, as the above citation shows, emphasizes that 'dissimilar early training' received by boys and girls has led to the mental feebleness of the latter (588). The lone solution then is to educate women well. If girls are taught from an early age safe, proper and uplifting ideas, then the daughters of such girls would automatically acquire these good

traits in congruence with the mechanism of the hereditary laws. What Darwin therefore circuitously articulates is that intellectual discrepancy among the sexes is an outcome of nurture and not nature.

When *The Egoist* is seen from this standpoint, Meredith's religious adherence to Darwinism becomes apparent. He seems to appropriate Darwin in countering centuries-old presumptions of an inferior female, exposing the alarming flaws inherent in the culturally as well as scientifically approved sexiest hierarchies. He charges men for the miserable plight of women. The narrator of the novel furiously announces that if women deliberately 'indulge a craving to be fools' it is because men stipulate 'total ignorance' as 'their pledge of purity': men 'have reared [women] to this pitch' (206), and this 'pitch' to which women have been forcefully raised is a signpost of the echelon of civilization in England, for 'by their state is our civilization judged' (232). For Meredith, as for Darwin, women must be given the opportunity to realise their potential otherwise their inferiority (imposed on them by men) would persist for many generations. In a letter dated 1905 he piquantly stated:

Since I began to reflect I have been oppressed by the injustice done to women, the constraint put upon their natural aptitudes and their faculties, generally much to the degradation of the race. I have not studied them more closely than I have studied men, but with more affection, a deeper interest in their enfranchisement and development, being assured that women of the independent mind are needed for any sensible degree of progress. They will so educate their daughters, that these will not be instructed at the start to think of themselves naturally inferior to men, because less muscular and need not have recourse to particular arts, chiefly feline, to make their way in the world. (Quoted in Fernando 54)

Meredith laments that men, being the self-appointed guardians of morality, act as despots in their command over women. According to him, the best method to ameliorate what he calls ‘the vestiges of rawness and grossness to be found among us’ (3) is comedy, and thus in his seminal ‘Essay on Comedy’ (1877) Meredith expounds that the status of women is a marker not only of civilization but also of comedy:

Where [women] have no social freedom, Comedy is absent: where they are household drudges, the form of Comedy is primitive: where they are tolerably independent, but uncultivated, exciting melodrama takes its place. . . . But where women are on the road to an equal footing with men, in attainments and in liberty .there . . . pure Comedy flourishes. (31-32).

It implies that if English ladies of the middle and upper classes could attain some social sovereignty, then they might be equal to their male counterparts in more than one respect. Clearly enough, Meredith is here more optimistic than Darwin, and his emphasis on measuring women on the beam-balance of intellectual ‘attainments’ and social and economic ‘liberties’ situates him much more closer to J. S. Mill, the famed campaigner of women’s rights. In fact, when John Morley handed Meredith a copy of J. S. Mill’s proto-feminist *The Subjection of Women* in 1869, Meredith ‘eagerly seized the book, fell to devouring it in settled silence, and could not be torn from it all day’ (Smith 74).

Lloyd Fernando has convincingly argued that Darwinism serves as the bedrock of Meredith’s feminism: Meredith’s wish to raise women to ‘a pedestal of greater dignity was based on the philosophy of evolution’ (50). Hence one of the trademark aspects of Meredith’s feminism is his depiction of women as the pointers of evolutionary progress – not only in their marital decisions but also in their own status within a culture. Among his major works of fiction, this idea is fruitfully epitomized by *The Egoist*. At one point in the novel Dr. Corney,

‘the popular physician of the county and famous anecdotal wit,’ (94) discreetly remarks that women should be trained to envisage a different picture of masculinity that radically differs from the carved-in-wood model of manliness. Clara’s temperamental affinity with Vernon and her ultimate selection of him as her soulmate reflects the dawn of just such a new ideal of strength and attractiveness. When in her initial rendezvous with Vernon Clara imagines an ascent together in the Alps, her imagination conveys the indomitable spirit of the new species – Vernon as the ‘new man’ and Clara as the ‘new woman’. This episode could be productively read as an example of Meredith’s egalitarian views on the potential of the female sex. He firmly believes that women, if given proper scope and encouragement, have the aptitude – the ‘birthmarks of individuality’ (135) – to guide humanity to the next stage of development. If the world could be made to venerate the true emancipated woman over what Meredith in *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) calls ‘the grossness of the overdainty,’ great strides forward could be made (19).

The British scientific community recently paid tribute to Charles Darwin by naming their Mars explorer ‘Beagle 2,’ in memory of Darwin’s momentous voyage, on board the *Beagle*, to the Galapagos Islands. Today Darwin’s position is secure and unassailable but a hundred years ago, at the fag end of the nineteenth century, there were serious detractors ready to belittle him and his theories. In response to one such attack by Hilaire Belloc, which claimed that Darwin is exploded, Meredith wrote a spirited defence of Darwin which was published in *G. K. Weekly* in 1902 (Fernando 52). Each novel of Meredith bears testimony to the fact that he considered Darwin as some sort of milestone in man’s intellectual history. And *The Egoist* is not an exception. Nonetheless, pretending to renounce Darwinian science in favour of the discipline of art (or the genre of novel), Meredith in the ‘Prelude’ of the novel writes:

We drove in a body to Science the other day for an antidote; which was as if tired pedestrians should mount the engine-box of headlong strains; and Science introduced us to our o'er hoary ancestry – them in the Oriental posture: whereupon we set up a primeval chattering to rival the Amazon forest nigh nightfall, cured, we fancied. And before daybreak our disease was hanging on to us again, with the extension of a tail. We had it fore and aft. We were the same, and animals into the bargain. That is all we got from Science. (2)

Certainly that is not all Meredith got from science. The 'Prelude' introduces his putative reading audience to an imaginative context which unambiguously integrates the discourse of science but does so by hemming it within multiple folds of ironic U-turns. The novelist's restrained irony here is not levelled against evolutionary theory itself but against those self-deluded egoists who misuse it for their own vested interests. The poet of evolution is a novelist of evolution too, and in *The Egoist* Meredith presents a story which humorously chronicles the intervention of three Darwinian forces – regression, mate choice, and hereditary laws – into the 'drawing room of civilized men and women,' (1), the parochial aristocracy of Victorian England.

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Dinesh Panwar

**Oblique Use of Language in  
Pinter's *The Birthday Party***

Pinter is a very gifted playwright who holds that the melody and rhythm of speech communicate meaning as much as the content of what is said. He also holds that spoken language is only the tip of the iceberg of meaning and that characters frequently mean more or mean differently from what they say out loud. He selects words and arranges his syntax with great care, so that his dialogue has a very particular rhythm and so that the audience share the characters' sensitivity to a meaning underlying the words. His characters speak in everyday vocabulary, but his dialogue is very far from what you'd hear if you tape-recorded everyday speech. He achieves his effects by introducing pauses and silences into the dialogue that make us aware there is more being meant than is being said. As a result we have the same unsettling experience as the characters in his plays, and we become agitated and nervously aware of a ferocious and unnerving disjointedness about the dialogue. In this regard *The Birthday Party* is a typical Pinteresque play. The dialogue's are colloquial and perfectly realistic, they are economical and tightly controlled. Cascoigne critically points out about the play: The language of the play *The Birthday Party* 1985 is, at its best, a superb distillation of ordinary conversation, both in rhythm and content.



The play, *The Birthday Party* starts with silence, if this is held for a moment the audience will wait for Petey to speak. But Pinter breaks the silence with words from an unseen source, so gathering a further Curiosity.

MEG. Is that you, Petey?  
 Pause  
 PETEY. Is that you?  
 Pause  
 PETEY. What?  
 MEG. Is that you?  
 PETEY. Yes, its me.  
 MEG. What? (Her face appears at the batch). Are you back?  
 PETEY. Yes  
 MEG. I've got your cornflakes ready (She disappears and reappears) Here's your cornflakes.

(Pinter, *The Birthday Party* ,5-8)

Pinter uses the commonest phrases in human speech, with extreme care and the dialogues in his plays flow like waves rising and falling with the undercurrent of dramatic tension. For example, the dialogue in *The Birthday Party*, though comic, offers a withheld threat and makes spectators uneasy:

“MEG. Have you been working hard this morning?  
 PETEY. No. Just stocked a few of the old chars. Cleaned up & bit.  
 MEG. Is it nice out?  
 PETEY. Very nice.  
 Pause  
 MEG. Is Stanley up yet?  
 PETEY. I don't know. Is he?  
 MEG. I don't know. I haven't seen him down yet.

PETEY. Well then, he can't be up.  
 MEG. Haven't you seen him down.  
 PETEY. I've only just come in.  
 MEG. He must be still asleep.

(Pinter 9)

She looks round the room, stands, goes to the sideboard and takes a pair of socks from a drawer, collects wool and a needle and goes back to the table.

What time did you go out this morning, Petey?

PETEY. Same time as usual.  
 MEG. Was it dark?  
 PETEY. No. It was light.  
 MEG. (Beginning to dark). But sometimes you go out in the morning and it's dark  
 PETEY. That's in the winter.  
 MEG. Oh, in winter.  
 PETEY. Yes, it gets tight later in winter.  
 MEG. Oh.”

(Pinter 10-11)

But habituated to the monstrosities of Ibsen, critics, at first, did not understand the language of Pinter's plays, and massacred, in almost one voice, his first full-length play. *The Birthday Party*, for its originality of theme and dialogue, as they, were too much for them. Scruton points out:

What is in fact pure, distilled, social utterance, was passed off as 'theatre of the Absurd', whose merits were no different from those of Eugene Ionesco. It seemed impossible that people, real people, should speak like this, that they should walk about the stage without once mentioning some weight of

moral isolation, some individual suffering or tragic destiny. Slowly, however, the public began to accept the new tones of voice (Scruton, 37-38)

Of course, it was a long chalk from Shakespeare. The idioms of Pinter or Beckett were as adaptable as Falstaff's bluster or Hamlet's grief. One could use them at parties, at meals, in the factory, on the bus, one could pick up girls with them, nor did they let one down in bed. The dramatist gave not only audience, meaning, social identity, but also a terrible consciousness of others through the words of his characters.

In *The Birthday Party* Pinter has successfully created a drama of human relations at the level of language itself. The playwright is known less for what he intends to convey thematically than for how he controls dramatic dialogue in order to achieve that compulsive force his drama exercises over an international audience. "A Pinter Play", as Louis C. Cordon aptly points out, "exists at the level of language as opposed to plot" (Cordon 04). Pinter's first full length play *The Birthday Party* fulfills the condition. The play derives its humour from verbal repetition and incongruity. Here as in Pinter's other plays, the plot is light and can be stated in a few words. John Russel Brown rightly observes: "More important than story-line, for Pinter, is scope and occasion for his characters to work through, and work out, the potentialities of their being end relationships" (Brown,97).

True to its title *The Birthday Party* contains a birthday party which does not refer casually to the birth anniversary of someone, it does refer to the actual day of a 'particular birth'. Stan's birthday party at Meg's place registers his new birth into a new situation. The henchmen turn Stanley into what McCann calls "a new man" (p. 91).

Stanley is reborn in the hands of these two sinister figures. Pinter's dramatic dialogue drives the point home:

GOLDBERG. You need a long convalescence.

McCANN. A change of air.... We'll renew your season ticket. (Pinter, 92)

Stanley has been made into a different personality on a day, a birthday:

GOLDBERG. You'll be re-oriented.

McCANN. You'll be rich.

GOLDBERG. You'll be adjusted. (Pinter, 93)

It has been shown earlier that a conscious Stanley has all along refused to accept the day as his birthday: "This isn't my birthday, Meg" (Pinter, 46). On learning from Meg that it is Stanley's birthday, Goldberg asks not impulsively but "thoughtfully" if they are going to have a party, then he informs McCann. "There's a gentlemen living here. He's got a birthday today, and he's 'forgotten' all about it. So we're going to 'remind' him. We're going to give him a party" (p. 43). Meg initially has no intention that there should be any party at all:

MEG. A party?

Pause

MEG. (her eyes wide) No.

GOLDBERG. You must have one. (He stands) We'll have a party, eh?

(Pinter, 42)

Goldberg's decision is deliberate and he at once assumes command of the lodging house, as it were. He 'stands' and by this deliberate physical action establishes his confident hold.

In *The Birthday Party* anagnorisis, or the dramatic moment when truth is discovered (in the play, it is when Stanley comes to know of the arrival of the two liquidators from the organization);

denouement, or the final unfolding of a plot – the point at which the audience expectation about what will happen in a play is eventually either satisfied or denied (in this play, it is Stanley’s transportation to unknown ‘Monty’); and crisis, or the turning point of a vitally decisive moment (here, it comes when Stanley is ushered in by McCann having been ‘silenced’ and ‘treated-over’) are all attained by an expert dialogic design. The characters plan their conversational strategies to achieve inter-personal relationships which they are supposed to establish. Through a convoluted language pattern, Pinter demonstrates how the characters exchange cryptically meaningful ideas with one another and how the ongoing interaction continues. Austin E. Quigley rightly points out in this regard: “the point to be grasped about the verbal activity in a Pinter play is that language is not so much a means of referring to structure in personal relationships as a means of creating it” (Quigley,66)

It is highly interesting to examine the subtle ways in which dramatic meanings are created by the playwright, dexterously organized, consolidated, grafted and realized in *The Birthday Party*. In Pinter’s drama implied meaning with an undertone of ambiguity is quite manifest in his dialogic design through interactive processes. Pinter has attained in this play a unique dynamism by a clever manipulation of the exchange-pattern of the dialogue. In his lingual system he stresses four different aspects of language – *tension*, *intensity*, *tempo* and *rhythm*. The unit of rhythm in the context of dialogue lies in brief exchanges amongst characters, and their subtle moves are also precisely illustrated through lingual variations. In *The Birthday Party* the terse exchange-structure of the dialogue plays a vital role in creation a tense dramatic atmosphere of menace and the absurd. Changes from one to two-part or three-part exchange structures, in tune with the tension underlying the action, are one of the major linguistic elements in *The Birthday Party*. This causes the proceedings either to follow slowly, or to reach a climax, or to form a contrast. The two-part

dialogue exchange pattern at the beginning, and at the end, stand in sharp contrast to the one-part exchange in the middle. Closely related to rhythm is the variation of dramatic structure that is expressed by tempo. Different rhythmic patterns create changes in the tempo of the dramatic dialogue, either cutting down or speeding up the on-stage activities. The movement of a conversation can be leisurely, because of the length of the responding moves. It can also be quick with the short and brisk responding moves. We may cite an example to illustrate the change in movement:

MEG. Was it nice?  
 STANLEY. What?  
 MEG. The fried bread.  
 STANLEY. Succulent..... What about some tea?  
 MEG. Do you want some tea? .... Say please.  
 STANLEY. Please. (p. 27)

The passage shows that the tempo of this dialogue between Meg and Stanley is quite leisurely. Responses are quite in tune with the questions. But in the following set of dialogue, the movement changes:

STANLEY. You haven’t heard it?  
 MEG. No.  
 STANLEY. (advancing) They’re coming today.  
 MEG. Who?  
 STANLEY. They’re looking for someone.  
 MEG. They’re not.  
 STANLEY. They’re looking for someone. A certain person.  
 MEG. (hoarsely) No, they’re not.  
 STANLEY. Shall I tell you who they’re looking for?  
 MEG. No.

(Pinter, 33-34)

Here the tempo of the dialogue has become faster and far too rapid than the preceding quoted passage. The response-move of the exchanges have become very sharp and poignant, revealing linguistically that a tension has been gradually building up, and at the same time, a latent menace is slowly developing over the thematic atmosphere. This is where the language of Pinter's absurd drama vertically cuts the horizontal line of the theme, and the grotesqueness of the dramatic situation establishes itself, having brought about an understandable rapprochement between the form and the content. The moment Meg breaks the news to Stanley that two visitors are about to arrive, Stanley loses his cool – objectively demonstrated by a carefully delved dialogic design:

STANLEY. I don't believe it.

MEG. It's true.

STANLEY. (moving to her) You're saying it on purpose.... (grinding his cigarette) when was this? .... who are they? ..... Didn't he (Petey) really you their names? (pacing the room) Here? They wanted to Stanley: come?..... It's a false alarm. A false alarm. (He sits at the table).

(Pinter, 30-31)

All Stanley's action like excitedly moving to Meg, grinding his cigarette, pacing the room are significant dramatic language to denote the suppressed menace and mounting tension in Stanley. His sitting at the table, as he does so, indicates beyond doubt that Stanley is nervous and frightened too. When, after the arrival of the two strangers, Stanley gathers from Meg that one of them is called Goldberg, he silently responds by again sitting slowly at the table:

STANLEY. Then what are they? Come on. Try to remember.

MEG. Goldberg.

STANLEY. Goldberg?

MEG. That's right. That was one of them. (Stanley slowly sits at the table).

(Pinter, 45)

Stanley's gesture upholds his utter helplessness and defeat, creating a superb theatre dialogue. When asked by Meg if he knows them, Stanley avoids the pointed question and maintains silence.

Do you know them?

Stanley *does not answer*.

Stan, they won't wake you up, I promise.

Stanley sits still.

They won't be here long. Stan.

Stanley sits still.

(Pinter, 44-45)

Here the dialogue has been masterly handled by the dramatist. "They won't wake you up" is an example of a subtle irony. For Goldberg and McCann do wake Stanley up from his slumber, in the make-believe world he has slipped into. Similarly, irony is struck in "they won't be here long," for, in actuality, even in their short stay in the lodge, the twosome would get Stanley "reorientated" for good. Stanley no more is to remain a nonconformist when he is taken to the mysterious "Monty". The dramatic sequence conveys to the audience that the mention of the name Goldberg has unnerved and unsettled Stanley – one of Pinter's remarkable strategies to uncover nakedness.

Dialogic design is a crucial factor to recognize in exploring Pinter's theatrical stratagems, and having provided ways of enjoying and appreciating *The Birthday Party*, though more often than not in a non-explicatory manner. When the play was first presented in England and also in the United States most of the spectators, ordinary ones as well as the academics, tumbled against the incomprehensibility of

actions and speeches. Yet they did not fail to notice that the play created “sop riveting a world of its own” (Dukore, 02) with a distinctive and rash dramatic idiom that they resolved to decode Pinter’s theatrical message. A bell was tolled over *The Birthday Party* in introducing and welcoming an altogether new language-oriented drama, hitherto unrealized. *The Birthday Party* launched a new drama of subtle sensibility, underlined by the menace and the absurd, where form and content are expertly welded into a consolidated composite unit, so much so that the effect becomes almost akin to that of poetry – a wholeness and universality of perfection of a highly conscious yet articulate poetry, its force being rather aural than visual. Explaining this true-blue poetic quality of Pinter’s drama, the famous Pinter-director Sir Peter Hall comments: “I actually believe that Beckett and Pinter are poetic dramatists in the proper sense of the word: they have a linear structure and a formal structure which you’d better just observe – don’t learn it wrong, don’t speak it wrong, you can’t, you mustn’t” (Scott, 48).

*The Birthday Party* often attains poetic quality in communicating feelings, emotions and experiences of its characters. Pinter’s acting career has helped him in writing dialogue marked by virtuosity and excellent verbal control. When Petey introduces Stanley to Goldberg in Act II, the latter reminisces poetically: “Humming away I’d be, past the children’s playground. I’d tip my hat to the toddlers, I’d give a helping hand to a couple of stray dogs, everything came natural. I can see it like yesterday. The sun falling behind. The dog stadium. Ah!” (Pinter, 53). Here the meaning and the dramatic effect are closely related to the evocative power of words, which is akin to poetry. One of the undeniable influences on Pinter is that of T.S. Eliot, an earlier pioneer playwright who experimented in dramatic forms during the first half of the twentieth century, especially in dramatic language to an appreciable extent. Eliot’s influence is quite obvious in

repetitions of phrases in a Pinter-play. In *The Birthday Party* Pinter catches hold of a word or phrase and then repeats the same over succeeding sentences, keeping it up in the air almost like a bobbing ball. These chosen words or phrasal idioms, taken together with the aptly pitched intonation of the actor, act as a unit of tonal composition and accordingly create a feeling, a perceptible imagery or reaction in the audience, to infuse into them an appealing communication:

STANLEY. Where’s my tea?  
 MEG. I took it away. You didn’t want it.  
 STANLEY. .... You took it away?  
 MEG. I took it away.  
 STANLEY. What did you take it away for?  
 MEG. You didn’t want it.  
 STANLEY. Who said I didn’t want it?  
 MEG. You did.

(Pinter, 31)

It is not what is spoken literally in the passage that matters, what is important is to comprehend that which remains locked within this lingual exchange, not being communicate on-the-surface, though exercising a weighty bearing on the entire on-stage situation with a strong sense of inadequacy of language. Listening to the dialogue we gather that Stanley is gripped by a definite tension that has made him peevish and woolly. Invisible menace hovers over the exchange of words. Stanley was told initially by Meg that the tea was taken away as he didn’t want it, yet Stanley chose to adopt silly repetitions. Not that he was not aware that he refused to accept the tea earlier, not that he wanted a rational answer from Meg, but that the repetitious dialogue was just a mental process to follow through in shielding him, for the time being, from a disturbing, gnawing fear which has already upset his equipoise since when he heard about the two strangers inquiring after this down and out boarding house. Such a repetitious passage at

once confirms Pinter's notion about the function of a stage dialogue: "A play is not an essay..... Language..... is a highly ambiguous business. So often, below the word spoken, is the thing known and unspoken." Brown, 12-13). Below the words spoken by Stanley Webber remains another world-that of his obscure past-known to himself, but not communicated to the audience. Memory of his past torments him. His repetitions are sure off-shoots of his suppressed unsettling fear. His questions are mere plays to gain time to get hold of himself over his distressing fear. Pinter's dialogue shows his use of language in connection with search, surprise and the misty background of a character. John Russell Brown pertinently observes: "Given that the dramatist is concerned with eventual disclosure here, in describing his characters' 'conversations,' Pinter touches upon the dangerous, or precarious, nature of his plays and their stunning, appalled and held (or arrested) climaxes. From the first world spoken on stage, the hunt is on" (Brown, 19).

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### Cosmopolitanism in Rohinton Mistry's *Family Matters*

Etymologically the word 'Cosmopolitan' derives from Greek *cosmos* (world) + *polis* (city, people, citizenry) which describes a universal love of humankind as a whole, regardless of nation. It stands for citizenship of the world. It refers to a taste or consideration for cultures besides one's own culture of origin. As far as cosmopolitanism is concerned it contains that all humanity belongs to a single moral community. It has also been used to describe a wide variety of important views in moral and socio-political philosophy. The nebulous core shared by all cosmopolitan views is the idea that all human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, do (or at least can) belong to a single community, and that this community should be cultivated. Different versions of cosmopolitanism envision this community in different ways, some focusing on political institutions, others on moral norms or relationships, and still others focusing on shared markets or forms of cultural expression. The philosophical interest in cosmopolitanism lies in its challenge to commonly recognized attachments to fellow-citizens, the local state, parochially shared cultures, and the like. (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). Emphasizing the unity of humankind over its division into different states and peoples, by arguing that humans are destined by Nature to be sociable and live in harmony, Erasmus

pleaded for national and religious tolerance and regarded like-minded people as his compatriots. According to Kant, all rational beings are members in a single moral community. They are analogous to citizens in the political (republican) sense in that they share the characteristics of freedom, equality, and independence, and that they give themselves the law. Their common laws, however, are the laws of morality, grounded in reason (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

Cosmopolitans believe that there is a burden on all the people to cultivate and improve humanity as a whole and to provide enrichment in the best way that they can. This ties into ideas of brotherhood of humanity, and how the human race is one entity that humans must all band together to support. It is a major friend and a necessary element of the human rights movement. As Klitou argues that a cosmopolitan “Human identity” is as necessary for the triumph of human rights, as a European identity is for a political European Union (Wikipedia, the free *Encyclopedia*).

Cosmopolitanism shares some aspects of universalism – namely the globally acceptable notion of human dignity that must be protected and enshrined in international law. Thus, a “cosmopolitan declaration of human rights” would be defined in terms of negatives that no one could disagree upon. In addition, cosmopolitanism calls for equal protection of the environment and against the negative side effects of technological development. A cosmopolitan world would consist of a plurality of states, which would use global and regional consensus to gain greater bargaining power against opponents.

Under the influence of the American Revolution, and especially during the first years of the French Revolution, cosmopolitanism received its strongest impulse. During the years the terms ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘world citizenship’ were often used not as labels for determinate philosophical theories, but rather to indicate an attitude of open-mindedness and impartiality. A cosmopolitan was someone

who was not subservient to a particular religious or political authority, someone who was not biased by particular loyalties or cultural prejudice. Furthermore, the term was sometimes used to indicate a person who led an urbane life-style, or who was fond of traveling, cherished a network of international contacts, or felt at home everywhere. In this sense the Encyclopédie mentioned that ‘cosmopolitan’ was often used to signify a “man of no fixed abode, or a man who is nowhere a stranger (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

The present research paper entitled “Cosmopolitanism in Rohinton Mistry’s *Family Matters*” aims at tracing the cosmopolitan features in India and Canada as depicted in Mistry’s novel *Family Matters*. These features of cosmopolitanism are appearing in literature written in English irrespective of any community. Before we deal with the theme as it appears in the novel it would be in the fitness of things first to encounter with the main events of the *Family Matters*, third novel of Mistry, which was published in 2002 and won the Kiriyaama Pacific Rim Book Prize amongst many other honors.

The story revolves around 79 year-old Nariman Vakeel, a former professor of English whose health is degenerating as a result of Parkinsons (a disease of the nervous system that gets worse over a period of time and causes the muscles to become weak and the limbs to shake). Nariman’s youthful love affair with a Christian woman, which led inadvertently to the death of the Parsi wife, his parents pressured him to marry, haunts him in his declining years and sours his relationship with his morally censorious step-children, Coomy and Jal, who are also his primary caregivers. When they successfully execute a plan to move the burden to his natural daughter, Roxana, her family is forced to adjust their lives and their already strapped finances to his care. Despite the increasing difficulties Roxana’s family faces and the hardships resulting from ill-hatched plans to remedy them, the shift to

their household is a moment of potential. However, the end of the novel contains that moment of potential when Roxana's husband Yezad tries to escape his feelings of guilt over the death of his beloved Hindu employer by retreating into his religion. This escape from emotion and responsibility re-invokes the rule of strict Parsi protocol and is complemented by the family's shift with Nariman back to his original home, the site of so much sadness and tragedy.

In *Family Matters*, Bombay has not only been treated as a native place where he was born but as a cosmopolitan city which is a cultural melting pot ready to accept all sorts of people who are displaced from their natural habitat or nation or birthplace. There is an instance in the novel where Bombay is called a religion. "Bombay is much more than a city. Bombay is a religion" (Mistry,361). When questioned as to how to account for the blemishes, slums or broken sewers and corrupt politicians, the answer is:

I don't think crime or corruption can be called a blemish. More a cancerous tumour. When a person has a cancer in their body, they should bloody well fight it . . . hating the cancer, attacking it with aggressive methods is futile. Holistically, you have to convince, your tumour, with love and kindness, to change its malign to benign one (Mistry,361).

In the words of Rohinton Mistry "Shakespeare is like Bombay. In them both, we can find whatever we need- they contain the universe" (Mistry,252). He goes even to the extent of praising Bombay without reserve-

the beautiful city of seven islands, this jewel by the Arabian sea, this reclaimed land, this ocean gift transformed into ground beneath our feet, this enigma of cosmopolitanism where races and religious live side by side and cheek by jowl in peace and harmony, this diamond of diversity, this generous goddess who

embraces the poor and the hungry and the huddled masses, this dear, dear city now languishes – I don't exaggerate – like a patient in intensive care put there by small selfish men who wanted destroy it because their coarseness cannot bear something so grand so fine (Mistry,215).

There is a classical example in the following situation, when, one evening while Yezad and his shop owner Mr. Kapur were relaxing with glasses of beer and when Yezad had finished, Mr. Kapur pours out some beer from his own glass on to the other's asking him to share from his glass, saying:

you see how we two are sitting here, sharing? That is how people now lived in Bombay. That is why Bombay has survived floods, disease, plague, water shortage, bursting drains and sewers, all the population pressures. In her heart there is room for everyone who wants to make a home here (Mistry,159).

In this passage Mistry demonstrates cosmopolitanism and underlying humanity of a Bombay that, despite all its fanaticism and corruption, provides a haven to all those who drift into the city, regardless of caste, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. Not only do people share homes in Bombay, but in places like Mr. Kapur's shop they are also celebrating all festivals, as a means of acknowledging unity in diversity. "Diwali, Christmas, Id, your Parsi Navroze, Baisakhi, Buddha Jayanti, Ganesh Chaturti everything" (Mistry,159). There is an example of Christmas, which is celebrated by the entire shop owners in their own ways.

The Jai Hind Book Mart featured a barefoot Santa in padmasana, an English translation of the Bhagavad-Gita open in his lap, perched upon his nose were half-moon reading glasses. Rasoi Stainless Steel had an aproned Santa stirring a



large cooking utensil. The Bhagat Opticals Santa wore stylish reflector sun-glasses (Mistry, 304).

In the novel Mr. Kapur expounded on the virtues of a cosmopolitan society and the advantage of celebrating festivals of all faiths and religions. Moreover, there is an argument, put forth by Kapur, which would be Mistry's message to the so-called displaced, alienated, marginalized people. All this is a feeling, which is there in the mind; once the mindset is changed and we choose to establish a sense of belongingness and commitment, a cultural acceptance, or cultural unity can be arrived at. The following passage by Kapur elucidates this powerful opinion. Kapur claimed his love for Bombay was special, far exceeding what a born-and-bred Bombayite could feel. Mr. Kapur said:

It's the difference between being born into a religion and converting to it . . . The convert takes nothing for granted. He chooses, thus his commitment is superior. What I feel for Bombay you will never know. It's like the pure love for a beautiful woman, gratitude for her existence, and devotion for her living presence. If Bombay were a creature of flesh and blood, with my blood type, Rh negative-and very often I think she is-then I would give her a transfusion down to my last drop, to save her life (Mistry, 152).

It is a sense of belongingness that resuscitates and rejuvenates the so-called alienated, deprived, and marginalized people. One more condition is essential and that is a strong sense of trust. The need for trust is explained in the following passage, which is a mundane sight in the daily grind of a city like Bombay:

A train was leaving, completely packed, and the men running alongside gave up. All except one. I kept my eyes on him because the platform was coming to an end. Suddenly he

raised his arms. And people on the train reached out and grabbed them. What were they doing, he would be dragged and killed, I thought! A moment later, they had lifted him off the platform. Now his feet were dangling outside the compartment, and I almost screamed to stop the train. His feet pedaled the air. There he was, hanging his life literally in the hands of strangers. And he had put it there. He had trusted them. More arms reached out and held him tight in their embrace. It was a miracle-suddenly he was completely safe. So safe, I wondered if I had over reacted to the earlier danger. But no, his position had been truly perilous for a few seconds (Mistry, 160).

In this vast expanse of our universe there are people who are ready to reach out and help one another. This phenomenon is amply elucidated when people reach out to help one another as in the train incident:

Whose hands were they, and whose hand were they grasping? Hindu, Muslim, Dalit, Parsi, Christian? No one knew and no one cared. Fellow passengers, that's all they were . . . My eyes were filled with tears of joy, because what I saw told me there was still hope for this great city (Mistry, 160).

Here the hope for the city of Bombay does not mean to relate it to a city only. In the novel Mistry gives another kind's description of the citizens of Bombay. "Bombay makes room for everybody. Migrants, businessmen, perverts, politicians, holy men, gamblers, beggars, wherever they come from, whatever caste or class, the city welcomes them and turns them into Bombayites" (Mistry, 159). It is for the whole planet, which has become a global image. Problems will be there whether one is in Delhi, Bombay or in Toronto or Quebec. This is explicit in the following revelation by Yezad:

His dream for an end to this ape-man commute had led him to apply for immigration to Canada. He wanted clean cities, clean air, plenty of water, train with seats for everyone, where people stood in line at bus stops and said please, after you, thank you. Not just the land of milk and honey, also the land of deodorant and toiletry. (Mistry,137).

Mistry suggests to approach the destination of your heart's desire with an open mind, without high expectation, to approach it with a sense of belongingness and a sense of acceptance. Thus the world shall be a macrocosm of opportunities and wonder. There are instances of Yezad's firm belief in Parsi history and Zoroastrianism and he used to go to the fire temple whenever he was depressed or in doubt. Moreover his bedroom was filled with volumes about Parsi history and Zoroastrianism. So it is faith, which keeps a displaced going.

Mistry's sentiments on the cosmopolitan features are best expressed in Mr. Kapur's observation: "Bombay endures because it gives and it receives. Within this warp and weft is woven the special texture of its social fabric, the spirit of tolerance, acceptance, generosity" (Mistry,159). So it is love, adjustment, accommodation, kindness and a positive attitude of acceptance and belongingness that family, society and nations are built and so shall they flourish.

Like India, Canada has also become conspicuous for its cosmopolitan features. These features are explicitly discernible in the novel. Mistry shows Canada as a multicultural nation in which Canadians are not of any one cultural background, race or heritage. Canadians today reflect a vast diversity of cultural heritages and racial groups. Mistry holds that this multicultural diversity is a result of centuries of immigration. "The generosity of the Canadian dream makes room for everyone, for a multitude of languages and cultures and

peoples. In Canada's willingness to define and redefine itself continually, on the basis of inclusion, lies its greatness, its promise, its hope" (Mistry,249). Mistry also comments on Canada's multicultural policy. It is a "policy that in the beauty of its wisdom did not demand the jettisoning of the old before letting them share in the new" (Mistry,249).

In few, Rohinton Mistry successfully embedded the cosmopolitan features in his novel from micro to the macro without fail. He depicts them deeply and heartily webbed in a nice thread. He gives voices to the feelings and emotions, tears and doubts, hopes and aspirations of the people of India and Canada. It is indeed that both the countries, according to Rohinton Mistry, are a cultural melting pot ready to accept all sorts of people who are displaced from their natural habitat or nation or birthplace. Mistry shows the multi-cultural features of both Canada and India, which reflect a vast unity in diversity of cultural heritages and racial groups.

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