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Shubha Tiwari

**The Female Face of God in the Novels of Paulo Coelho**

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

intimidating, monopolistic and quite unfair.

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

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

The concept of 'purity' becomes very typical when one speaks of women. Purity, chastity, virginity – traditional religions all over the world have burdened the female folk with these heavy ideas. Guilt seems to be a female forte. How often our mindset has been corrupted by pictures of a girl confessing and a man listening to her confessions. Coelho does not shy away from treading into forbidden territories of female purity. He is talking about religion. He is talking about an alternative spirituality. He cannot ignore the all important issue of a woman's purity. Coelho's idea takes a great burden off the shoulders of women. No one is marginalized. Purity is in the mind. Self respect

is the highest incarnation of purity. To live with one man compromising one's own dignity is no purity. There is no nobility in forced suffering. Suffering without a purpose is weakness. Therefore we have a prostitute touching saintly heights in *Eleven Minutes*. Maria's profession does not prevent her from experiencing true love. Similarly in *The Witch of Portobello*, Athena is declared a witch but actually who throw her away are satanic. The following lines that I quote mark the hypocrisy and devilishness of the institution of formal religion. These words are also important because they mark the strength of a woman who can raise her voice.

'A curse on this place!' said the voice. 'A curse on all those who never listened to the words of Christ and who have transformed his message into a stone building. For Christ said: Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Well, I 'm heavy laden, and they won't let me come to Him. Today I've learnt that the Church has changed those words read: 'Come unto me all ye who follow rules, and let the heavy laden go hang!' ... 'I swear that I will never set foot in a church ever again. Once more, I've been abandoned by a family and this time it has nothing to do with financial difficulties or with the immaturity of those who marry too young. A curse upon all those who slam the door in the face of a mother and her child! You're just like those people who refused to take in the Holy Family, like those who denied Christ when he most needed a friend!' (55-56)

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

Coelho's writing directly connotes to spirituality, mysticism,

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

*The Witch of Portobello* by Paulo Coelho is another example where he sets out to resurrect 'fallen women', women who have been cast away from society. He is interested in very fundamental questions like 'what is purity', 'what is justice', 'who can actually deliver justice' etc. The power of one human being or for that matter a group of human beings to pronounce verdict, to declare someone as 'good' or 'bad' is questionable. The question of purity becomes important in connection with establishing the female face of God because a woman is a source of creation. All women are ultimately mothers. All girls are future mothers. This is how religion perceives women. The production house must be pure; only then the product will be good. All human beings identify with their mothers. The figure of 'mother' lies at the core of anyone's consciousness. Therefore, there is this burden of purity. This burden of purity is perhaps the greatest reason why the Western world has drifted away from religion. Women have found it impracticable. Women are the carriers of culture and religion and family traditions. Once women do not identify with a set of religious beliefs, it gets impossible to perpetuate those ideas in practice. This is the reason why new beliefs are required. Every age must have its own interpretation of religion.

There is no problem with an Oriental soul accepting the female face of God. God is worshipped in her various female incarnations throughout the Oriental belt of consciousness. In the Western dogma, God is strictly male. Coelho's effort is to change that. Mother Mary must be included in the trinity. He hopes to engulf the materialistic, dry, hopeless world with the waves of female consciousness. Water, shapelessness, tears, flexibility, generosity, creativity will finally defeat

reason, masculinity, physical power, cruelty, competitiveness and a new world order will be created. That is why there is this deliberate effort to shun away reason. Coelho's world is incomplete without miracles, prophesies, trances, voices, phantoms and so on.

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

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

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

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

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

A flood of tears purified the thief's face; the desire to steal had disappeared.' ([www.paolocoelhoblog.com](http://www.paolocoelhoblog.com) dated 1.10.10 )

This female face of God is evoked basically to generate self-worth and self-respect in people who think that they have fallen or people who have faced big tragedies or people burdened with unspeakable guilt. If we look closely, this will include the whole of present day society. There is lots of unhappiness around. The pressure

to be successful, to be happy, and to be presentable – this pressure has marred the beauty of life. Coelho’s effort is to revive the original sense of wonder in living. These lines are good- ‘Try to feel good about yourself even when you feel like the least worthy of creatures. Reject all those negative thoughts... surrender yourself to dance or to silence or to everyday activities... Everything is worship if your mind is focused on the present moment.’ (Blog: 28.8.2010). The account is further given in the following way:

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

quote, ‘In order for us to understand the powers we carry within us and the secrets that have already been revealed, it was first necessary to allow the surface — expectations, fears, appearances — to be burned away.’ (Blog: 4.10.2010)

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

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

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**Ajai Sharma**

***The Voyeur: A Study of Time in Narrative***

**I**

Etymologically narrative is derived from Latin word 'narrare' (to narrate) and is related to Sanskrit root 'gna' which means to know. Narrative is an attempt to relate in order to know. Narrative tells of a causally related series to events which contribute "to knowledge about human nature (motivation and action), family, society, culture, and history, the individual and the world, dilemmas and conflicts, suffering and bliss, good and evil, laws and possibilities, lifetimes and generations, time and death, the cosmic enigma and human fate" (*Interpretation of Literature*, Block V,22). Narrative that helps us in knowing became itself the object of scrutiny when structuralism focused its attention on it.

Structuralism's preoccupation with narrative can be traced to 1966 when the journal "Communication" published its 9<sup>th</sup> issue. Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes "which was for a long time the main bastion of French structuralism would publish 'Communication'" (*The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, 264) as a journal of the Centre for the Study of Mass Communication. All the luminaries of French structuralism: Barthes, Greimas, Bremond, Metz, Todorov, Genette, and Umberto Eco contributed to the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the journal. If

Barthes wrote the preface, Umberto Eco analyzed Ian Fleming's James Bond novel.

Structuralism tries to apply the principles to linguistics to all fields of knowledge including literature. Levi Strauss applied linguistic insight to the analysis myth and discovered that disparate myths are in fact variants of basic themes. Prop, a Russian formalist discovered limited number of narrative elements and roles that can be combined in various ways to generate infinite number of stories while doing morphological analysis of Russian Folktales. Drawing inspiration from these two stalwarts, in the words of Todorov the narratologists began to discover the 'grammar' of narrative. "The notion of a narrative grammar or logic implies that any given set of narrative structures will display recurrent features that can be identified with recurrent regularities. The grammar is constructed on the basis of such regularities" (*The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*,265).

Gerard Genette classified a host of narrative procedures and elements which are employed in narratives. "Genette's narrative taxonomy expounded in 'Disours du recit', the second part *Figure III* ... (translated by Jane Lewin as *Narrative Discourse* / 1980) promotes new ways of examining and discussing the aesthetics of narrative rhetoric..." (*Interpretation of Literature*, Block V,28). After establishing the distinction between *histoire* and *recit* and narration, Genette concentrates on narrative time. The difference between *histoire* and *recit* which is quiet clear in French is difficult to catch in English translation. In order to understand the distinction between *histoire* and *recit*, we can introduce two concepts: story and discourse. Story here means chronological presentation of events without any anachrony. Discourse means series of events with all anachronies that the writer might like to introduce. For example a crime thriller shall begin with the search for criminal after the crime. The rest of the story shall be told in flashback and flash foreword. The writer of a thriller has written a discourse and the reader can glean story from the written

discourse. The technique of analepsis (flashback) and prolepsis (flash foreword) break the strict chronology of events. Gerard Genette concentrates on this break of chronology and studies it under three categories: order, duration and frequency.

## II

Order is very significant category of narrative analysis. Gerard Genette divides it into two broad categories: Analepsis (Flashback) and Prolepsis (Flash foreword). Both analepsis and prolepsis is further divided into internal, external, heterodiegetic, homodiegetic, completing, mixed and repeating. Internal means that incident occurs within the beginning and the end of the discourse. External means the incident falls outside the discourse. Homodiegetic refers to character that figure in discourse and heterodiegetic refers to characters that fall outside the discourse

The novel *The Voyeur* begins with the departure of Silvia to reflect on her life and ends with the going of Edoardo and Silvia to Edoardo's father to say that they do not want the flat. Edoardo's father has already met with an accident and is bedridden. Edoardo's father who was bedridden in the opening scene of the novel begins to get physiotherapist's visits. It can be a safe guess that the novel does not take more than two months to complete because a plaster on a broken leg is kept only for six weeks. Since the narrative shows the hero influenced by childhood experience, there is extensive use of external and heterodiegetic analepses. The external heterodiegetic analepses are concerned with the mother of hero and the external homodiegetic analepses are about the father of the hero. There is only one internal homodiegetic analepsis that is concerned with his father and his nurse Fausta. There are two instances of internal homodiegetic prolepses and both somehow relate to Silvia and his father, directly or indirectly.

The most important example of external heterodiegetic analepses are about Edoardo's dead mother. External heterodiegetic

analepsis means that it is about the person who does not participate in the first narrative i.e. the story of the novel from the beginning to the end. In his search for unconscious hostility against his father, he is reminded of one childhood incident. Edoardo, the hero, reminisces about his childhood when he develops love for collecting stamps. He requests his mother to get the foreign stamps from the envelope that his father got in his mail. His mother goes to his father's room to collect the stamps, instructing Edoardo to wait for her in her room. Impatient Edoardo tiptoes behind her after a little wait and stumbles upon a scene in his father's room in which his father was making love to his mother. What he saw "looked like a decapitated head" (*The Voyeur*, 133) of his mother "on the desktop" (*The Voyeur*, 133) because the rest of her body was outside his "angle of vision". (*The Voyeur*, 133) He saw his father's hand that was pressing down the head of his mother on the desk. Even as a child, he could sense "a mysterious complicity on her part" (*The Voyeur*, 133) in this scene "because she was not struggling". (*The Voyeur*, 133) Hence "the hand that kept her nailed to the desk was unnecessary" (*The Voyeur*, 133) and she "would have stayed bent down there even without it." (*The Voyeur*, 133) Later in the scene, he slaps his father who comes to give him the foreign stamps. The antipathy that he developed for his father incidentally in his childhood keeps vitiating their relationship. He finds always finds his father a winning rival in all spheres of life

In another example of external heterodiegetic analepsis, Edoardo thinks of Silvia's "elongated oval of a face with grey eyes" (*The Voyeur*, 18) with "an expression of contemplative compassion". (*The Voyeur*, 14) It had always given Edoardo "a sense of déjà vu". (*The Voyeur*, 18) When he tries to recollect when and where he experienced the same expression, he is reminded of the church he would visit with his mother. "Inside, at the end of a nave lined with columns, a huge madonna dressed in white, holding a baby Jesus likewise in white, stood out against the sparkling new gold mosaic of

the apse.” (*The Voyeur*, 18) He found this madonna staring down at him “in an attitude of inexplicable compassion.” (*The Voyeur*, 18) He discovers that Silvia resembles the Madonna of his childhood church. Silvia understands that he adores her as Madonna and finds it difficult to adjust to role of Madonna and that of a wife. It is one reason of Silvia’s running away as she thinks that it is easier to make love like and animal than a madonna.

Chronologically the first instance of external homodiegetic comes to Edoardo’s mind because after his marriage he finds that he should have his independent flat to please his wife Silvia. This instance of analepsis occurs when Edoardo thinks of the death of his mother in his childhood and of the flat that his mother left for Edoardo. (*The Voyeur*, 14) Taking a long jump in time, Edoardo comes to his adult age straight from his childhood and thinks of how he under the influence of protest movement “inspired by some strange feeling of polemical altruism” (*The Voyeur*, 14) renounced the said flat and left it to his father. Now he needs the flat but finds it difficult to ask for it after renouncing it in rebellious mood. Since he believes that Silvia is basically unhappy because they do not have some independent flat, he fails to notice what is obvious even to Faista, the nurse that Silvia is having an affair with his father.

Chronologically the second external homodiegetic analepsis comes in the chapter one when Edoardo remembers the day his father met with an accident. Edoardo is reminded of the incident because this accident changed his relationship with his father. The rebellious Edoardo begins to behave like a son towards his father after his father’s accident. On the day his father met with the car accident, the ramshackle lift was as usual out of order and Edoardo is forced to use stairs to go down. On the flight, he saw a group of persons moving up, “two men carrying the stretcher with the third man lying on it.” (*The Voyeur*, 04) It was his father who was on the stretcher after his car accident. After this incident, Edoardo begins to attend to the daily needs of his father

like preparing breakfast and collecting newspaper for his father. Moreover, the ‘invalidity’ of his father helped in complicating the already tangled relationship between him and his father. Even in bed-ridden condition, his father could defeat Edoardo even in the matters of sex and women

Internal homodiegetic analepsis means that the incident takes place within the first narrative. Many years later, after the death of his mother, Professor Edoardo chances upon a scene in his father’s room. Edoardo one night decides to find out the Bible in his father’s library. As he was reaching out to take the Bible, he heard “a confused sound of voices and realizes that the study door is open a good hand’s breadth.” (*The Voyeur*, 114) First he simply overhears the dialogues between his father and father’s nurse Fausta. Then he finds himself peeping in his father’s room. “Since the door is located in a corner in the study,” (*The Voyeur*, 115) he “has only partial view of the room”. (*The Voyeur*, 115) He cannot see his father but he had “an excellent view of the armchair at the foot of the bed where Fausta has just sat down.” (*The Voyeur*, 115) In the room, he sees Fausta exposing herself to the pleasure of his father. Edoardo discreetly withdraws. Later in the novel, Fausta and Edoardo talk about the scene. Fausta wants to know why Edoardo withdrew from the scene. (*The Voyeur*, 121) As Fausta had seen Edoardo, she was exposing as much for Edoardo as for his father.

Prolepsis is flash foreword. Internal means it takes place before the end of the discourse of the novel. Homodiegetic means that it is concerned with the characters that occur in the first narrative. The first incident also occurs in the first chapter. The incident becomes much more clear if read retrospectively with the knowledge that Silvia has sexual relations with her one time teacher who is now her father-in-law. The incident throws light on the developing relationship between Silvia and Edoardo’s father. Edoardo remembers, “He asks me what the weather’s like, what film I saw yesterday evening with Silvia, where



we ate and so on: but I have impression that he does so out of politeness, without any real interest, or rather, with a curiosity which for unknown reason he attempts to disguise as casualness and indifference.” (*The Voyeur*; 08) Ironically he guesses right but does not understand the meaning of his guess. Instead he concentrates on some other reason for Silvia running away. The incident foreshadows the development sexual relations between Silvia and Edoardo’s father.

The second instance of internal homodiegetic prolepsis really occurs within second analepsis. Edoardo thinks of his renouncing the flat that he got as inheritance from his mother. In a rebellious mood, he gave the flat to his father. At this stage, with uncanny accuracy, his father predicted that he might regret giving up his inheritance. “‘Okay, whatever you want.’ He said, ‘but seeing as you might regret it some day, let’s not put any thing down on paper just for the moment. You give up your property and I’ll go on looking after it in your name.’ ‘But I don’t want to own anything.’ ‘You say that now, but tomorrow you might change your mind.’” (*The Voyeur*; 14) In the beginning Edoardo could not understand what can force him to change his mind about the flat. After meeting Silvia he “discovered the pretty obvious fact that having a place of your own can be an important asset for a young married couple...” (*The Voyeur*; 14) Initially, he hesitates in asking for the said flat. But later in the novel, he asks for the flat saying to his father, “Dad, you remember of course that some years ago I told you I wanted to renounce what I inherited from Mother. You told me the inheritance mainly consists of a flat in our block. Now, given that Silvia wants to have a place of her own, I’m asking you please-if you’ll forgive me for the word play- to renounce my renunciation. I mean to return the flat to me.” (*The Voyeur*; 73) As predicted by his father, he asks his father for the flat who readily give him the flat saying, “It goes without saying that I never took your giving up the inheritance seriously. So all I did was administer the property on your behalf. In other words, the flat is yours.” (*The Voyeur*; 73) However, the flat did not solve the conundrum of his married life.

Duration refer to time taken in describing some incident in the novel. A writer can describe years in sentences or expand the description of a day in pages after pages. Genette divides duration into acceleration and deceleration Acceleration is the process by the novelist increases the speed of the narrative. Since it is not possible to detail every incident in the novel for various reasons, the novelist takes recourse to various types of acceleration like summary and ellipsis. Deceleration is the process of diminishing the tempo of the narrative. Deceleration is achieved by description.

The routine life of Edoardo is disturbed one day when his wife decides to leave him. The narrator simply summarizes the whole incident. Edoardo observes “One morning, Silvia left. She packed the few things she couldn’t do without in a suitcase and left a note saying that at least for the time being she wanted to go and stay with her aunt. This didn’t mean she was leaving me for good: just that she wanted to ‘reflect’ on her life. In fact she added that she would like to see me once a week at our regular Chinese restaurant not far from the flat.” (*The Voyeur*; 27) As per agreement, they keep meeting in the Chinese restaurant. The novelist does not describe each meeting in the restaurant. He again summarizes the three meetings a few words. Edoardo writes, “I’m at the Chinese restaurant waiting for Silvia. This is the third time we’ll have seen each other since she, as I can’t help but describe it, ran away, though she denies having run away and even I can’t imagine what could have made her do so. By now the first violent impulse to know the truth has faded in the face of Silvia’s sweet but obstinate evasiveness.” (*The Voyeur*; 49)

Likewise, the novelist summarizes the replacement of Rita, the nurse of Edoardo’s father by Fausta, the niece of Rita. This replacement takes place so imperceptibly that some time passes before Fausta’s presence is registered. “For some time now my father’s old nurse, Rita, has been replaced by her niece, Fausta. It was Rita who specifically recommended Fausta and although she isn’t really a nurse

my father, now on the road to recovery, seems happy with. . . .” (*The Voyeur*, 58)

Edoardo’s father who is a famous professor of science slowly loses interest in reading for the sake of curiosity and begins to concentrate on specialist reading. Edoardo fails to notice this slow change and reminisces summarily. “I couldn’t say why but it seems that at a certain point in his life my father stopped reading for curiosity and relaxation and concentrated entirely on his specialist publications.” (*The Voyeur*, 64)

Ellipsis is another type of acceleration technique that novelists use. In *The Voyeur*, Alberto Moravia masterly uses what Gerard Genette calls ‘hypothetical ellipses’. The reader becomes aware of hypothetical ellipsis when the writer tries to fill in the gap at some later stage in the narrative. The serene life of Edoardo is disturbed when Silvia, his wife leaves him without assigning any reason of her leaving. This mysterious departure opened the floodgate of conjectures. Edoardo notes that he cannot be certain about the reasons of Silvia’s departure “because probably there’s not just one truth but a number of equivalent interchangeable truths.” (*The Voyeur*, 49) The first explanation that seems logical to Edoardo is “the problem of flat.” (*The Voyeur*, 51) Edoardo has no independent flat to live in and has to adjust in his father’s flat. However, Silvia does not validate this conjecture and slowly and firmly says “The problem of finding a place of our own has got nothing to do with what you call my running away but which actually is merely a result of my wanting to think things over.” (*The Voyeur*, 51) The second guess that Edoardo makes to fill in the ellipsis is that Silvia cannot stand his father and does not want to live with in his father’s flat. Silvia invalidates this guess also. “I haven’t got anything against your father, nothing.” (*The Voyeur*, 56) Finally Silvia offers to fill in the gap and tells Edoardo that she has a crush on some person whom she refuses to name. However, on Edoardo’s insistence Silvia tells him how she and her lover make love. Very

intriguing information that she gives relates to the actual words Silvia and her lover exchange when they make love: “Okay listen: right at the moment of climax he says: ‘Tell me you’re my pig.’ And I have to repeat: ‘Yes, I’m your pig.’” (*The Voyeur*, 96) Edoardo fails to make anything of this piece of information. Much later in the narrative, Edoardo had a sense of déjà vu. He could piece together two incidents separated from each other by “twenty seven years.” (*The Voyeur*, 137)

This, then, is the memory that comes back to me, sharply focused and well organized with all its colours and gestures, as I watched my father sleep. Then, with the sensation of making an important discovery. I remember how, a few days ago at the Chinese restaurant to justify her ‘crush’ on this other man, Silvia said she wasn’t a Madonna, as I insisted on thinking of her, but a pig. And ‘pig’ was the same word my mother panted out twenty seven years before in response to my father’s command. ‘Yes’, she said, ‘I am your pig’”

(*The Voyeur*, 136-7)

At this stage, the hypothetical ellipsis: why did Silvia leave Edoardo was finally filled in.

Deceleration is the process by which an author impedes the speed of the narrative by giving minute details of actions, persons and environment. Deceleration helps in forcing attention on minor details that make up the total effect of the narration. It brings into foreground what is generally relegated to background. In this novel, Alberto Moravia decelerates the story line by description of a day in the life of the hero, Edoardo, by describing actions of characters, and by the description of characters

The novel begins with the chapter “an Ordinary Day in My Life, as Prologue” and details a day from six thirty a.m. when Edoardo

wakes up after “not more than six hours” (*The Voyeur*, 01) of sleep and begins to devote “five or ten minutes to that rare occupation that goes under the name of thinking”. (*The Voyeur*, 01) At “seven o’clock” (*The Voyeur*, 02) that is thirty minutes later, he takes a shower and dresses up. Still, half an hour later, at “seven thirty a.m.” (*The Voyeur*, 04), he goes to collect newspaper from “the kiosk at the corner” (*The Voyeur*, 04) of the block in which he lives and prepares breakfast for his father and administers to other needs of his invalid father till “nine a.m.” (*The Voyeur*, 11). when he goes out to nearby restaurant to have his breakfast. A nine thirty, he leaves for the university where he is a professor of French. At “one a.m.” (*The Voyeur*, 13), he returns from the university and takes his lunch with his father “at a small table set up near his (father’s) bed”. (*The Voyeur*, 13) At “two a.m.” (*The Voyeur*, 13), he along with his wife, Silvia leaves the room of his father “to go to take...siesta” (*The Voyeur*, 17) During siesta, in their bedroom, which is “tucked away in a corner of the block with two windows that face inward on a deserted and silent courtyard” (*The Voyeur*, 17), he and Silvia make love slowly almost up to “three p.m.” (*The Voyeur*, 20) when he goes for an “early afternoon walk”. (*The Voyeur*, 20) At “five p.m.” (*The Voyeur*, 21) he returns home and marks the essays of his students and does other odd jobs about the house till “eight p.m.” (*The Voyeur*, 23) At about eight p.m., he begins to search for his wife, Silvia, in the large flat. At about “nine o’clock” (*The Voyeur*, 24), he leaves his father in the company of his nurse and goes to dinner with his wife “to Chinese restaurant” (*The Voyeur*, 25) At “ten p.m.” (*The Voyeur*, 25), “after dinner” (*The Voyeur*, 25) they usually “go to cinema” (*The Voyeur*, 25) where they every so often make love in the dark. The day ends at midnight with their return from the cinema. The novelist thus describes “a typical day” (*The Voyeur*, 27) in the life of the hero. A typical day begins at six thirty and ends at midnight. The shortest chunk of time that the novelist talks of is half and hour and the biggest chunk is of four hours. By giving the details ranging from thirty minutes to two hundred forty minutes the novelist

manages to focus on the life of the hero and decelerates the progress of the narrative.

The novelist decelerates the narrative still further while he gives the minute details of the preparation of breakfast that Edoardo makes for his father. Describing the narrative in first person singular number, the novelist writes: “So, very carefully, I cut a few slices of bread and slip them into toaster; I put the coffee pot on the burner; I lay the tray with a cup, milk, butter, a carton of yoghurt and what else? Oh yes, the paper napkins. I’m always forgetting the napkins. While the bread toasts and coffee boils, I sit at the table and glance through the papers. Then a smell of hot bread fills the kitchen and the coffee bubbles over; I jump off my chair, turn off the burner, put the toast on a plate, place the two papers sideways across the tray, pick everything up and go out” (*The Voyeur*, 5-6).

The same deceleration can be seen in the description of characters. For example, Edoardo by chance sees a black African woman while he is taking a early evening walk. “I slow my pace to get a better look at her. She’s leaning forward, at a right angle, her breasts pressed against the windowsill. The black of arms, bare to the elbows, contrasts sharply with the white of her angora pullover. She’s young and round her head she has the same ring of short thick curls you sometimes see round the forehead of Roman statues. The nose is small and wide with open nostrils, the mouth set in a capricious ironic expression. Her bright, round eyes are staring at me hard. . . I don’t know what to say next. Watching her, I’m fascinated by an unusual feature of her body. Although she has the bust of a normally shapely woman, behind, bent over the windowsill, I can see the butt of a different and altogether more substantial figure. I’m so distracted by this disproportion between the bust and backside that I don’t say anything for quite a while, searching through my memory for the right epithet to describe the phenomenon. Finally, I have it: ‘Callipyguous’ “ (*The Voyeur*, 36).

Frequency relates to number of times an incident happens or repeated in the novel. Gerard Genette divides Frequency into three types: singulative, repetitive, and iterative. Singulative frequency means that the incident happens once and narrated once. Repetitive frequency means that the incident happens once but narrated many times. Iterative frequency means that the incident occurs many times but narrated once. Gerard Genette's categorization does not include fourth category that I would like to call DUPLICATIVE. By duplicative frequency I mean those incidents that occur more than once and repeated more than once in the narrative.

In *The Voyeur*, duplicative narrative is used extensively. The duplicative technique is used in stumbling on to love making, imitative love making and exhibitionism.

The novelist first develops the voyeuristic theory in reference to one obscene poem by Mallarme. Elaborating voyeuristic literary theory, Edoardo, the hero and the Professor of French literature at an Italian University writes: "Of the many literary theories which, during my lecture, I find myself giving away off-the-cuff to my obtuse and apathetic students with a generosity I later regret and feel ashamed of, there is one that has recently taken shape in my mind with suspiciously neat precision. This is voyeurism that seems to lie at the source of a great deal of fiction writing and obviously cinema too. . . . the voyeur does not fatten on the subject, so much as on its movement or behaviour. What's more, this behaviour must be strictly private, that is it must be such that no one, except a voyeur, could chance to see it without being aware that he is guilty of indiscretion. In other words, and restricting myself to written narrative, as well as having us see what anyone could see, the novelist often has us see what on one could see, unless of course they happen to be a voyeur. . . . This voyeurism of the narrator is often mirrored by the voyeurism of a character in the book. . . ." (*The Voyeur*, 28-9).

Edoardo, the hero, reminisces about his childhood when he develops love of collecting stamps. He requests his mother to get the foreign stamps from the envelope that his father got in his mail. His mother goes to his father's room to collect the stamps, instructing Edoardo to wait for her in her room. Impatient Edoardo tiptoes behind her after a little wait and stumbles upon a scene in his father's room in which his father was making love to his mother. What he saw "looked like a decapitated head" (*The Voyeur*, 133) of his mother "on the desktop" (*The Voyeur*, 133) because the rest of her body was outside his "angle of vision". (*The Voyeur*, 133) He saw his father's hand that pressed down the head of his mother on the desk. Even as a child, he could sense "a mysterious complicity on her part" (*The Voyeur*, 133) in this scene "because she was not struggling". (*The Voyeur*, 133) Hence "the hand that kept her nailed to the desk was unnecessary" (*The Voyeur*, 133) and she "would have stayed bent down there even without it" (*The Voyeur*, 133).

Many years later, after the death of his mother, now Professor Edoardo chances upon another scene again in his father's room. Edoardo one night decides to find out the Bible in his father's library. As he was reaching out to take the Bible, he heard "a confused sound of voices and realizes that the study door is open a good hand's breadth." (*The Voyeur*, 114) First he simply overhears the dialogues between his father and father's nurse Fausta. Then he finds himself peeping in his father's room. "Since the door is located in a corner in the study," (*The Voyeur*, 115) he "has only partial view of the room" (*The Voyeur*, 115) very much like the childhood view between his father and mother. He cannot see his father but he had "an excellent view of the armchair at the foot of the bed where Fausta has just sat down." (*The Voyeur*, 115) In the room, he sees Fausta exposing herself to the pleasure of his father. This scene is voyeuristic at multiple levels. At one level, his father is voyeuristically enjoying Fausta. Edoard comments: "There is long silence. My father says nothing, obviously

he is watching the spectacle of that extraordinary shagginess.” (*The Voyeur*, 116) At another level, Edoardo is being voyeuristic. At third level if we take the voyeuristic theory of literature, the reader is a voyeur. At another level, the novelist is also playing the part of a voyeur

Edoardo apparently impressed by success of his father with women of all ages, unconsciously decided to imitate him in his love making to Fausta and Silvia. Describing his imitation, he says. “I feel myself swept by a violence that is somehow experimental. I jump to my feet, turn to Fausta, grab her by the shoulders, turn her round, still yielding and amazed, bend her violently down at a right-angle over the table, her rump over the edge, cheek squashed down on the marble under the pressure of my hand pressing on her neck. At the same time I try to pull down her trousers and in a conscious imitation of my father, hiss in her ear: ‘Tell me you’re my pig’” (*The Voyeur*, 159).

In another incident, he feels like imitating his father with Silvia when Silvia is leaning on a window sill. He notices that “in this position, the small of her back dips down and her buttocks lift and stick out.” (*The Voyeur*, 178) He thinks of his father and of “the violent and compulsive temptation he’d feel...” (*The Voyeur*, 178) finding Silvia in this position. At this time, Silvia could guess what Edoardo might be thinking as he, probably, “brushed against her” (*The Voyeur*, 178). In both the above cases, Edoardo fails to take his action to logical conclusion because of objections of Fausta and Silvia. Or because he is not Edoardo’s father. What is acceptable behaviour from the father of Edoardo is unacceptable from the first person narrator.

Exhibitionistic scenes are also duplicative. Fausta and Silvia at different times in the novel exhibit for the pleasure of a voyeur like Edoardo and his father. Fausta exhibitionism where he exposes primarily and ostensibly for his father has already been discussed. One point is to note that Fausta knew of the sly presence of Edoardo and she was exposing to Edoardo also. (*The Voyeur*, 121) Before their marriage, Silvia exposes to Edoardo. “Silvia moved to and fro

about the room, doing the most insignificant things with the concentration of the actress who senses she is being watched by a large and attentive audience. She moved to and fro and with every step her flowing yellow skirt flapped around her legs as if in a provocative dance. Finally she stood in the middle of the room and with a brusque gesture, like a marionette, bent down, legs apart, took hold of the hem of her skirt and pulled it up and off over her head... Every now then she would throw me a quick sidelong glance as though to make sure (Edoardo) was still there and not unhappy with the performance” (*The Voyeur*, 93-94).

Chronologically later, Silvia indulges in sly exhibitionism in the Chinese restaurant where husband and wife meet after Silvia’s running away. “She has not got a skirt on today though. Instead she’s wearing a pair of bright red trousers, so tight they seem to be separating the lips of her sex between her legs with a neat, fine cut from which a score of straight creases radiate fan-wise like rays of a rising sun.” (*The Voyeur*, 80) This “not unplanned exhibitionism” (*The Voyeur*, 80) is not lost on Edoardo for whom she is exposing. Silvia is satisfied with her performance very much like previous occasion as Edoardo blurts out: “‘They are so tight, Don’t they bother you?’ Good-humoured and provocative, she answers: ‘Not me, what about you?’” (*The Voyeur*, 80).

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S. K. Agrawal

### **Endangered Indigenous Languages and Traditional Ecological Knowledge**

(According to a rough estimate, at least half of the world's 6500 languages shall become extinct in the next century. The endangerment of languages has generally been the domain of academic linguists and anthropologists, the international awareness of this impending linguistic catastrophe is growing; this is obvious from the fact that development organizations are also becoming involved in the campaign to preserve the dying indigenous languages. The death of a language is the death of a culture and the extinction of a language means the end of a knowledge system including its rich bio-diversity and ecological system. The death of a language marks the loss of yet another piece of cultural uniqueness from the mosaic of our diverse planet, and is therefore a tragedy for the heritage of all humanity. Language death, thus, can be compared to species extinction; the same metaphors of preservation and diversity can be invoked to canvas support for biodiversity and language preservation programmes.

Linguistic diversity and bio diversity are correlationally and causally related. Most of the world's mega biodiversity is in areas under the management or guardianship of indigenous/tribal peoples. Most of the world's linguistic diversity resides in the small languages of indigenous/tribal peoples. Much of the detailed knowledge of how to maintain biodiversity is encoded in their language. Through killing

them, we kill the prerequisites for maintaining biodiversity.

Traditional ecological knowledge, often referred as TEK, is embedded in the tribal languages. TEK is a culturally and spiritually based way in which indigenous people relate to their ecosystems. This knowledge is founded on generations of careful observation within an ecosystem of continuous residence and represents the clearest empirically based system for resource management and ecosystem protection. Tribal/native societies knowledge surpasses the scientific and social knowledge of the dominant society in its ability to provide information and a management style of environmental planning. Indigenous peoples play an important role in the maintenance of biodiversity and that the maintenance and development of their languages are related to the maintenance and development of biodiversity.

The present article address indigenous language endangerment in the Indian context and how it is going to prove a tragedy for the heritage of all humanity as it will deprive the mankind from the practical ecological knowledge stored in these local/native/tribal languages. The paper also pleads that there is a need to eradicate the occidental scientists biases working against the indigenous epistemologies, philosophies and ways of 'doing science' reducing them to 'local wisdom' or 'ethno-sciences'. This can happen only when our academic knowledge becomes part of the indigenous languages.)

If during the next century we lose more than half of our languages, we also seriously undermine our chances for life on Earth. From this perspective, fostering the health and vigour of ecosystems is one and the same goal as fostering the health and vigour of human societies, their cultures, and their languages. We need an integrated bio- cultural approach to the planet's environmental crisis. (UNESCO 2003: 44)

The observation encapsulated in UNESCO's report bring out two very significant facts- that linguistic diversity and biodiversity are

correlationally and causally related, and the second one is that an integrated bio-cultural approach to the planet's environmental crisis also requires fostering the health and vigour of languages as they are the emblems of the human societies who make use of them.

Each language encapsulates a vision of the world, when it is gone, it is an incalculable loss. The more we can preserve of linguistic diversity, the better for the health of mankind. "It is exactly the same argument as preserving the ecology of the world, the plants and the animals." (David Crystal; *The Hindu*, 17 Oct., 2004). Some monolingual English speakers would have us believe that linguistic diversity is incompatible with the juggernaut of inevitable progress that requires smooth international communications across national boundaries; this is simply not the case with the indigenous/ tribal people who are functionally tri-or quadric – lingual, speaking an ethnic or tribal mother tongue inside the home, a different language in the local market town, conversing in the national language at school or in dealings with the administration and often using an international language in dealings with the outside world.

While the origin of the extra ordinary diversity of human languages is intertwined with the evolution of cognition and culture, the spread of modern language families is a direct result of historical population movement and migrations across continents and the colonization of new geographical and environmental zones. Human languages are not evenly distributed across the world: there are relatively few in Europe compared to an abundance in the Pacific.

There are four solid reasons for supporting, preserving and documenting endangered languages. First, each language is a celebration of the rich cultural diversity of our planet; second, each language is an expression of a unique ethnic, social, regional or cultural identity and world view; third, language is the repository of the history and beliefs of a people; and finally, every language encodes a particular subset of fragile human knowledge about agriculture, botany, medicine and ecology.

Indigenous/ tribal languages are more than grammar and words. The tribal languages are a mine of unique indigenous terms for local flora and fauna that have medicinal and ritual value. Much of this local knowledge is falling into disuse as fluency in the national language increases. When children cease to speak their mother tongue (i.e., indigenous language), the oral transmission of specific ethno- botanical and medical knowledge also comes to an end.

Linguistic diversity is an integral component in ecological stability and the fabric of cultural life, and we should remember that the evolution of a species or a language takes much longer than its extinction. Languages, like species, adapt to reflect their environment. The Bhili language (the Bhil languages are group of Western Indo-Aryan languages spoken by some six million Bhils in Western, central and by small numbers, even in far Eastern, India. They constitute the primary languages of the southern Aravali range in Rajasthan and the western satpura range in Madhya Pradesh. The Bhil languages, which comprise Adiwasa Garasia languages, Bareli language, Bauria language, Bhilali language, Bhili language, Bhilori language, Chodri language, Dhodia language, Dubli language, Dungra Bhil language, Gamit language, Mawchi language, Pardhi language, Rajput Garasia language, Rathawi language, Vasavi Bhil, etc. form a link between the Gujarati language and the Rajasthani languages spoken in the tribal sub plan area where farming animal husbandry are the sole occupations of the people, have semantically distinct verbs for which there may be no equivalents in the global or the most advanced language of the world. For example, 'Mori' and 'Rahe' mean 'rope' in English. 'Mori' and 'Rahe' however, are distinct from each other. 'Rahe' simply means 'rope' where as 'Mori' means the string put around the mouth of the calf to control it.

Likewise, the Thangmi language spoken in a highly mountainous region where topography is challenging, has four semantically distinct verbs that are translated into English as "to come". Yusa, "to come from above (down the mountain)".

Wangsa, “to come from below (or up to mountain)”.

Kyelsa, “to come from level or around a natural obstacle”, and

rasa, “to come from unspecified or unknown direction”

(Mark Turin : 2005)

A language thus mirrors ecology, and ecology reflects the linguistic and cultural form of a people inhabiting a special niche. The languages and cultures of the millions of indigenous peoples are in part endangered because their traditional habitats and ecological niches are now under threat.

Researches on language endangerment point to an intriguing correlation: language diversity appears to be inversely related to latitude, and areas rich in languages also tend to be rich in ecology and species. Both biodiversity and linguistic diversity are concentrated between the tropics and in inaccessible environments, such as the hilly regions, while diversity of all forms tails off in deserts. Around the world then, there is a high level of co-occurrence of flora, fauna and languages, and humid tropical climates as well as forested areas are especially favourable to biological and linguistic diversification.

Most of the world’s linguistic diversity resides in the small languages of indigenous people. Much of the detailed knowledge of how to maintain biodiversity is encoded in their languages. The indigenous and ethnic people of the world have learnt to live in most hostile environmental conditions in this universe. The most interesting feature associated with the indigenous people is that they live in localities which are immensely rich in biodiversity. It is estimated that about 300 million indigenous people are living in the world; out of which nearly half, i.e. 150 millions are living in Asia, about 30 millions of which are living in Central and South America and a significant number of them is living in Australia, Europe, New Zealand, Africa and Soviet Union. These ethnic and indigenous people speaking varied languages have played a vital role in conservation of environmental management and development process as they possess traditional knowledge which

has been useful in Eco-restoration. It has been noticed that these people know how to live in harmony with nature.

In India, 68 million people belonging to 227 ethnic group, and comprising 573 tribal communities derived from six racial stocks namely – Negroid, Proto- Australaid, Mongoloid, Mediterranean, West Breachy and Nordic exists in different parts of the country. The indigenous people live in the forests/ vicinity of forests and have managed and conserved the biodiversity of their localities since long. They utilize wild edible plants – both raw and cooked (the flower and fruits are generally eaten raw where as tubers, leaves and seeds are cooked). They also utilize forest produce, forest timber and fuel- wood. They have been living in forest since ages and have developed a kind of affinity with forests.

India is a country with larger ethnic society and is quite rich in biodiversity. There are 45,000 species of wild plant out of which 9,500 species are ethno botanically important species. Of these 7500 species are in medicinal use for indigenous health practices. About 3900 plant species are used by tribals as food (out of which 145 species comprise roots and tubers, 521 species of leafy vegetables, 101 species of bulbs and flowers, 647 species of fruits), 525 species are used for fiber, 400 species are used as fodder, 300 species are used in preparation and extraction of chemicals which are used as naturally occurring insecticides and pesticides. 300 species are used for extraction of gum, resins, dyes and perfume (Arora: 1991).

In addition to these, a number of plants are used as timber, building material and about 700 species are culturally important (from moral, cultural, religious, aesthetic and social point of view). Indian sub- continent is one of the twelve mega- centres of biodiversity representing two of the eighteen hot spots of biological diversity, one in Western Ghat and the other in North – Eastern Himalaya (Zeven and Zhikovsky: 1973). Floristically 141 endemic genera belonging to over 47 families of higher plants are found in India. In India 11.95% of the worlds’ biodiversity has been conserved by people in many



ways (Arora: 1997). Botanical survey of India has reported that 46,214 plant species of global flora are found in India; of these 17,500 represent flowering plants. Thirty seven of these are endemic and are found in the North – East India (Arora: 1997).

Many plants such as Tulsi, Amra, Bilva are conserved in their natural habitats by the tribals due to their magico-religious belief. They believe that gods and goddesses reside in them. The indigenous people have conserved several plants and endangered cultivars of agricultural crops such as rice, maize, millets, grains, fruits and vegetables which have originated under diverse agro-ecological climates in north-east, central and peninsular region of India. The Indigenous people follow environmental conservation rule in harvesting edible plants which establishes ecological prudence. Tubers of edible plants like those of *Dioscorea* spp. are harvested when the leaves of the vine turns yellow and has physiologically matured. There are plant species used by tribals as antidote of snake-bite and scorpion sting (e.g. rhizome); others are used for orthopaedic treatment (e.g. *Vanda tessala*); some others are used as medicinal herbs (e.g., *Sida acuta*) to combat diseases such as muscular pain, headache, fever, body swelling, etc. Tribal people also prepare decoction from the roots of *Curculigo orchoides*, *Bombax ceiba* to cure white discharge in urine of women and this has received a wide acceptance.

The ethnic people of India have also played a vital role in preserving bio-diversity of several virgin forests and have conserved several flora and fauna in sacred grooves; otherwise they would have disappeared from natural eco-system. The sacred groves are the natural forests located in North-East, Central and Peninsular India. The interference of all human activities is prohibited in sacred groves. A nutritional evaluation of some 200 wild plant species by CSIR has revealed that the tribals who still live in undisturbed forest areas and practice traditional food habits (consumption of wild cultivars and food varieties found in the forest in different seasons) lead a more healthy life, free from diseases.

It is thus, obvious that India is rich in biodiversity. The indigenous people have helped in the conservation of this bio-diversity. The need of the hour, however, is that efforts be initiated in both vertical and horizontal directions. Conservation of diversity, (inclusive of linguistic diversity), sustainable management, propagation of valued flora are the areas to be paid attention to. Therefore, linkages are to be established among the various disciplines such as ecology, biology, botany, biometrics, bio-stat, linguistics, etc. If these disciplines could not be made to work from one platform, the mankind would be deprived of the advantages of diversity (bio-diversity and linguistic diversity) and that would lead to an alarming situation.

To date, there are no active projects on languages and livelihoods in the country that interweave biological and cultural diversity with the aim of building sustainable futures for disadvantage indigenous/tribal communities. The initiation of programmes aiming at the promotion of equality and empowerment of vulnerable indigenous people for enhanced social security and reduced conflict – shall pave the way towards the sustenance of linguistic, cultural and ecological diversity.

The proof of dominance and tendency of circumstantial linguistic assimilation is evident in the data of indigenous languages, such as Gondi, the language of Gonds, the tribal community in southern India down the Vindhya, to cite for example. In 2001, among the speakers of Gondi, the proportion of bilinguals and tri-linguals was 42.34 percent and 6.31 percent respectively. Gondi is spoken in more than one state, though the habitat of gonds is somewhat geographically contiguous. The language is dominated by the respective language of the state of domicile and in the process the gonds lose their own tongue. The scenario applies to almost all the tribal languages, most of which are on the verge of extinction.

Our discussion provides some indications linking bio-diversity and linguistic diversity; it proposes that the maintenance and development of tribal languages are related to the maintenance and

development of biodiversity. It also suggests that this is high time we took measures to initiate some concrete programmes/ projects aiming at preventing language endangerment. Language revitalization campaigns must be launched to increase the prestige, wealth and power of the speakers of endangered indigenous languages to give them a strong presence in the education system and to provide them with a written form to encourage literacy and improve access to electronic technology. Linguistic diversity is, after all, the human store of historically acquired knowledge about how to use and maintain some of the world's most vulnerable and biologically diverse environment. Bio-cultural development projects need to involve and mobilize communities to build positive values for indigenous languages.

A related question is whether academic languages should become part of the indigenous languages. This should not be reduced to a technical question of finding the best indigenous word for 'cell' or 'atmosphere', but requires discussion of the ideological implications when it is assumed that the introduction of what counts as academic knowledge reasoning and 'truths' is good.

Indigenous people, anthropologists and linguists have questioned this truth but their efforts were branded as ethno-academic for instance, ethno-mathematics, ethno-biology, ethno-medicine and ethno-astronomy. But why is some knowledge classified as 'ethnic' in contrast to 'pure' knowledge as in 'pure' mathematics?

Now a – days, 'ethno' is used in a quite liberal way (...), in order to indicate that the investigation of a particular field of study (as biology or astronomy), is made from the perspective of and based on the knowledge of traditional non-occidental society (Urton 2003:21).

By classifying non-occidental knowledge as 'traditional' or 'local wisdom', it is fixed in time and space. At the same time, words like 'abstract', 'neutral', 'pure science' or 'universal knowledge' hide the fact that all knowledge is produced by somebody, at a certain time in history and at a certain place in history. By defining academic knowledge as time- and spaceless, western scholars are trying to

hide their own philosophical foundations (Urton 2003, 21). What is needed, therefore, is that the occidental scientists' biases working against the indigenous epistemologies, philosophies and ways of 'doing science' reducing them to 'local wisdom' or 'ethno-sciences' must be done away with, and indigenous knowledge be recognized as much science based and as much a technology as any other more recent system of knowledge. This, however, may not be possible unless our academic language becomes part of the indigenous languages.

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## Indian English Fiction Today

With economic globalisation, consumerism, westernisation, market-based economy, ICT, mobile technology, deterritorialisation of physical boundaries and Cybercrimes becoming common place phenomena, human experiences seemed to have undergone significant transformation in almost all walks of life be it culture, cinema, literature, sociological institutions, legal frameworks, or other institutional structures. The influence of globalisation is so engaging that the erstwhile celebrated conventions in art, literature, cinema and other forms of human representation are now being replaced by a different set of concerns in the name of celebrating postmodernism. The idea of celebrating the postmodern differences is so powerful that tradition seems to have been lost in the remains of past. Instead of preserving the pastness of the past and its presence, the Indian English Fiction today has taken an altogether different course. Taking a sharp departure from the traditional Indian literature guided by the typical 'Indian Sensibility', the postmodern Indian English fiction today is ignoring the inclusive representation.

Going down the memory lane, the towering figures of Indian English Fiction like Raja Rao, Mulkraj Anand, R.K.

Narayan and Kamala Markandaya had a strong commitment to expose the harsh realities of life to effect the desired transformation in society. Nationalism, partition, poverty, peasantry, subjugated women, rural-urban divide, East-West encounter, feudal practices, casteism and communalism were some of the themes quite closer to their heart. Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Kamala Markandaya are deified as path-breakers of Indian writing in English for their portrayal of contemporary Indian life in a truthful manner. If Raja Rao was upheld as "an Indian writer using mysticism to explore the spiritual unity of east and west" (The Guardian), R.K. Narayan was acclaimed by V.S. Naipaul for his interest in "the lesser life that goes on below: small men, small schemes, big talk, limited means: a life so circumscribed that it appears whole and unviolated, its smallness never a subject for wonder, though India itself is felt to be vast" (The New York Times, May 14, 2001). Similarly, Mulkraj Anand and Kamala Markandaya are revered for "Anand (was) to Indian people what Anton Chekhov was to Russians: a profound interpreter of their lives, an analyser of their deepest conflicts, a verbaliser of their agonies" (Satchidanand) and for the dominant theme of Markandaya being "the intersection of rural and urban life in India and the unrealized dreams of peasants seeking their fortunes in the factory" (The New York Times, May 28, 2004). Besides, the partition narratives present a harrowing picture of the consequences of separation so much so that an entire generation had to bear that stigma for one reason or the other. In an essay written in 1989, Anita Desai is all praise for Indian English Fiction of those days when she comments:

The changing landscapes of life, politics, geography, hunger, love, are explored in contemporary Indian fiction, as in literature of the country's past.... A character in R. K. Narayan's story is both "from far away" and going "far away again" not unlike Indian authors today... Indian

authors are impelled by a knowledge of the past and a visionary stance toward the present; they take keen notice of the struggles.” (Desai 2006)

Taking a departure from the first generation of Indian English novelists, the Postmodern Indian English novelists have concentrated on an entirely new-fangled set of themes which are as wide-ranging and complex as the life in the age of globalisation is. Engrossed with the emerging issues like globalisation and subsequent multiculturalism, postfeminism, cyber-feminism, queer theories, cultural conflicts, diaspora sensibility, glamour, consumerism, commodification, BPOs, upward mobility and consequent erosion of ethical values, and transforming public sphere, the present generation of novelists seems to have buried down the erstwhile fundamental issues. It is in this context that the present paper aims at exploring the range of themes undertaken by the postmodern Indian English writers.

‘Postmodernism’ in itself is a complex phenomenon as it is neither a complete negation nor an acceptance of modernism. Merriam Webster’s Dictionary defines Postmodernism as “of, relating to, or being any of various movements in reaction to modernism that are typically characterized by a return to traditional materials and forms (as in architecture) or by ironic self-reference and absurdity (as in literature)” or “of, relating to, or being a theory that involves a radical reappraisal of modern assumptions about culture, identity, history, or language” (Merriam-Webster). Holding the realities to be plural and relative, it involves the belief that most of the seeming realities are only social constructs, as they are relative and subject to change with the temporal or spatial changes. Postmodernism emphasizes the role of language, power relations, and motivations and is against the sharp distinctions such as male versus female, straight versus gay, white versus black, and imperial versus colonial (Wikipedia). Perhaps, taking clue from the

generalised definition of the term, postmodern Indian English writers have taken excessive advantage and liberty to evade even the key social concerns like poverty, debt-ridden farmers, and underprivileged sections of society. The postmodernist discourses have made the issues of identity and nationality as all the more complex. It is quite amazing that even the novelists who are being conferred the coveted prizes like Nobel, Booker or Pulitzer have now no ink left for the portrayal of poverty which brings India disgrace for it being the home of the largest number of poor people. Present generation of Indian novelists in English seemed to have travelled far from a rich literary heritage which championed the cause of even the most underprivileged in the novels like *So Many Hungers* and *Untouchable*. Apart from it, to hide their apathy, the novelists like V.S. Naipaul who is held in high regard by the countrymen, shun India with harsh satiric remarks like “Indians defecate everywhere” (Naipaul 1964, 74), and “No other country I knew had so many layers of wretchedness, and few countries were as populous... country where, separate from the rest of the world, a mysterious calamity had occurred.” (Naipaul 2003, 1)

Cross-border migrations being common during colonial/postcolonial period, and more frequent during the reforms period, there are scores of Indian diasporic writers including Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Nirad C. Choudhury, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, M.G. Vassanji, Farrukh Dhondy, Amit Chaudhury, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, to name only a few who have lured the readers and academia across the world by producing the literature depicting typical diasporic sensibility among the émigré and expatriates. Their works capture the essential diasporic complexities by reflecting upon Jacques Lacan’s concept of mimicry which “reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage...it is

not a question of harmonising with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare” (The Location of Culture, 121). This mimicking tendency goes hand in hand with other concepts like interstice, hybridity or liminality resulting into diasporic ambivalence characterised by love-hate relationship with the native or alien culture, Freudian heimlich-unheimlich dichotomy where ‘heimlich’ signifies “pleasures of the hearth” while ‘unheimlich’ signifies “terror of the space or race of the other” (Nation and Narration, 2) further leading to the generalised politics of home and abroad. The portrayal of nostalgia for the native culture is beautifully contrasted with Indian diaspora’s temptation towards the glamourised Western World. Meanwhile, the double consciousness of the Indian diaspora abroad, like other diasporas, is “not merely double, but a reality that involves the crossing of an indeterminate number of borderlines, one that remains multiple in its hyphenations” (Minh-ha, 121). The Indian diasporic literature has been quite rewarding for the authors of Indian origin and the compatriots because it fetched Nobel Prize for V.S. Naipaul, Booker for Salman Rushdie and Kiran Desai and Pulitzer for Jhumpa Lahiri.

The novels like *Midnight’s Children*, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *Such a Long Journey*, *The Palace of Illusions*, *Desirable Daughters*, *Inheritance of Loss*, *A Suitable Boy*, *The Assassin’s Song*, *Difficult Daughters*, *English*, *August*, *The God of Small Things*, *The White Tiger*, *One night @ Call Center*, *Revolution 2020*, and many others established new canons in Indian writing in English. First two books in the list i.e. *Midnight’s Children* and *A House for Mr. Biswas* made India take pride in the authors of Indian origin who could sense the essential predicaments of Indians at certain points of history i.e. one during the independence and consequent partition, and another during the colonial days of utter

poverty and deprivation which made people sign the bonds for Indentured labour. In spite of the fact that the whole oeuvre of the two celebrated writers is derivative of their Indian experience, the reader finds the characteristic elements of empathy, concern and commitment for the real issues troubling ordinary Indians (which were the guiding principles for the first generation of Indian English novelists) lacking in great measure. In addition to that, the Indians had to reconsider their sentimental approach to these writers with the publication of Naipaul’s Indian Trilogy whose titles—*An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilisation* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* signify the sarcastic attitude of the novelist towards the land of his ancestors.

With the changing Indian realities in the context of globalisation and immigration, national identity as well as the literature is bound to change. We have emerged from the darkness of illiteracy to near universalization of elementary education: from darkness of superstition and colonial subjugation to the realisation of ‘selfhood’; from the trauma of partition to the celebration of multiculturalism and inter-culturalism, from the hegemony of caste-based hierarchy to *sanskritisation* and upliftment of *dalits* and subalterns; from a sluggish economic growth rate to a resilient growth rate; from under-developed country to an emerging nation; from the borrower of technology to the domineering status in science, technology and software engineering; from a country of indentured labourers to a capable diaspora abroad and one of the most attractive foreign direct investment destination; and from restricted access to transport, communication and career options to a massive road and rail network (along with metro trains, bullet and Duronto trains) and easy access to telecommunication and web-services; from a limited number of English language speakers to India now taking pride in hosting probably the largest number of industry-ready professionals who are proficient in both spoken

and written English, besides phenomenal transformation in every walk of life. Now, “India is big and India is young. Its size and its demographics, together with its growth potential, have made it a fashionable market. Marketers from around the world and within India are betting big on these two aspects of the country...” (Sinha 157). Erstwhile begging bowl is now identified as a nation already ‘emerged’ and as one of the fastest growing economy; previously agriculture based economy is now gearing towards more sophisticated service-led economy; the agenda of self-sufficiency and over-reliance on indigenous products are now replaced by global competence and consumerist practices of open-market; the decadal growth of female literacy rate has surpassed the male literacy rate; and Indian culture as a whole seemed to have undergone phenomenal transformation. Similarly, the social sector has also shown tremendous growth during eleven five-year plans and the erstwhile vulnerable sections like women, unorganised labour, farmers, scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, and backward classes are now given importance so much so that they are not only provided with insurance cover, finance packages or reservation in jobs, but also with the confidence that they now hold the important political and administrative posts at national and state levels. Further, the eight Millennium Development Goals and targets are largely contributing in eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; universal primary education; gender equality and women empowerment; reduction of child mortality; improvement in maternal health; combatting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; environmental sustainability; and most importantly, global partnership for development. (www.un.org.)

Now, it is the time when ‘*Sanskritisation*’, consumerism and commoditization characterise Indian sociology. M.N. Srinivas’s concept of ‘*Sanskritisation*’ in Indian context denotes “the process by which a low Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high

and frequently, “twice-born” caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community” (Jayapalan 428). Similarly, globalisation and consequent rise of Indian middle class which is estimated to touch 267 million in next five years (National Council for Applied Economic Research, 2010) has literally deconstructed the typical Indian way of life by giving more importance to consumerism, commoditization and Epicureanism. “Interestingly, as per NCAER findings, the middle class that represents only 13.1 per cent of India’s population currently owns 49 per cent of total number of cars in India, 21 per cent of TVs, 53.2 per cent of computers, 52.9 per cent of ACs, 37.8 per cent of microwaves and 45.7 per cent of credit cards.” (The Economic Times, Feb. 6, 2011)

Erstwhile sacrosanct values like austerity, self-restraint and life with limited means are now considered old-fashioned. Now, we are in the blind race of accumulating more and more wealth and consuming the materialistic pleasures to the every possible extent. The emerging realities signify that “there is an inclusion for some and an exclusion, or marginalisation, for many. There is affluence for some and poverty for many. There are some winners and many losers. It would seem that there are two worlds that co-exist in space even if they are far apart in well-being” (D’Costa, xiii). If this is what we call transformation then there is nothing wrong in the new generation of writers like Chetan Bhagat (IITian turned banker turned writer), Aravind Adiga, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Suketu Mehta presenting to us the rural-urban divide, consumerism, commodification, glittering metropolitan culture, upward mobility, spell of westernization, openness in relations, and changing principles guiding our ethics and morals.

Life style has now become as fast as twenty-twenty cricket, social institutions have become quite fragile, our goals have become

as short lived as a puff of cigarette, fashion and glamour as essential as air to breathe, and life without cellphones and laptops unthinkable. According to the latest report of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, India has the remarkable tele-density of 70.89% out of which 67.98% subscribers use cellphones or wireless sets and only 2.91% use wire-line phones and Broadband subscription has reached to 11.87 Million in March 2011 from 11.47 Million in Feb. 2011 (Press Release No. 35/2011). In the age of Orkut, Facebook, Google and other popular sites, we are proud to have more friends on social networking sites than in real life. With an obsession of chatting, surfing, tweeting, mailing, e-matrimonial, e-invitations, e-governance, e-banking e-ticketing and e-everything, we have lost community spirit, respect for social institutions and celebrated Indian legacy.

So, if we consider Literature as subject to change with socio-political and economic pressures and refer to C.S. Lewis for whom “Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become” (Holmer 75) Postmodern Indian English Fiction is very much close to that definition of literature when it is termed either as ‘twitterature’ or ‘glitterature’<sup>1</sup>. Indian chicklit novels (following the Chick lit genre popularised by Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary*) including Rajashree’s *Trust Me*, Swati Kaushal’s *Piece of Cake*, Varsha Dixit’s *Right Fit Wrong Shoe* and *Xcess Baggage*, and Shobha de’s Novels present to the readers a spicy flavour of life. Similarly, the feminist literature has evolved with a new set of terminology under the postfeminist approach. The women issues are now discussed with a preconceived notion that no two women could have one set of problems and so any attempt to reach to a consensus regarding common issues of woman, would be a futile effort. Ironically, on the one hand cyber-feminism is debated in

the context of Donna Haraway’s “A Manifesto for Cyborgs”, while on the other hand ecofeminism is now being revived afresh.

Moreover, the socio-political and cultural transformations in Indian culture have led to the demands for the legalisation of gay & lesbian rights, revocation of IPC Section 377 by Delhi High Court stating that “sexual orientation is a ground analogous to sex, and that discrimination on sexual orientation is not permitted under Article 15” (The Hindu, July 3, 2009), legalisation of live-in relationships, and popularity of queer theory and literature which is a sort of redefinition of sexuality in the pretext of postmodern celebration of differences. The best-selling novels of N.Raj Rao’s *The Boyfriend* (the first gay novel from India) and *Hostel Room 131* and the much hyped launch of website <http://www.allthingsqueer.net> show an entirely different orientation of Indian culture towards postmodern “celebration of differences in race, gender, culture, and religion as well as in other areas of life” (Engelbreton 69). The queer has now become so common that perhaps to capitalise on that Joseph Lelyveld recently wrote a book on Mahatma Gandhi’s homo-erotic relations with Hermann Kallenbach. (The Times of India, April 20, 2011)

Thus, it can be affirmed that the trajectory of Indian English fiction has not been linear; rather, the whirls of social, economic and cultural transformations reshaped it as an entity entirely different from what it used to be. With India taking pride in all sort of success stories in different spheres of life, and with a number of failures in the form of scams and scandals, Indian English fiction has portrayed the newly defined social, economic and cultural realities. It is only because of their sensitivity towards the changing national realities with the fine mix of fiction that Chetan Bhagat, Aravind Adiga, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri and many other Indian English writers are among the largest selling authors today. Besides, they are writing in tune with the global changes, multicultural environs

and cosmopolitanism which obviously impress the readership beyond spatial boundaries. They might have failed to achieve the stature of Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan or Mulk Raj Anand but they have the propensity for the depiction of emerging issues, though by excluding certain dark sides of multiple realities of 'new India'—poverty, hunger, displacement on the name of development and denotified tribes. The literature today is as glossy and exclusive as the life of man itself. What interests the readers today is not the issues addressing the plight of the subalterns or marginal; rather, the glimmering celebrities, metropolitan mall culture, cyber-maniacs, flourishing diaspora, glamorous 'power women', queer gender identities, and mechanics of growth, are given more prominence.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup>For the essential combination of fashion, glamour and literature, the term became very popular in media during DSC Jaipur Literature Festival 2011

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Pratyush Vatsala

### Re-reading Othello and Other Characters: A Response in Emotions

Shakespeare usually creates a situation which enables him to illuminate the mysterious workings of the 'red-pipe of the human heart'. This objective is achieved mostly by delineation of the character of heroes and heroines. Othello is a tragedy where Shakespeare has dissected the heart of a newly-wed couple who are passionate lovers and have a sound social status. Thus love, jealousy, hate, rivalry, villainy and the like passions are at full play. Here, a heart bubbling with love and passion has been made a subject of jealousy and thus the tragedy commences.

The first striking emotional situation comes in Act I Sc III where Desdemona, the newly-wed wife of Othello comes in the court and confesses her love for Othello before her father. This confession of love by Desdemona after the elopement and marriage with Othello adds fuel to the fire. The cause of the awakening of this emotion is clearly visible. The scene may be well analysed in Rasa terminology.

*Ālambana Vibhāva- Āúrayālambana* - Brabantio  
*Vi°ayālambana* - Desdemona,  
*Uddīpana Vibhāva* – Confession of love by Desdemona  
 publically.  
*Anubhāva*- Brabantio's speeches full of sarcasm.

But the permanent emotion of anger is not relished and, that is why it does not become Raudra Rasa or Furious relish. In fact, the generalization of the feelings does not take place in this context. The anger of Brabantio is not expressed in a fashion that it may be generalized.

Desdemona prefers Othello to her father and wishes Othello's company. But Othello is bound to Cyprus. When they meet again in Act II Sc I, after the storm is over, Othello's speech ngāra. presents an ecstasy of love. We find an exquisite example of Sañyoga Sòrò Desdemona is Viúayālbana and Othello is A°rayālbana for the permanent emotion of love. Othello is willing to take any storm, any tempest after which he could meet Desdemona, his beloved. He is so happy that even death cannot pain him anymore, he wants to preserve this moment by death. In this context the stimulating cause or Uddīpana is the pleasant sight of Desdemona after a storm in which he might have died. A narrow escape from death serves as the stimulating cause.

Happiness, a wish to die at that very moment and, feeling strong enough to face another tempest and kissing are the *anubhāvās* following and supporting the *vibhāvās* and *sañchārīs* visible here are – *moha*, *har°a* etc. add to the feel of the emotion of *rati* or Love turning into *æ[ñgāra*. After enjoying *sañyoga æ[ñgāra rasa*, we meet villainy working beneath the nobility. Iago, a villain robs the happiness of the two lovers by way of jealousy inflicted in the mind of a loving and so good a husband and man who cannot imagine villainy in anybody so reputed. Here one is reminded of Shakespeare's comment in Macbeth, "One may smile and smile and be a villain". But the irony is that first we suffer then only we learn a lesson. And this inclement villainy deprives him of the free and balmy sleep. The following speech is a pathetic one where he is mourning over the loss of his love- "O now for ever farewell..." Really, if the faith in his love is gone, there is nothing in his life. The expression which was ironical for Macbeth is quite true and plain for Othello "The wine of life is drawn/ And the mere lees are left to brag of." (Act II Sc iii) He feels angry with Cassio

and Desdemona when he finds that the handkerchief, spotted with strawberries, his first gift to Desdemona is now in the hands of Cassio. The love is gone and the spirit of black vengeance is awakened as he himself accepts. This situation is enough to awaken the passion of anger which is developed to the state of the fury or the *raudra rasa*. Cassio and Desdemona are *vi°ayāmbana* and Othello is *ūyāmbana* here, in this context. *Uddīpanas* are the speeches of Iago, loss of the handkerchief- his first gift of love- the so called proof against Cassio and Desdemona. Disappearance of love, awakening of the spirit of black vengeance in Othello, his resolve not to take rest till that a capable and wide revenge swallow them up are the Anubhāvās in this case and the *sañcārīs* are- *ūanka, asūya, vega, ugrat*. (Act III Sc.III).

The peace of Othello is gone. His mind is hanging in a dilemma of love and hate. He analyses the situation of love between Cassio and Desdemona as described by Iago; “Pish! Noses, ears and lips- Isn’t possible? (Act IV Sc. i). He has now become a miserable creature burning in the passion of love, jealousy and anger. He is angry with Desdemona yet he loves her. And he loves her but he is jealous. He prefers to have remained ignorant of all that because he is now depressed to see his beloved proves a whore. In such a complicated mood his heat oppressed brain tries to find some swift means of death for Desdemona. What an irony it is that Desdemona does not know anything and she is proud of her husband’s love and says: “But my noble Moor/ Is true of mind and made of no such baseness/ As jealous creatures are.” (Act III Sc iv) She pleads Cassio’s case as she is ignorant of her husband’s mood and disposition. She makes her husband angry with her pleadings and also gives him a seeming proof of her unfaithfulness. Then the meeting between Othello and Desdemona takes place in Act IV Sc ii. The scene is pathetic on the one hand and terrible on the other. The two hostile situations are there. Othello, the *ūyāmbana* is full of doubt and jealousy. The reader is *ūyāmbana* here. Desdemona the *vi°ayāmbana* is quite

innocent. *Uddīpanas* for the feel of grief are the love of Othello for Desdemona which disturbs him and also the sweet innocence of Desdemona. *uddīpanas* for the awakening of the emotion of Bhaya or fear are- Othello’s resolve to kill Desdemona and his own spirit of vengeance. Anubhāvās for the Ūoka or Grief are- tears and his speeches. *Sañcārīs* to fear are- *amar°, ugrata, dainya*, etc.

Othello wants to kill Desdemona out of anger but at the same time he is reminded of her beautiful body, sweet nature and excellences. He is almost weeping when he meets Desdemona. This complex situation of the mingling of pity and terror arises again in Act V Sc ii where Othello kills Desdemona, in spite of all his love for her. The reader here feels pathos tinged with fear. Othello and Desdemona are the *lambana* and *uddīpana* being the continuous insinuations of Iago, Desdemona’s ignorance of the matter, loss of handkerchief etc. cause the arousal of the emotion of Grief. The *anubhāvās* of this emotion are- the sleepless nights of Othello, the tears in his eyes as well as his decision to kill Desdemona. The *sañcārīs* which are visible here are- *asūya, moha, amar°, œanka, unmāda*. And, thus, we feel the *karuṇā rasa* tinged with *bhayānaka rasa*. Throughout the play we get such mixed feelings.

The tragedy of Othello rests supported on a triangular foundation. Iago, the full soldier and Desdemona, the guileless and innocent maid, endowed with a beauty which is beyond description and her wild fame frustrating the genius of the poets and the artists. We immediately chime with Professor Walter Raleigh, when he describes Othello as “the supremest achievement” of Shakespeare’s genius. As Lear says about himself “I am a very foolish fond old man. Fourscore and upward not an hour more or less” Othello also confesses that he is the “one not easily jealous: but being wrought Perplexed in the extreme”. We know that his life proves to be a tragedy of one single passion, Jealousy, though, his nature was indisposed to Jealousy, as he claims. He is not emotional like Hamlet rather an extrovert and simple but more poetic than Hamlet. He is a born soldier

and probably a born lover too. As a man living hard life in the battlefield he has a soft heart and weakness especially for the fair sex. It is a fact that the more brutish a person is the more passionate and sensual he would be. This is true in case of Othello, though, time and again, he shows exceptional self-control. Despite his vehement passion, his self-control has been highlighted by Shakespeare not only by wonderful pictures in the fourth Act but by reference to his past life as well. "Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate/ Call all in all sufficient?" (Act IV Sc. i) And in Act II he controls himself

Now, by heaven  
My blood begins my safer guide to rule,  
And passion, having my best judgment collied  
Assays to lead the way.

(Act II Sc.iii)

We realize how necessary the self-control was and we appreciate him more. He comes before us as a man lighted with the sun where he was born, no longer young but aged and self-controlled, made steel by the countless perils and hardships and simple and royal, simultaneously, having a dynamic and a dashing personality seeking for fullness of life with love through senses. He meets Desdemona, a young maid too simple and too innocent to be loved. Infatuated by the tales of his bravery in the battlefield Desdemona falls in love with him and defies even her father. Othello also finds his senses aching to see the beauty of Desdemona: "O! thou weed/Who are so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet/That the sense aches at thee." (Act IV Sc.ii) But his love has everything except insight. Herford also comments on his love as Othello's love has all the traits of deep and noble passion save one insight into the soul of woman he loves. Had he seen it (her child-like pursuits of nature), he could not have been persuaded that it was not there.

In the early scenes of the play, we find Othello calm and dignified, having a marvelous self-control, confident and trustful about his love for Desdemona. Even in the beginning when his mind was

slightly poisoned how intense his love was: "Perdition catch my soul/ But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,/ Chaos is come again". (Act III Sc.iii)

Othello's nature as suggested is made of one piece. His trust where he trusts is absolute. He can not live in hesitation. And as a good and hardy military General he decides and acts instantaneously. Even then his trust in Desdemona fights with his distrust. "I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;/ And on the proof, there is no more but this,/ Away at once with love or jealousy!" (Act III Sc.iii) But when getting privilege of his credulity, suspicion, jealousy and sorrow take strong positions against him, he is quite a changed person, a green-eyed monster. The love for Desdemona is wiped away from his heart. He says;

If I do prove her haggard,  
Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings  
I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind  
To prey at fortune. (Act III Sc. iii)

But it is not his jealousy that is expressed so but it is the feeling of wreck of his faith and love, "If she be false, O, then Heaven mocks itself! I'll not believe't. (Act III Sc.ii) He becomes terrible, at times, but he does not lose the grandeur or our sympathy. In the fourth Act where he goes to test Desdemona in the matter of handkerchief he is physically exhausted and dazed. His world becomes misty with blood and tears. Othello, who enters the bed chamber with these words, is not the same person, "It's the cause, it is the cause, my soul:/ Let me not name it to you, you chaste star/ It is the cause." (Act V Sc.ii)

He is not a revengeful person. It is now his hate compels him to do this murder. It is not revenge, but a sacrifice deeply moving off a thing that he loves so much. He kisses her and again caught by her ravishing charms says, "Ah! Balmy breath that dost almost persuade/ Justice to break her sword." (Act V Sc.ii) But to save Desdemona for herself he strangles her in the bed. C.H. Herford also agrees with the

view that Othello is no longer the husband maddened at betrayal but the vindicator of justice weeping with a heavenly sorrow and staying what he loves, doing not in hate but all in honour, (honour killing).

And as soon as he comes to know the reality he compares himself with a foolish Red Indian, "Of one whose hand/ Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away/ Richer than all her tribe". (Act V Sc ii) And washing his deed in the Ganges of heart- felt sorrow and tears ends his life to die upon a kiss. In fact, he confesses his crime as a crime hero, full of justice. But when Emilia's revelations point to a terrible disillusionment, out of grief and despair he stabs himself and falls on the bed of Desdemona, kisses her and dies. And his last speech full of anguish and remorse leaves us with tearful eyes and aching hearts; "I kissed ere I killed thee/ No way but this killing myself/ To die upon a kiss." (Act V Sc ii)

Desdemona is too innocent and simple like that of Miranda in the Tempest and Ophelia in Hamlet yet she is stubborn and refuses to gratify her father's vanity and says "My noble father/ I do perceive here a divided duty." (Act I Sc.iii) She loves the Moor whole-heartedly and very simply gives the reason to justify her stand: "And I loved the Moor to live with him" (Act I Sc.iii) She never suspects her love even when warned by Emilia and others. Like Othello, she is too good to suspect evil in others but unlike Othello she does not give herself to credulity or any other passion. She really worships her hero but she lacks worldly wisdom and knows nothing about the psychology of men. She has the courage to declare her love before the court but she feeling shattered has no courage to refute any false allegation against her. She utters this much when cornered, "If to preserve this vessel for my lord/ From any other foul unlawful touch/ Be not to be a strumpet, I am none." (Act IV Sc.ii) And has a swan like end, having a heart full of love for Othello and tries to turn away the guilt from him "Nobody, I myself, Farewell/ Commend me to my kind lord, O farewell." (Act V Sc ii)

All this takes place because of Iago, a hard dyed villain. He has an insight into human nature. He analyses and knows the weaknesses of each and every man. He is an incarnation of evil itself. He appears before us a man of strong will, an ascetic and has no such weakness like Othello, Desdemona, Roderigo or Cassio. He is certainly the master of his art, so perfect that even his wife could not have any foul smell in his nature.

In the present play, however, the dramatist's genius appears to have been exclusively devoted to the delineation of how conjugal felicity has come to be destroyed on account of unfounded suspicion in the mind of the hero, who has been by master strokes of evil genius, led to believe that his wife has been false to wedlock. The play represents a glaring contrast between a gullible Othello, the noble Moor and Iago, the villain of the piece. There are no manifest allusions to fate or providence in this play as is the case with Hamlet. The dramatist's entire concern has been to bring out in depth the terrible calamity befalling the newly married couple both of whom have been equally honest and generous in mind and soul.

The earlier Acts are devoted to the development of Iago's malicious plan to spell devastation on the matrimonial fortunes of Othello and Desdemona ostensibly, for the reason of his having been overlooked by Othello in the matter of promotion to the lieutenantancy which has been conferred on Cassius, manifestly superior to him in merits and popular esteem. We are deeply struck with the dramatist's skill employed in the progression of arrant knavery with how Iago hatches the monstrous plan with how the details are panning to a nicety. Iago's decision to pour into Othello's ears the pestilential suggestion that Desdemona is interested with him. For Cassio in order to gratify her body's lust with in all that has been delineated by the dramatist up to the Second Act which closes on a note of dismal foreboding as to the possible disruption of the felicitous ties of marital harmony. This is what Iago, plans for planting the seeds of jealousy or suspicion in the mind of the noble Othello :

Myself the while, to draw the Moor apart.  
 And bring him jump when he may Cassio find  
 Soliciting his wife. Ay, that's the way  
 Dull not device by coldness and delay. (Act II sc i)

Needless to observe that the he shivers to contemplate on the ultimate upshot of Iago's malignant designs. In the context of an emotional response, let us state that we get here a vague feeling or premonition that something terrible might come about to mar the domestic happiness of the newlyweds.

It is in the third Act that Iago's knavery approaches near fulfillment. We are made aware in Act III how villainy succeeds in producing a situation pregnant with ominous possibilities. Irony plays a major role to play an excruciating role in accelerating the progress of the plan meditated by Iago. We know to our intense grief how Desdemona has lived up to her sincere assurance to Cassio and tragically enough, out of her conviction that her solicitations will not go in vain. Confidence in her own sincerest affections to Othello has engendered the belief in her that her entreaties for Cassio, who really loves 'my lord' could not but be fulfilled. She little harbours any foreboding as to her incurring her husband's displeasure, let alone wrath in this case.

Cassio's withdrawal from the scene out of pure delicacy at the approach of Othello, furnishes the first plausible foundation to Iago to construct his malignant scheme of exciting Othello's suspicions, respecting his young wife's chastity. The reader, though, unconsciously prepared for the terrible conjugal tragedy likely to overtake the newly married couple. The element of terror, occasional peeping out has not yet surfaced. Iago's wily insinuations should have robbed Othello of all sleep and mental tranquility. The latter should be so overwrought with the passion of jealousy as to feel persuaded to bid adieu to all the pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war does awaken in us a sense of terror. This sense, however is a little relieved when Othello wants in undoubted wrath, ocular proof to the infidelity of his wife. He

warns : if Iago slanders her and tortures him without any foundation if he continues accumulating "horrors upon horrors" by telling monstrous lies about her, the cup of his damnation is filled up to the brim. This outburst of the 'good soldier' who is terribly shaken and consumed with distress over the calumny of his wife, sends a wave of fresh terror into our hearts as to the drift of the situation.

Othello shimmers with an acute sense of anguish when Iago invents and communicates to him the fantastic story of Cassio's ejaculation in sleep; "Sweet Desdemona,/ let us be wary, let us hide our loves." (Act III Sc iii). Iago follows up this invention with the mention of the bridal napkin which was given to Desdemona by Othello. In the fashion of an adroit villain, Iago tells him that he has seen Cassio wiping his face with that handkerchief, spotted with straw-berries and that leads Othello to talk of black vengeance and surrender of love to tyrannous hate in his bosom. His withdrawal for finding out some swift means of death for the fair devil (Desdemona) after ordering the death of Cassio within three days, augments the feeling of terror. However, this feeling of terror as to the future course of action of distraught. Othello is integrated with an undercurrent of pity for the innocent victim of his misguided wrath. One also seems to pity how virtuous and unalloyed love is under a malignant shadow, in consequence, of downright knavery, progressing and prospering in such a systematic fashion. The irony becomes cruel when finds that Othello is labelling Iago as 'honest'. The dramatist finely handles the desired situation. Trust betrayed, nobility exploited, innocence humiliated and generosity wrongly construed, sincerity of affection jeopardized and unredeemed villainy gradually becomes triumphant.

Scene four of Act three is wholly connected with the fateful handkerchief. The reader, during that entire scene, is seized with an acute premonition of some terrible calamity in the offing. As villainy progresses according to plan, so our sense of the tragic possibilities goes on deepening. The fourth Act depicts Iago's villainy reaching perfection and accelerating the pace of the doom. By reminding Othello

of the handkerchief and attributing a false confession to Cassio that the latter has had physical commerce with Desdemona Iago achieves a further measure of success in deepening Othello's suspicions as to the gross wantonness of his wife. The distressed and distraught Othello ejaculates in deep anguish:

Lie with her! lie on her!...

Handkerchief— confessions-handkerchief

...It is not words that shake me thus.

Pish! Noses, ears and lips. Is it possible? –

Confess?- Handkerchief? – O devil!. (Act IV Sc i)

The extraordinary success of knavery is steadily achieving Othello's conjuring up the picture of copulation and his grief and anguish – all this heightens our sense of shiver as to what disaster is in store for the innocent guileless Desdemona.

Iago succeeds in thwarting the possibility of Othello's return to sobriety and has been able to make acceptable to him the suggestion of strangling Desdemona in her bed. Here our sense of terror born pity for the sweet creature is inter-mixed with somewhat of an identical feeling for the noble Moor who, filled with the milk of a husband's affection has irremediably duped and falsifying all his tender virtues, musters his resolve to kill that intensely trusting non-pareil of beauty. "I will chop her into messes. Cuckold me!" (Act IV Sc i)

Let us affirm that the dramatist has a balanced equation between pity and terror till now. Scene two portrays the interview between Othello and Desdemona, with Emilia coming and going. It brings the tragedy near completion. This scene is really the most pathetic and terrifying in all literature. Othello's agony of self-torture, caused by the conviction of Desdemona's unchastity leads Othello to fancy that he has come to house of a strumpet, "Closest lock and key of villainous secrets." (Act IV Sc.ii) Pity and terror jostle here together, alternating with each other or accompanying each other. Othello, generates terror in the reader as well as in Desdemona. The verbal exchange that follows between them is charged with an admixture of

feelings of terror and pity, begotten of our knowledge that both of them are totally unaware of the correct posture of matters.

Othello's vehement condemnation of Desdemona, however, intensifies the feeling of terror. "If I were to name thy deed of sin./ I shall have to make a furnace of my mouth...."(Act V Sc.ii). Here the pathos is all for the helpless Desdemona who is being dubbed as a prostitute despite all her sincere affections, loyalty and fidelity. The rank cruelty and undeterred vehemence of his accusations pierce the inner most fibers of our soul. It is difficult to distinguish here between pity and terror.

Shakespeare has managed the fateful interview with an unmatched delicacy of art, having his mind exclusively bent upon tearing out the very soul of pathos in the invocation of which terror is playing. It has consistently, from this stage, conduced to the overflow of the emotion of pity. Act five opens with a series of murders. Let us confess that these murders move us a little. But the concluding scene of Desdemona, done to death is extremely painful. Her entreaties being allowed only a night's lease of life will move the hardest of granites. Shakespeare purposed Pity to be identified as the final master emotion is borne out convincingly by the following piteous utterance of Othello; "If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife/ My wife! My wife! That wife! I have no wife."(Act V Sc. ii) The grief agitating the mind is preponderantly felt and experienced. "My wife! My wife! What wife! I have no wife." (Act V Sc ii) is the cry of a soul, overpowered by a sudden deluge of grief. Emilia's distracted, frightened utterance, "the Moor has killed my mistress/ Murder Murder ." (Act V Sc.ii) bespeaks her emotion of terror no doubt, but the pathos is too deep, too unspeakable to feel any further feeling of horror.

The portion of the play succeeding the death of Desdemona is a little over done, over protracted. If Othello had to die, he should have died earlier without any unreasonable loss of time. If the dramatist had to make the Moor discover the truth, underlying the entire diabolical

business, that should have been without the interpolation of the two hundred and odd lines as has been the case. True there are lines and passages which minister to the deepening of the pathos without doubt. The self-accruelement of Othello beginning with “ Behold I have a weapon” and ending as “ O Desdemona! Dead! Oh! Oh! Oh!” (Act V Sc ii) climaxes, as it were, the volcanic upsurge of grief, leaving us in no doubt as to the dramatist’s intention, respecting recognition of pity, as his final inspiration.

Othello’s tragedy turns out an exclusively conjugal tragedy pregnant with poignant pathos, generating in us an unfathomed well of pity in which terror, having throughout contributed its share has ultimately mingled, merged and lost its separate identity. Therefore pity and not terror is in ultimate analysis the chief emotion, the *angin rasa* of Othello.

Sunita Jakhar

### **Tracing History : The Partition Saga in *The Ice Candy Man and Train to Pakistan***

The partition between India and Pakistan is almost 65 years old but it is a tragic event in the past of the Indian subcontinent. My interest arose on partition as I was browsing through the information related to partition on the internet. According to google it is the most brutal episodes in the planet’s history in which a million were displaced from their homes. In memoirs from refugees it is mentioned, “in between , on the railway tracks awaited violence , rape and death for Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs”(Mehdi,99). Through my research paper I propose to trace the episodes and atrocities related to partition as depicted in *The Ice-Candy- Man and Train to Pakistan*.

In *The Ice-Candy-Man* before the partition the characters are engaged in informal chit-chat and it is beyond their comprehension to think of a separate country Pakistan, “And where will this Pakistan be? Enquires our Sikh neighbor”(ICM,63). Sidhwa was nine when the partition took place. There are a lot of similarities between Lenny and Sidhwa. In an interview she says, “but yes there are a lot of similarities . I did not attend school regularly as a child . I had polio and I led a very isolated life at that age”(The Hindu).

Around Baisakhi fair , Lenny notices a Gurkha soldier announcing through a megaphone , “those mussulmans who want to go to Pakistan had better get into the truck”(ICM, 110) the puzzled

villagers innocently ask, “Is Pakistan already there” (ICM,110). The Gurkha declares, “who knows ... I’m telling what I’m told to say” (ICM,110). It seems here that the periphery/common man is forced into a condition imposed upon him by the motives of the centre/ruler. The gullible peasants are worried about their fixed assets, “And what about our harvests? And the crop we have just sown? And our cattle? Who will evacuate them?” (ICM,110). The Gurkha soldiers are only instructed to follow order from top brass. The villagers sentimentally ask, “Do you expect us to leave everything we’ve valued and loved since childhood? the seasons, the angle and colours of the sun rising and setting over our fields are beautiful to us, the shape of our rooms and barns is familiar and dear. You can’t expect us to leave just like that” (ICM,111). The emotional trauma related to partition of one’s homeland does not figure out in historical accounts thus it has been appropriately observed by a sociologist that, “memory begins where history ends” (Bose, 85). It is rightly restated that, “a traumatized memory has a narrative structure which works on a principle opposite to that of any historical reality” (Dipesh,2143).

Lenny is shocked to hear of the murder of Mr. Rogers which is an outcome of partition riots. She ruminates over the death of her family member, “... but they weren’t murdered or mutilated. And they weren’t people I knew” (ICM,112). The servants around Lenny’s household who otherwise lived in harmony are affected by partition ambience. Hari, who supports a bodhi, “why must he persist on growing it? and flaunt his Hinduism? and invite ridicule?” (ICM,117). Hari receives rough treatment from Imam Din for no fault of his. “Someone pulls off his shawl and it is trampled underfoot. Hands stretch and pull his ... cardigan and rip off his shirt. His dhoti is hanging in ragged edges and, suddenly it’s off” (ICM,118).

Prior to Holi, a festival of colours, Sikhs and Muslims crave to play holi with each other’s bloods. “The Sikhs milling about in a huge blob in front wildly wave and clash their swords, kirpans and hockey-sticks, and punctuate their shrieks with roars: Pakistan Murdabad! Death to Pakistan!... And the Muslims shouting: So,

we’ll play holi with their blood...” (ICM,132). All kinds of rumours float around. The ice candy man tells Ayah about the muslim mohalla, “we’ve got wind that the Hindus of Shalmi plan to attack it – push the muslims across the river. The Hindus and Sikhs think they’ll take Lahore. But we’ll surprise them yet!” (ICM, 134). Communal processions romp about the city, “And then a slowly advancing mob of muslim goondas: packed so tight that we can see only the top of their heads. Roaring, “Allah-O-Akbar! Akbar! Yaaaa Ali! and Pakistan Zindabad!” (ICM,135).

The Hindus are leaving Lahore and Lenny notices, “The Shankars, too, go. The back portion of our house is untenanted” (ICM,139). At a tender age of eight Lenny witnesses partition, she is stormed by her childish queries, “A new nation is born. India has been divided after all. Did they dig the long, long canal Ayah mentioned?” (ICM,140). Lenny’s Ayah craves to go to Amritsar but as the times are not comfortable she is asked to stay back. The masseur even proposes marriage. Ayah for security and protection admits, “I’m already yours... I will always be yours” (ICM,158). Even Hari shaves his bodhi and, “also had his penis circumcised” (ICM,161). He becomes a Muslim out of fear.

Lahore once a cosmopolitan city becomes a city exclusively of Muslim refugees. The others have left the city and homes at the mercy of looters.

The first wave of looters, in mobs and processions, has carried away furniture, carpets, utensils, mattresses, clothes. Succeeding waves of marauders, riding in rickety carts, have systematically stripped the houses of doors, windows, bathroom fittings, ceiling fans and rafters. Casual passers-by, urchins and dogs now stray into the houses to scavenge amidst spiders’ webs and deep layers of dust, hoping to pick up old newspapers and cardboard boxes, or any other leavings that have escaped the eye and desire of the preceding wave of goondas. (ICM,176)



A group of muslim fanatics come to the Parsee household hunting for Ayah and other Hindus. Imam Din plays a good Samaritan and saves everyone but ice candy man plays a cheap trick and through Lenny learns about the hiding place of the Ayah who is taken away by the mob. During partition time women were the worst affected. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin in their book on interviews with partition victims narrate the sexual violence suffered by women, “their wombs knifed open, fetuses killed, rampant raping” (Borders and Boundaries, 43). The Ayah is carried away in a tonga. Later trapped by ice candy man, who becomes a poet and she a dancing girl and live in Hira Mandi, a red light area.

Ranna, witnesses so much of mayhem, suffering and nauseating experiences with dead bodies soaked in blood, he hears wailings of women and discovers that the Sikhs have captured the mosque and trapped the village women in it. Rubbing shoulders with such incidents make him beyond recognition. His Noni Chachi says, “For a minute I thought: who is this filthy little beggar?” (ICM, 205). He hides in Noni chachi’s house but the Sikhs come hunting for him and he is tortured. He becomes a vagabond, “his rags clinging to his wounds, straw sticking in his scalped skull, Ranna wandered through the lanes stealing chapattis and grain from houses strewn with dead bodies, rifling the corpses for anything he could use. He ate anything. Raw potatoes, uncooked grains, wheat flour, rotting peels and vegetables” (ICM, 207). Rana was, “herded into a refugee camp at Badami Baug...” hopes to be reunited with his Noni chachi and Iqbal chacha” (ICM, 208). Hamida who replaces the Ayah lost her husband and children during partition as she, “was kidnapped by the Sikhs” (ICM, 215). Thus becomes a ‘fallen woman’ in the eyes of her husband disowns her.

Khushwant Singh, in his regular column of Bhaskar reminiscences his Lahore days as the last Sikh to leave his abode near the posh Lawrence garden. His personal encounter with the partition produced Train to Pakistan. The novel is so realistic and powerful that Pamela Rooks did not make any major changes in the story for

screen adaptation. The otherwise peaceful village on Indo-Pak border, Mano majra becomes a hotspot after the arrival of the ‘ghost train’, “At first glance, it had the look of the trains in the days of peace. No one sat on the roof. No one was balanced on the footboards. But somehow it was different. There was something uneasy about it. It had a ghostly quality” (TTP, 82). The villagers are inquisitive about the train as to why it is guarded. Banta Singh, the lambardar knows about the inside scene of the train and without disclosing anything to the villagers appeals, “Everyone get all the wood there is in his house and all the kerosene oil he can spare and bring these to the motor trucks on the station side” (TTP, 86).

The train had disturbed the daily routine of the villagers that “they had forgotten to prepare the midday meal. Mothers fed their children on stale leftovers from the day before. They did not have time to light their hearths. The men did not give fodder to their cattle nor remember to milk them as evening drew near” (TTP, 88). But from the bloody odour and the direction of coming from Pakistan explained everything to the villagers and from that day things began to change. “That evening, for the first time in the memory of Mano Majra, Imam Baksh’s sonorous cry did not rise to the heavens to proclaim the glory of God” (TTP, 89).

Hukum Chand could not get over the scene inside the train, “there were bodies crammed against the far end wall of the compartment, looking in terror at the empty windows through which must have come shots, spears and spikes. There were lavatories, jammed with corpses of young men who had muscled their way to comparative safety” (TTP, 90). People of Mano Majra conjecture that around four to five hundred people must have fallen from the railway tops as the roof was covered with dry blood. Now the Sikhs have started to feel insecure in Pakistan and around 40-50 Sikhs crossed over from Pakistan and were putting up in the temple. But the muslims of Mano Majra are still there they have not evacuated.

The peace of Mano Majra is further destroyed as the incoming Sikh refugees were asked to leave for Jullundur as it was apprehended

that killings might take place in Mano Majra. Hukum Chand, in order to prevent further riots tells, “we must get the muslims out of this area whether they like it or not. The sooner the better”(TTP,103). Suspicious environment multiplied to the extent that, “everyone felt his neighbours hand against him”(TTP,124).Nooran does not want to leave Mano Majra for Pakistan. She is severely reprimanded by her father, “those who stay behind are killed. Hurry up and pack”(TTP,136). Nooran goes to Jugga to bid goodbye but she is accused by Jugga’s mother, “you have made him a badmash. Does your father know that you go to strangers’ houses at midnight like a tart”(TTP, 138). Nooran is heartbroken when the old woman hissed, “you, a muslim weaver’s daughter marry a sikh peasant! Get out”(TTP,138). Nooran declares the truth about her unborn child and starts crying. Mano Majra echoes with cries of, “All muslims going to Pakistan come at once. Come! All muslims. Out at once”(TTP,141). The remaining people came to see them off, this shows that the harmonious people were driven by circumstances.

There had been a massacre upstream as corpses came floating in Satluj, “Some were without limbs, some had their bellies torn open, many women’s breasts were slashed. They floated down the sunlit river, bobbing up and down. Overhead hung the kites and vultures”(TTP,151). One day a young self styled leader from city comes to Mano Majra and asks, “Do you know how many train loads of dead Sikhs and Hindus have come over? Do you know of the massacres in Rawalpindi and Multan, Gujranwala and Sheikhpura? What are you doing about it? You just eat and sleep and you call yourselves Sikhs – the brave Sikhs?” (TTP, 156). He says it sarcastically in order to incite the Sikhs to take up a plan of action to eliminate muslims. He further tells them,

For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two muslims. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two. For each home they loot, loot two. For each trainload of dead they send over, send two across. For each road convoy that is attacked, attack two. That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach

them that we also play this game of killing and looting (TTP, 157).

The self styled leader who has come from city is aggravating hatred in the hearts of otherwise peaceful people of Mano Majra he tells them, “tomorrow a train load of muslims is to cross the bridge to Pakistan. If you are men, this train should carry as many people to the other side as you have received”(TTP,159).

Hukum Chand and the sub inspector discuss to avoid the mishap. Jugga and Iqbal are set free from jail. Jugga’s most urgent concern was Noora. Iqbal, a progressive ‘England returned’ sikh changes his secular philosophy. Now he calls himself a sikh and, “a fortnight earlier he would have replied emphatically ‘No’ or ‘I have no religion’ or ‘Religion is irrelevant’”(TTP,175). Now everything was different. Iqbal got agitated to hear about killing of those people who inhabited the same village and who were addressed as uncles, aunts, brothers etc. Meet Singh tells Iqbal, “... they will kill. If it is a success they will come to the gurudwara for thanks giving. They will also make offerings to wash away their sins”(TTP, 177). This proves Karl Marx’s theory that ‘Religion is the opium of the masses’.

There is a moving picture of Sunder Singh’s escape to India as he wades through the corpses of his wife and children,

At all stations there were people with spears along the railings. Then the train was held up at a station for four days. No one was allowed to get off. Sunder Singh’s children cried for water and food. So did everyone else. Sunder Singh gave them urine to drink. Then that dried up too. So he pulled out his revolver and shot them all. Shangara Singh aged six with his long brown-blond hair tied up in a top knot, Deepo aged four with curling eyelashes, and Amro, four months old, was tugged at her mother’s dry breasts with her gums and puckered up her face till it was full of wrinkles, crying frantically. Sunder Singh also shot his wife. Then he lost his nerve. He put his revolver to his temple but did not fire. There was no point in killing himself. The train had begun to move. He heaved

out the corpses of his wife and children and came along to India. (TTP,188)

Juggat Singh epitomizes the true spirit of humanity and universal, brotherhood, he reverses the plan of the self styled leader and his followers by cutting the rope meant to derail the train. The leader shoots Jugga but he manages to cut the rope with his kirpan . He dies because of the bullet and the train passes over him and escapes to Pakistan.

I have a question – what is the lesson learnt after reading *Ice Candy Man* and *Train to Pakistan* ? I feel that partition should never take place in any part of the world. History can be repeated if the separatists persist on an individual status for Khalistan , Kashmir and Nagaland. Long live my India!

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Manjusha Kaushik

#### Attitudinal Shift in Woman : A Study of Rita Garg's *An Abbreviated Child*

In Indian English fiction three types of women have been depicted in Indian patriarchal society. The first type of women have been depicted in the fictional works of Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya. Their heroines are submissive, introspective and never ready to raise their voice against injustice, equality and corruption. For example - Nanda Kaul in *The Fire On the Mountain* and Rukmani in *Nector in a Sieve*. They show extraordinary power, patience and submissiveness. In the second phase we have the name of Shobha De and Manju Kapoor. We find revolt in both of them. In Kapoor's *Difficult Daughter* even today, women are victims of gender discrimination and sexual exploitation. Her family values and the institution of marriage is the focal point of interest in the novel. Desh Pandey's *The Dark Holds no Terrors* represents the sensitive women of post Independence India. Saru represents that new woman who while remaining confined to the familial bonds. She depicts a realistic picture of the contemporary middle class. In the third phase we have the name of Bharti Mukherji, Namita Gokhle, Jhumpa Lahri and Arundhati Roy etc. In their fiction the early image of woman is gradually fading away. Her place is taken up by independent, free and self-centered woman.

Thus Indian fiction, well ensconced in a long tradition has developed steadily impregnating the helplessness of a woman. In spite

of the fact there is a change in the depiction of a woman. In the beginning, the woman was at the periphery and thereafter she was brought to the centre but with no solution. This matrix of patriarchal society seems to be useless for women. The contemporary writers being sensitive to this position of woman and have shown an attitudinal shift in her character. Now in contemporary fiction the women characters take a flight- ambitious, revolting- with an intention not to let the man exploit them. They give a clarion call for a change. The present novel *Abbreviated Child* belongs to this category which hatches a graph of attitudinal shift in a woman through the character of Radha. The hypothesis is based on the account which shows that:

“real independence lies in a capacity to work, and so long as a woman fulfills it, she is truly independent in the highest sense of the term. Indian women possess a profound inner strength to find freedom through realization of their individual truth. They keep themselves submerged in the relations they are bound with. Unlike Western liberated women, the Indian ones do not wish to discard the social values. They are the real inheritors of the values. Hence, there is a need to emphasize the fact that they should be heard for reconstructing a better society” (Sharma, 188).

*An Abbreviated Child* is the debut novel of Rita Garg. It shows the heart rending story of the protagonist Radha who is sold thrice and rehabilitated five times. Life could never settle for her. In childhood, the family could not provide comfort to her and she could never forget the treatment of her father towards her mother. Seeing the depressed condition of her mother, she gets strength to face the struggle of life. She established her NGO to save the life of poor children as well as the abbreviated and suffering women. Chhotu, Roderigo, Gauri, Chandirima, Keshava and his sister are the best example of it. Today, we need, people like Radha who can come forward and save the life of helpless ones from the monopoly of the rich people.

The novel shows the struggle of the protagonist Radha who is the chief character of the novel. Her journey of life is from a traditional submissive woman to a woman of her own identity. Being submissive and traditional, she is sold and passed on from one hand to another. “Her condition is like a pigeon, cried and cried but the ultimate was exhaustion. Mental death is often the forerunner of physical death.” (6) Being a mistress she does not have her fixed home. She is sold by one and settled by another. Nobody can understand the agony of her heart and destiny. People use her as a toy in their hands. Poverty plays an important part in her life. Due to the lack of money she suffered a lot and lost her identity.

The submissiveness of Radha’s mother before her husband who keeps beating her is also exemplifies this phase. The encounter witnessed by Radha in her early life shapes her mental fabric. She realizes that Amma bears the burden of the family. It is the helplessness of the woman. Whether the husband is good or bad or cruel but a woman should live with her. “Baba! Now you are crying in your drunken state, you beat us. But we never cry. We do not hate you.” “Amma says that you are our shield woman needs a man”(27).<sup>1</sup>

The novelist beautifully expresses the helplessness of woman. In front of man she feels herself insignificant. Please mark the following lines which unfold the agony a pulsating heart: “Amma yours son is unsympathetic. I am going to die soon. The warning of the doctor rings in my ears. I am in danger of health as well as life. Remember, this is the eighth time I have to face the ordeal of medical termination of pregnancy. How my life was jeopardised when my sixth son was born. Amma she becomes a brute”(75). These lines show the cruel behaviour of a man who wants to fulfill his physical lust at the cost of the life of his wife. How pathetic to see a man insensitive to merital and emotional matrix of life!

In the second phase of her life Radha gets courage and challenges the role of a submissivie woman. She unfolds her desires and expectations which reverberate in her heart. Having pulsating heart she questions:

Lord God, why I alone am a bad woman. Does my sincerity not make me Savitri, Sita, Radha, Sohni or above all my sincere self. God, I was sold to be resold and be always sold. I was made a rope walker also. I was earning money for the last buyer once again the role of bamboos was found in my life. I used to hold a bamboo was found in my hand to balance myself on a rope tied between two bamboos.(39)

Again she questions:- “How I am wrong. What is my fault. If I was sold should I die? The voices of sale, sell and sold shall continue to whimper into my ears-shredded into every bone-with ashes to be mingled into dust”(40).

No doubt, she has never got comfort in her childhood and not even in her young age but accepts life as a gift of God. Radha who has been sold thrice and rehabilitated five times, realises the agony of her heart and “maintains moral courage.”(5) She stands herself as a helping hand to others. Serving others is the motto of her life. She suffers a lot in life but could not earn the feeling of mercy from others. God of money has taken the place of mercy. She does not approve of the role of a sacrificing woman like Panna Dhaya who sacrifices her own son for the sake of the life of a prince. “The decision of Panna Dhaya made Radha cry at heart in the wilderness of humanwoods. The frenzied mother, Panna, accepts that the lump of meat be better finished instead of leaving the baby boy as a lump of meat for others, it is better to finish what ever life is there” (3). Though Radha gets the power by the character of Panna but she is not ready to leave the hand of Chhotu, a helpless boy.

Feeling of sacrifice can make man’s life strong and powerful. But Radha has no feeling of regret that she sacrificed her life for the abbreviated ones. She says that people do sacrifice for the good cause. “Revolutions, was and so many more things have been taking the toll of human life. Let there be one more cause”(32).

Though she has not her own son but she has a mission in life to help the abbreviated ones. She saves the life of Chandrima, Chhotu, Gauri and many others. She tried her level best that they must stand

by their own feet and meet the challenges of life courageously. Being an innocent girl Chandrima does not know her real parents. She knows only Radha. she is remembering the moment of her arrival she says “If even I forget to help the miserable freshly remembered misery of my life, would deepen the idea to help others”(50).

Gauri is another woman character who remembers Radha with reverence and elevates her character. To her, Radha is like God on earth who saves the life of helpless ones. She too wants to follow Radha. She says “Radha ma’am. I wanted to work for abbreviated ones. Allow me to be a member of this purest of all establishment. Radha ma’am the purity of heart covers all the destruction faced by you. “An abbreviated child has bloomed as a musk rose”(73).

The conversation between Chhotu and Radha show the feeling of his heart in this way. Chhotu says “you are a perfect Organiser, otherwise, mental HIV is to such an extent that disorganization is also taken for a step towards the construction” (77). To give respect to the views of Chhotu, Radha replies “you are thinking of my story but Chhotu this establishment is a creation of yours as well” (77). In the end of the novel Radha shows herself as a new woman, who has the power to mould the situation according to herself just as in the end of the novel, *The Namesake* Ashima comes out as a powerful individual and feels that the strength of woman can handle the entire situation efficiently in the same as Radha does.

The journey of Radha’s life shows that Indian women have a deep inner strength which is realized by them and others when they display confidence for real self, individuality and power to achieve success. Being a housewife, daughter, mother and mother-in-law, a woman fulfils every relation with great sincerity. Radha the protagonist of the novel, though deprived of the familial happiness, spreads the message of love, happiness, support, caring nature and self-identification. Through love and devotion she wins her fight against the cruel system of society. But her revenge is not like a wild justice. It is only for the betterment of the needy ones. She gives this message in the following way” The firm belief and sincerity of action are required in every walk

of life. Nice that you are going to tread where you really belong to”(104).

### Note

<sup>1</sup>G.M.Treveleyan in his history of England shows this feature:

Wife beating was a recognized right of man and was practiced without shame by high as well as low. Similarly the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parent’s choice was liable to be locked up beaten and flung about room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was not an affair of personal affection but of family avarice, particularly in the chivalrous upper classes. Betrothal often took place while one or both the parties were in the cradle and marriage when they were scarcely out of the nurse’s charge. (Jain, 37, 38)

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Vinod Kumar

### **Sri Aurobindo’s Nationalism: Polemical and Ideological Dimensions in *The Renaissance in India and Other Essays on Indian Culture***

An author is the product of his/her materialistic conditions of living; as a result writing is also a part of the structure to which its author belongs. The arrival of literary theory helps to deconstruct the notions (of gender, nation, subaltern etc.) which seem natural and eternal. The theory de-essentializes a literary text by historicizing it. “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas. . . .”(Marx and Engles 67) so it is not easy for an author to write freely. The prevailing ideology negotiates with his pen to maintain the existing system of power and domination. Sometimes it happens consciously but most of the time unconsciously.

Ideology literally means the set of beliefs held by a particular group. It denotes forms of thought as a reflection of material changes in historical conditions. Hence it can be argued that ideology changes with time and conditions. The coiners of the term ‘ideology’, namely Cabanis, Destut de Tracy and their friends, “assigned to it as an object the (genetic) theory of ideas” (Althusser 21). Althusser again states that “ideology is the imaginary way in which people experience their real lives, the ideal representation of a material process” (qtd. in Hawkes 121). It is a process through which we identify reality not as a reality in itself but its representation which is distorted by the mediate ideology.

Ideology maintains its flow mainly through “Civil Society” as Antonio Gramsci states. To rule over individuals with their consent is termed as ‘hegemony’. The subject accepts its role and the conditions of living as his fate and lives an illusory life. Ideology makes us complacent by concealing from us the real conditions of our existence. Althusser also states that its function is to maintain the existing hegemonic relations. From the Marxist perspective, the dominant ideologies are the product of the ruling class. The ruling class uses it as a tool “. . . the more it becomes the organ of a particular class and the more directly it enforces the rule of that class” (Engels 51). Althusser reinterprets ideology and states: it “. . . express[es] a will, a hope or nostalgia rather than describing the reality (qtd. in Eagleton 19). Ideology becomes a political tool in itself to serve a purpose. Slavoj Zizek writes “Ideology is not simply a ‘false consciousness’, an illusionary representation of reality, it is rather this reality itself which is already, it is rather this reality itself which is rather this reality itself which is already to be conceived as ‘Ideological’ (Zizek 21).

Thus ideology becomes a major mediator between reality and representation. That is why writing often appears to be innocent, although it is invariably permeated by ideology or even by conflicting ideologies.

Nationalism is also an ideology born out of certain historical, material conditions. Grosby states “[n]ations emerge over time as a result of numerous historical processes”(7), as an ideology emerges. Antony D. Smith writes: it is “a process of formation, or growth, of nations” (5). ‘Nation’ is an imagined concept. Benedict Anderson observes that print capitalism has contributed to the construction of nations and nationalism. He states new communities become imaginable because of “. . . a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (Capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic

diversity” (42-43). Nationalism as an ideology took shape partly through the anti-colonial struggle and partly through the assertion of communal identities. Ashish Nandy states that mobility also contributes to nationalism because uprooted people try “to retain their culture, opt for a kind of standardized- or nationalized- form of the culture” (137).

Sri Aurobindo’s essays exemplify both a discourse of opposition against the British colonial power and a discourse of cultural nationalism from an exclusivist Hindu standpoint. He reconstructs Indian nationalism which becomes the product of postcolonial ideology. He challenges colonial ideology through his various writings.

The present paper will analyse Sri Aurobindo’s *The Renaissance in India and Other Essays on Indian Culture* as a product of post colonial ideology and other historical conditions. The essays were written during the period of India’s struggle for freedom against the British colonial rule, and are the result of an ideology shaped by those conditions. In particular, these were written by Aurobindo in response to William Archer’s book *India and the Future* (1917) which was an attack on Indian culture. Further, he contributes to the discourse of Sir John George Woodroffe who wrote a book titled *Is India Civilised?* In response to Archer’s criticism of Indian culture in 1918. Aurobindo’s defense and glorification of Indian culture, and nationalism can be studied as an example of post colonial ideology.

Aurobindo’s father sent him to an English school to learn English language and English lifestyle. He spent his childhood among English children. Then he got a chance to go to England. He learnt many languages. He returned to Baroda from England in 1893 and devoted himself to the study of spirituality and culture. He also started to take part in revolutionary activities for India’s freedom and established close contact with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and other nationalist leaders. A mystical view of life and post colonial ideology fundamentally shaped

his idea of a nation. He became a religious idealist and rejected the materialist conceptions of the world: “Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as matter; matter is a form and body of that which we realize as spirit” (qtd. in Borodov 316).

The militant Indian nationalist Sri Aurobindo started to write in defense of Indian culture, spirituality, life, culture, art, literature and against colonialism. The selected essays, published during 1918-21, are among his most important contribution to the nationalist discourse on Indian culture. He uses a mystical cultural-nationalist post colonial ideology to ‘write’ India that appears to be timeless but that is revealed as a specific ideological formation in response to the prevailing historical situation, particularly the British colonial discourse. Aurobindo’s project was to prove the superiority of India against the colonial conceptions of it which were derogatory.

Sri Aurobindo defines a nation as *the Shakti* (Divine force enshrined in the figure of Mother India), the Goddess of its millions. Like other contemporary nationalist militants, he describes India as Mother India and the Indian people as her sons and daughters. He writes: “Mother India is not a piece of earth, she is a power, a Godhead, for all nations have such a Devi supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being. Such beings are real and more permanently real than the men they influence, but they belong to a higher plane.” . . . (“Sri Aurobindo on Mother India” 1). According to him, we fail in our struggles if we lack faith in *Shakti*: it is to be noted that for Aurobindo *Shakti* appears in the form of Mother India who is visualized as a stereotypical Bengali woman.

For Aurobindo the identity of India as a cultural entity is defined by its opposition to the British colonial identity exemplified by Archer’s essays. He constructs a counter-discourse to the discourse of Archer and others who argued that Indian culture was inferior to the Western. According to him, Archer’s

. . . chief claim to speak was a sublime and confident ignorance, [ . . . and he ] assailed the whole life and culture of India and even lumped together all her greatest achievements, philosophy, religion, poetry, painting, sculpture, Upanishads, Mahabharata, Ramayana in one wholesale condemnation as a repulsive mass of unspeakable barbarism. (*The Renaissance in India* 55)

He often repeats that Indian culture is superior to the Western, so that the India which emerges in his essays is powerful, spiritual, divine, and highly cultured and civilized.

In the series of essays titled “The Renaissance in India” (3-42), Aurobindo begins by assuming an essential spirit of India. He writes that India will keep its essential soul, which is immortal even if there are several superficial changes. He believes that new self-consciousness and a reawakened national spirit will appear; in fact, the Indian mind has already started the process to emancipate itself from the false conceptions of Indian history. He celebrates the rich civilization, culture and past of India, which is still living and will live forever for him. He compares the Indian spiritual past with the European, and finds Indian heritage hundred times better than the European. He writes India will accept whatever is sound, true and useful in the modern Western civilization but it will Indianise it. The Goddess, the *Shakti*, will master and take possession of the modern influence. At the core of Indian renaissance there is “spiritual and religious ferment and activity”, which he sees “as the most prominent feature of the new India” (26).

Aurobindo also stresses on the need for national freedom because only then the power of renaissance can take effective hold of the mind of Indian people. In his essay titled “Indian Culture and External Influence’ (43-54), he asks the Indians to strengthen their culture against the European. He disapproves the Western style of living and



advises the Indians not to imitate it because “. . . to imitate European civilization . . . [is]. . . to make ourselves a sort of brown Englishmen [sic]. . .”(45). Talking on India’s social system, he says it is based on *Dharma*<sup>1</sup> and aims to achieve spiritual consciousness.

Aurobindo observes that the West was led by Christian spirituality in medieval times, but adds that the spiritual impulse of Christianity had its origin in Asia. He goes on to state that the West today has strayed from the spiritual path and it bears in itself the seeds of the death of civilization.

Aurobindo is very keen to ‘prove’ that the Indian civilization is better than any other civilization of the world; he writes that there is need of an aggressive defense of Indian civilization. He observes that Archer’s attack on Indian culture is politically motivated. Archer wants India to “follow the canons of a rationalistic and materialistic European civilization” (60-61). Aurobindo finds the Western civilization to be arrogant of its modernity, because it is not aware of what it has lost; it has become hollow and lifeless because it is wedded to material reality. On the other hand, Indian culture remains rich and eternal because of its rich spiritual orientation.

Aurobindo responds to the denigration of Indian culture by Archer and elaborates certain positive aspects of this culture. A series of essays, titled “A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture” (97-177), contests Archer’s negative depictions. He points out that Archer’s book does not give any proof of serious intellectual criticism: Archer is wrong to find fault with Indian philosophy (110-11). Rather, Aurobindo finds European philosophy alienated from religion. There is also a conflict between religion and philosophy in the West, according to Aurobindo. Against Archer’s attack, he states that the life of spirituality is greater than the life of science and reason and on this account; he regards Indian culture as superior. Extending his comparison between the two cultures, Aurobindo holds that Western

culture lays stress on personality, while Indian culture and religion value impersonality, which is the consequence of freedom from ignorance and its attendant self-conceit. He rejects the Western civilization as materialist and lifeless while glorifying India’s “still persistent” (56) spiritual culture.

In another group of essays titled “Indian Spirituality and Life” (178-254), Aurobindo states that Europe is unable to understand Indian culture because it fails to understand Indian religion. Indian religion stresses on highest human existence beyond the physical and mental levels. The Western mind is unable to digest such idealistic definitions of Indian religion because it has no such experience. In his opinion, Indian religion aims to enlighten us to grow out of ignorance of the self and to become aware of the divine power in us. The features of Indian religion which Aurobindo discusses all belong to Hindu religion. Constructing the binary of the spiritual and the material existence, he broadly identifies the Western culture with the material existence and the Indian culture with consciousness (“pure spirit”).

Aurobindo states that Archer depreciates Indian fine arts, architecture, sculpture and painting as a result of his failure to understand them. Spirituality is omnipresent in India; the Indian art also reflects the embodied spirit. Western aesthetics have roots in Greek and Renaissance traditions focused on the senses, but Indian art portrays the spirit, and is nearer to the soul. Indian art can only be seen with the spiritual eyes.

Aurobindo discusses Indian literature in five essays (314-383). The first three deal with *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, respectively; the fourth deals with Kalidasa and other poets of the classical age. The fifth discusses *Purana* and *Tantra*, and also some Tamil and other poets who wrote in praise of God.

Vedas are the books of supreme knowledge for Aurobindo. Their study gives feelings of the presence of the infinite and awakens

the sixth sense to recognize divinity. The *Upnishads* contain religion, poetry and philosophy of a very high order. He writes that *Mahabhart*a and *Ramayana*, the two epics, exhibit Indian philosophy of life and provide a glimpse into the religion, culture, society, and politics in ancient India. The rich cultural diversity that the two epics represent is thus subordinated to Aurobindo's unifying cultural and religious vision, the lynchpin of the nationalist discourse of the time.

Aurobindo finds that Kalidasa is a poet of great importance who ranks with Milton and Virgil but who at the same time has "a more subtle and delicate spirit" (358). In a series of essays titled "Indian Polity" (384-444), Aurobindo writes that India has proven competence in political organization also, and therefore when the Western commentators talk about Indian political incompetence, they have a false view of Indian history and insufficient knowledge. He holds that in the past religion always guided the political system in India. The king was expected to be guided with *Dharma*. The *Rishi* (the sage) occupied a high position and could advise the King on crucial matters. Aurobindo has the opinion that ancient Indian political system functioned efficiently until the Muslim invasion, and later the British imposed their own regime and system. However, he does not answer why foreign invaders succeeded in India repeatedly if the pre-Muslim political system was so good.

As stated earlier, an ideology has historical and political implications and Aurobindo's discourse also has its own post colonial and other historical and political implications which construct his nationalism. A critical study of the essays collected in the book indicates that the nationalism of Aurobindo is a result of the postcolonial, religious and other historical and material conditions of the time. His nationalism is a figure of discourse, subject to contending claims. William Archer and other colonial writers construct India from their colonial point of view while Aurobindo constructs a post colonial India, which is not

inferior in any sense. Its culture, heritage, religion and past make it rich than any nation. Thus his nationalism and construction of India is the result of colonial and postcolonial ideologies.

In short, a critical analysis of Aurobindo's *The Renaissance in India and Other Essays on Indian Culture* shows that his ideological position shapes his nationalism, his vision of India's identity as something timeless and basically rooted in ancient times. Basically Aurobindo's discourse as exemplified by the essays is defined by Archer's denigration of Indian culture and the norms and conditions of nationalist discourse prevalent at the time.

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Alpna Saini

**Scarred and Silenced Subjectivities:  
Mahesh Dattani's *Thirty Days in September***

Mahesh Dattani is the first Indian playwright writing in English to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi award for his contribution to drama. Born in 1958, Dattani began his professional life as an advertising copywriter. He formed his theatre group *Playpen* in 1984 and directed several plays, ranging from classical Greek to contemporary works. He wrote his first full length play *Where There is a Will* in 1986 for the Deccan Herald Play Festival. He went on to write many famous plays like *Dance Like a Man* (1989), *Tara* (1990), *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991), *Final Solutions* (1993), *Do the Needful* (1997), *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998), *Seven Steps Around the Fire* (radio play for the BBC, 1998), and *Thirty days in September* (2001).

*Thirty Days in September* treats the sensitive issue of child abuse. The play was commissioned by a non-government organization called RAHI (Recovering and Healing from Incest) that helps survivors of child abuse. The play endeavors to lift the veil of silence which surrounds the issue of incest. It builds on the trauma of Mala who lives with the haunting memories of her abused past. Her past damages her natural growth; it scars her soul, making her unable to pursue serious

relationships with men beyond an ominous thirty-day period. She has become a woman who perversely enjoys being taken advantage of.

The present play is the study of a very important aspect of the experience of a very wide but little discussed segment of society. This is a part of subjectivity which has generally remained largely unanalysed in literary and critical studies. Mala's is a tortured subjectivity through which the play brings into focus similar subjectivities which remain twisted and wrongly interpreted.

The recuperation of Mala from her state of shock is presented through her taped conversations with her psychiatrist. From a very insecure, shy and diffident girl at the beginning of Act I, we see her transforming into a confident woman ready to face the world. The insights afforded by psychoanalysis and other disciplines enable her to analyse her own subjectivity and pinpoint the root of her problem. Rather than blaming herself or her mother for her woes, she points her finger at the real culprit, her maternal uncle who had abused her for a period of six years.

I do not hesitate to use my real name now. Let people know. There's nothing to hide. Not for me. After all, it is he who must hide. He should change his name not me. . . . I wish he were here now, so I could see his face when I tell him I have nothing to hide. Because I know it wasn't my fault. . . . Now, I know now. (8)

But Mala is not so confident earlier when the play begins. She is afraid to even utter her name. She hesitates to tell anyone what is bothering her and she does not even know that she is a victim. She stammers out her sentences:

I – I don't know how to begin . . . Today is the 30th of September . . . 2001, and my name is . . . I don't think I want to say my name . . . I am sorry. I hope that is okay with you . . . I am unsure about this . . . and a lot of other things . . . I

know it is all my fault really . . . It must be. I must have asked for it . . . Somehow, I just seem to be made for it. Maybe I was born that way, maybe . . . this is what I am meant for. It is not anybody's fault, except my own. (9)

Mala is not intellectually equipped to understand the root of her suffering. She is undergoing a crisis of self-identity due to which she begins to see herself through the eyes of others and begins to blame herself. She is a common woman, not a cultural theorist or a psychoanalyst. She believes that the self is an entity fixed and given. She has no idea that the self is a socio-political and cultural construction. According to Lacan, the response and recognition of others are needed in order to arrive at what we experience as our identity. In other words, our subjectivity is constructed in interaction with others. Mala too forms an image of herself on the basis of how others treat her and think of her. She compares herself to other girls of her age and passes judgement on herself. A person becomes himself/herself under the gaze of the other, by way of other perspectives and other views of who he/she is. Both Sartre and Lacan suggest that this "Other" – the center from which the question of existence is posed – is not a concrete individual, although it may be represented by one (father or mother, for instance), yet it stands for the larger social order (Bowie 82).

For Mala, the other locus of self-identification is her uncle Vinay whose approval she desires in everything. This misrecognition, to use a Lacanian term, becomes incorporated in her identity. And since others see her as guilty or spoilt, she too begins to think of herself as such. But for her, this misrecognition becomes the basis of her identity. As a result, Mala is unable to connect positively with men. She meets men and enters into relationships with them. But she times it in such a way that the relationship ends within a period of thirty days. She admits to Deepak that she likes it when she is being abused in a relationship. Her obsession with thirty days seems to suggest her

desire to remain in control of the situation, yet she is unable to get the abuser out of her system which makes her compulsively want to be abused. It is a case of the ambivalent pathological subject in control and dependent at the same time, a subject both free and unfree in her actions.

When she meets Deepak, she tries to end the relationship after thirty days, but Deepak likes her and insists on knowing why she is avoiding him. He goes and meets her mother Shanta who is of little help. But from some names, ticks and crosses jotted on Mala's calendar at her home, Deepak guesses what Mala is going through. He wants to help her and sends her to see a psychiatrist. Through Deepak thus, the dramatist allows us an insight into Mala's real inner situation. Mala does not understand herself, so she is unable to examine her problem. Hence the omniscient author has to disclose Mala's inner world by means of Deepak and the psychoanalyst.

Dattani depicts the change in Mala's state after the treatment through the tapes of Mala's recorded conversations; he thereby hints that Mala's subjectivity can be understood through the discourse of psychoanalysis. The symptoms of her problem are read through Freudian and Lacanian perspectives. Dattani himself locates the play in these perspectives. As it is apparent from the earlier conversation, Mala is very hesitant, unsure and guilty. She feels that she is the one who is to blame for whatever is happening to her. "I have been so bad. I can't tell you where to begin! It's not just the men in the office I told you about, but before . . . much before! I – Oh God! I – I seduced my uncle when I was thirteen . . . No, there is nothing to tell about my uncle, forget all that . . ." (33).

The subject is here both victim and victimiser. She thinks that she is a seducer. But the significance of the analysis lies in the ambiguity of the situation which further complicates the real problem of the subject. The uncle is the Freudian father figure whose approval Mala

desperately desires to the extent that she is sexually exploited at his hands at such a tender age. In fact, the institution of patriarchy is so deeply internalised by Mala that she exclusively holds herself responsible for her victimization. And she is afraid to raise her voice against her victimization in spite of the heavy price she has to pay for it. She cannot bring herself to believe that it is she who is the victim and her uncle, the father figure, her persecutor. So she hides behind a veil of unruly sexual conduct, lack of moral values and sometimes silence, like her mother does. These are her survival tactics meant to keep herself sane by forgetting reality. But she does not realise the psychic damage she is causing herself by creating a cocoon and hiding in it.

She has learnt to remain silent from her mother. She sometimes blames her mother for not listening to her when she complained of sexual abuse to her:

. . . I came to you hurt and crying. Instead of listening to what I had to say, you stuffed me with food. I couldn't speak because I was being fed all the time, and you know what? I began to like them. I thought that was the cure for my pain. That if I ate till I was stuffed, the pain would go away. Every time I came to you mummy, you were ready with something to feed me. You knew. Otherwise you wouldn't have been so prepared. You knew all along what was happening to me, and I won't ever let you forget that! (24)

The mother's complicity in the crime through her silence makes Mala a victim without hope. The metaphor of silence in the play can be compared to that in Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session!* The silence in these plays is used in order to be deconstructed; the silence is not an absence of sound; rather it is full of violent noises. As such, it is an insidious formative force. Mala is made to suffer time and again doubly, first through the abuse and then through the silence of

her family. She is shattered by her experience and withdraws herself completely from the family. She feels that her mother could have prevented all that from happening if she had intervened: “The only person who can, who could have prevented all this is my mother. Sometimes I wish she would just tell me to stop. She could have prevented a lot from happening” (18).

In an interview quoted from Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri, Dattani says that he was deeply moved to hear the accounts of the abuse victims whom he met at RAHI. But he adds: “It’s the silence and the betrayal of the family that affects me the most. Like in this case, the mother knew that her daughter was being sexually abused by her uncle, but still chose to keep quiet. It’s this silence that makes the abused feel betrayed” (1).

Mala too feels shaken, when both her parents do not listen to her but ask her to keep quiet:

I am talking about the time when uncle Vinay would molest me. When I was seven. Then eight. Nine. Ten. Every vacation when we went to visit him or when he came to stay with us. You were busy in either the pooja room or the kitchen. I would go to papa and cry. Before I could even tell him why I was crying he would tell me to go to you. You always fed me . . . that I should eat well and go to sleep and the pain will go away . . . But it comes back. It didn’t go away forever! (26)

Mala’s parents could have prevented her abuse. Uncle Vinay is Shanta’s brother who used to help her financially when Mala’s father had abandoned them. It could be the financial angle that prevented Shanta from heeding Mala’s pain. She accuses Mala of cooking up stories at one time and at another of dreaming and at yet another of inviting sexual exploitation: “No, no Mala. Just forget all these bad dreams” (25). She accuses Mala of having seduced a cousin of hers when she was thirteen and even says that she enjoyed what was being

done to her: “But Mala, I have seen it with my own eyes. You enjoyed it. You were an average child but you had my brother and your cousins dancing around you. That is what you wanted. Yes! How can I forget? I am trying to forget, please help me forget” (28).

Her accusation could be her unconscious strategy of facing the situation that her conscience is unwilling to accept. But Mala cannot forget however hard she tries. She feels her abuser’s presence everywhere, in every relationship with men. She desperately seeks the approval of her persecutor: “I see this man everywhere. I can never be free of him. I am not so sure I want to be free of him. Even if I was, I am not sure whether I have the ability to love anyone . . . else” (54).

Both Deepak and Shanta advise Mala to forget her past and begin her life afresh. But Mala is unable to lead a normal life after having suffered so many scars on her psyche: “By staying silent doesn’t mean I can forget! This is my hell. This hell is where I belong! It is your creation, Ma! You created it for me. With your silence!” (54).

The mother signifies for Mala the site with which she identifies and also misidentifies. As Lacan has remarked, a child encounters himself/herself by looking into the eyes of the mother. When she accuses her mother, she is in a way accusing herself and in this way trying to evade the responsibility of her own complicity in her violation. This brings the play to its climax as Shanta discloses that she too had been a victim of child abuse at the hands of the same man causing her to keep quiet, although she knew everything. It is a moment of negative enlightenment for Mala, a knowledge which liberates as well as oppresses.” Yes. Yes! I only remained silent. I am to blame . . . I remained silent not because I wanted to but I didn’t know how to speak. I – I cannot speak. I cannot say anything . . . My tongue was cut off years ago. I did not know how to save her. How could I save her when I could not save myself?” (55)

Shanta is herself a victim of exploitation. She is afraid to divulge her pain to anyone. This probably keeps her from listening to Mala when she comes to her crying. She knows all along that Mala is being exploited, but she is too powerless to stop the victimization. She turns a blind eye to everything and pretends not to know anything. She accuses Mala just as she has always accused herself. She believes that one has to bear the pain when one is powerless to remedy the situation. She silently bears her pain and tries to forget all about it, although it makes her a “frozen woman” in the words of Mala’s father. But her disclosure makes Mala understand her pain, and she now empathises with her: “While I accused you of not recognizing my pain, you never felt any anger at me for not recognizing yours. We were both struggling to survive but I never acknowledged your struggle. Ma, no matter where I am, I always think of you. I want you to know that I am listening. Waiting for you to speak” (58).

After her treatment, Mala is finally able to kill the shadows that haunt her. She grabs the shadow of the man by the throat and strangles him. She is now free of his influence. She fights free of him and is now able to lead a life free of his memories. Mala thus acts at the level of the symbolic to tackle patriarchy, since patriarchy also functions at the level of the symbolic through the collective psyche. She says: “I wish he was here now, so I could see his face when I tell him I have nothing to hide. Because I know it wasn’t my fault . . . Now. I know now” (56).

She believes that she can start her life afresh: “I can smile again. I can be a little girl, again. Not again, but for the first time. At thirty plus I am the little girl, I never was” (33). Shanta’s disclosure also helps Mala to come to terms with her situation. The feeling of betrayal by her mother goes away and it now becomes easier for her to rearrange her life. Shanta, on the other hand, remains closed to any opportunity for healing and rejuvenation. Her only help is prayer and silence, which help her maintain her sanity.

Both Mala and Shanta are seen as behaving ambivalently towards their persecutor. They pay him proper respect and need his advice and approval, yet they despise him for what he did to them. The uncle is a representative of ugly authority in both their lives, though it is through Mala’s subjectivity that Dattani depicts the complexity of possible attitudes towards authority. The discourses available to Mala to understand her predicament are psychiatry and the social/familial/moral/religious discourses. But is Mala able to see them as discourses and thus to free herself? In fact, Dattani himself uses and analyses indirectly these discourses in order to depict Mala’s subjectivity.

Mala is a subject formed by complex socio-cultural and psychological forces. In her ambivalent attitude towards authority/father figure, she can be compared to Leela Benare of *Silence! The Court is in Session*, whose maternal uncle and, later, Damle exploit her physically and emotionally. She abhors them, yet she needs their approval. She simultaneously revolts against and submits to their authority.

Mala too craves for her uncle’s attention and approval. The power he wields even in his absence hints at the hidden power of the discourses that lie behind the cruelty of gender-based exploitation. He appears to wield the authority of the Freudian father figure, which Mala both spurns and finds fascinating. He first uses his authority to exploit Mala and later passes judgment on her conduct: “You like it! You enjoy it. After four years, you have become a whore! At thirteen you are a whore!” (44). He tells Shanta, “If only you had controlled her from the beginning. She has always been wayward” (45).

But Mala’s persecutor himself remains aloof and sane. He first exploits his younger sister Shanta and then her daughter. He uses force as well as emotional blackmail to achieve what he wants: “I won’t hurt you I promise” (43) and “See, I love you even though you are so ugly. . . . Nobody will tell you how ugly you are. But you are good only for

this” (44). He hammers into Mala’s mind that she can get approval only in return for sexual favors. Why he does so, or what makes him do so, or what he thinks about all this, remains unknown as the dramatist does not let us have a glimpse into the interiors of his subjectivity. So, we do not know whether he is haunted by some guilt or just feels repentant for Mala’s and Shanta’s condition. In Dattani’s dramatic world, there is hardly anyone who does not have at least a bit of the playwright’s sympathy, but we do not notice any for this child abuser. Dattani does not usually paint black or white characters but varying shades of gray, which are conspicuous by their absence in the case of Vinay.

In this play also, as in *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *A Muggy Night in Mumbai*, Dattani uses the techniques of flashback and juxtaposition of dialogues in two simultaneous scenes on two different parts of the stage. Both these methods throw light on the layers of subjectivity acquired by a subject over the course of time. For example, in one scene Deepak is comforting an exasperated Mala in one part of the set and in the other part Shanta and uncle Vinay are discussing Mala. But after some time Vinay moves on to the other part of the set and haunts Mala by reiterating the process of her abuse when she was a child. Now only Mala can see him but Deepak cannot, which means that it is a figment of Mala’s imagination. But this method lets us see the contrasting behavior of two men towards Mala and how she cannot get rid of the shadows from the past in every new relationship.

Another technique which Dattani uses is the multiple-role playing by one person. For example, there is only one person called “the man”, who plays the uncle, the Paperwallah and the other two men who bother Mala. All these men are shown as abusing Mala in one way or another. Moreover, one character suddenly starts performing the role of another to deepen the contrast. For example,

when Deepak visits Shanta, he pleads with her to help him. When she refuses, he suddenly steps into the shoes of the Paperwallah and assumes the latter’s body language. Dattani describes it through a stage direction: “*Deepak looks at her for a while, then takes charge by putting on the posture of the man, pelvis thrust forward, taking charge of the space*” (13).

This multiple role playing by Deepak suggests that he performatively assumes the most effective role that will help him in a particular situation. Deepak can be very persuasive, caring and charming with Mala, pleading and understanding with Shanta, but he can also assume the role of “the man” when required. His multiple performance can be better understood in the light of Judith Butler’s theory of performativity which suggests that identity is constructed and constituted by language and that there is no identity outside language, meaning thereby that actions or speech are not performed by a subject, but these constitute the subject. According to Butler, the gendered body has no ontological status apart from the acts performed by it and these acts constitute its reality (*Gender Trouble* 136).

The speech and actions of a person thus constitute his/her identity, which is true in the case of Deepak, Shanta and Mala. In other words, there is no subjectivity without performativity. A new subjectivity is formed when there is a new performance. But there is something essential about patriarchy which transcends subject formation. This is the reason that the man, the uncle, Paperwallah and Deepak can melt into each other. Each of them is equally an abuser and the distinctions between the normal and the abnormal crumble.

*Thirty Days in September* thus successfully depicts the trauma of the victims of child abuse. The play explores the silence, the feelings of betrayal and the psychological instability that are characteristic of a victim of sexual abuse. On the other hand, the play offers no help by way of analyzing the subjectivity of the abuser. Questions such as



what makes a person an abuser, what his psycho-social circumstances are, or how his actions affect his psyche remain unanswered. Yet the play continues Dattani's attempt to explore the hushed-up issues in Indian society.

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Anuradha Bhattacharyya

### Milan Kundera: The Sign of the European Divide

Milan Kundera, the Czechoslovakian novelist, has been described as a writer critiquing the society calling it dogmatic, politicized and graded by consumerism; he has been portraying with a sharp irony the decay of the society. In all his books he has been using the format of a novel to create a way of thinking that is specifically novel-like which he defines as not abstract, not theoretical, not philosophical, but questioning, and provocative. Meditation or reflection becomes an inseparable part of his novels converging with narrative lines into a coherent piece. He is frequently labeled an Eastern European 'dissident' writer despite his insistence that his works are not inherently political or propagandistic. Rather than serving as ideological puppets, Kundera's characters are usually vulnerable individuals whose views and lifestyles are challenged through events and dilemmas in their personal lives and in society. In *Immortality* (1990) he uses several plots to express his ideas on man and society, stating right at the beginning that the whole story is arbitrary, an improvised exercise of the mind. His other works *Slowness* (1993), *Identity* (1998) and *Ignorance* (2000), deal with the problem of emigration.

Kundera has been striving to achieve an absolute originality of his writing which is impossible to imitate in another form of art. He disbelieves adaptations, trying all his life to make a novel that is not possible to reduce or rewrite. Kundera is writing his novels exactly the way he has described the art of a novel in his book: one can not tell a story of the novel. He clearly differentiates between an adaptation and a variation. Using somebody else's work to make a variation on the subject is a writing technique that Kundera used often in his book. However, he would not try to imitate or 'adapt' an original and try to reword it in his books or plays. In his treatise *Testaments Betrayed (Les testaments trahis: essai, 1993)*, Kundera wrote: All the transportation of Anna Karenina that we know from theatre or movies are adaptations, thus reductions. The more the adaptor is striving to remain discretely behind the novel, the more he betrays it. The reduction removes the elegance and meaning of the novel.

In *The Art of the Novel*, Milan Kundera redefines Europe in contemporary terms. He explains that in the Middle Ages, European unity rested on a common religion. In the Modern Era, religion yielded its position to culture [to cultural creation], which came to embody the supreme values by which Europeans recognized themselves, defined and identified themselves. He insists that cultural unity is also a thing of the past. A European is the one who is nostalgic for Europe. (*The Art of the Novel*, 128)

A claim such as this made by a novelist shows that he is criticizing the modern way of objectifying and studying the detail of everything and trying to classify them as separate. The postmodern methods of culture studies can be cited as examples of the disintegration of the sense of a unified cultural history of Europe.

He says, for Edmund Husserl, the adjective 'European' meant the spiritual identity that extends beyond geographical Europe

and that was born with ancient Greek philosophy. The Modern Era has gradually reduced the world to a mere object of technical and mathematical investigation and put the world of life, *die Lebenswelt* beyond the horizon of science.

The novel is a parallel of history. It has declined and progressed at the same time. The death of the novel has been discussed by the Futurists, the Surrealists and by nearly all the avant-gardes. For Milan Kundera, the death of the novel has already occurred in the time of bans, censorship and ideological pressure, meaning that the novel is incompatible with the totalitarian universe. The novels that have appeared even in the time of censor are mere illustrations of what the novel has already discovered about being. Totalitarianism has reduced man's life to its social function.

In order to unify the earth's history, the media amplify and channel the reduction process. Even the meaning of the works of art is reduced to tendentious interpretations. The spirit of the mass media is contrary to the spirit of the novel. "The novel's spirit is the spirit of complexity. Every novel says to the reader: Things are not as simple as you think." (*The Art of the Novel*, 18)

The novel's spirit is the spirit of continuity. Each work answers the previous works. Each later novel contains the experience of the previous novels. But the present has imposed itself so much on the novel that the novel is no longer a work. It is one current event among many; it is a gesture with no tomorrow. It may be believed that the future alone can tell the worth of a novel but it would be a folly to wait for the future to pass a judgment upon one's present work. So it is better to focus on the present action and discover its paradoxes. That is precisely the art of the novel.

Herman Broch insisted that the sole *raison d'être* of a novel is to discover what only the novel can discover. With Descartes,

the thinking self is the basis of the universe. With Cervantes, the imaginary selves called characters embody the contradictory truths of the world. The novel's wisdom is the wisdom of uncertainty.

Kundera believes that the present moment is the most elusive. Joyce tried to capture it by interior monologue. Kundera tries to show how paradoxical present action is. He says that the paradoxical nature of action is one of the novel's great discoveries. (14) in the third part of *Life is Elsewhere* the hero Jaromil experiences love for a girl in the form of tenderness. The author examines the word tenderness and clubs it with coming into adulthood. Tenderness is an attitude when we treat another being as a child. (30)

In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* Tereza experiences vertigo and the author analyses the word for her. "A heady, insuperable longing to fall", he defines. Further, "vertigo is the intoxication of the weak. Aware of his weakness, a man decides to give in rather than stand up to it. He is drunk with weakness, wishes to grow even weaker, wishes to fall down in the middle of the main square in front of everybody, wishes to be down, lower than down." (31)

Kundera suggests a term to define the structure of his novels. He calls it meditative interrogation or interrogative meditation. (31) He questions the age of youth. He calls it the lyrical age and recalls the triad lyricism/revolution/youth. For Tomas, Kundera examines the words lightness and weight. To make a character come alive, it is necessary to study his existential problem. It means getting to the bottom of his situations, some motifs and even some words that shape him. This is because man is bound to the world like a snail to its shell (35) and his social dimension constitutes his situations. Kundera cites Heidegger's verbal formulation of existence *in-der-Welt-sein* meaning being-

in-the-world as the characteristic of his novels. It suitably explains why it is that man's actions in the given situation in a given time period characterizes him, his internal as well as social being in Kundera's novels.

In the 1968 Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, the reign of terror against the public was preceded by officially organized massacres of dogs (37). An episode that has been forgotten by historians and political scientists is of significance for an anthropologist. Literature as a part of culture studies cites such examples from real life to illustrate the condition of man, his existential problems.

Not only must historical circumstance create a new existential situation for a character in a novel, but History itself must be understood and analyzed as an existential situation. [p. 38] Kundera gives the example of a man who suffers from tremendous weakness. Any man confronted with superior strength is weakness. Vertigo is intoxication with one's own weakness, the insuperable desire to fall.

Franz, in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, is the last melancholy echo of the Grand March of the European left. All the characters fulfill not only their personal histories but also the suprapersonal history of the European Experience (40). The history of Europe is a single common experience. All the characters are in some way or other withdrawing from the world. As against Descartes's famous formulation 'master and proprietor of nature' Kundera sees man as master neither of nature, nor of History, nor of himself and the planet is moving through the void without any master. (41)

By terminal paradoxes Kundera means that death is inevitable and it goes unnoticed as well. "There can be nothing so quiet as the end." (42)

“What is action? – the eternal question of the novel, its constitutive question, so to speak. How is a decision born? How is it transformed into an act, and how do acts connect to make an adventure?”(58). The novel explores the terrain of the irrational. How irrational our decisions can be. Despite reasoning, man tends to overdo logic and meets with a deadend. “Irrational logic is based on the mechanism of con-fusion”. (60). One thing is like another and confounded with it and due to its likeness comes to consciousness.

The Tomas-Tereza relationship in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* takes off from a juxtaposition of Beethoven, book and learning. Tomas is a doctor reading a book in a café in the country where Tereza is a waitress who believes that anyone who reads a book is learned and worthy of admiration. On top of that, just then Beethoven’s music floats in and Tomas happens to be able to talk about it. Her love of books and music culminates into Tereza’s love for Tomas. She examines nothing else about the character of Tomas and trusts him with all her heart.

In his novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*<sup>3</sup>, the themes are loosely strung up around seven chapters, or subjects. Sexuality or the sexual equation is a strong ingredient in the everyday life that Kundera describes. For example, in *Litost*, one starts with introducing Kristyna, a country maid who develops a love relationship with a student studying philosophy and poetry. Then it explains the Czech word *Litost*, which the writer states has no exact substitute in any other language. *Litost* is “a state of torment upon by the realization of one’s inadequacy or misery”. *Litost* seems to be always present in the student Kristyna loves and this feeling is also one of the reasons that he broke up with his former girlfriend. His professor, nicknamed Voltaire, invites the student to an evening gathering of the great poets of the country.

However, the student has a date with Kristyna that night and refuses to go to the gathering. He then meets Kristyna on the day the gathering is held. He is surprised to find her gaudy and simplistic in the city setting and decides to go to the meeting. He tells her about it and she is fascinated by it and wants the student not to miss the chance. The student agrees and meets the great poets and listens to their arguments and insults to each other. Through this he learns a lot of things. He asks one of the poets, named Goethe by the author, to inscribe on one of his books and gift the book to Kristyna. He returns home and finds Kristyna waiting for him. He gives her the book and she is moved. They do not have sex but feel each other’s immense love. The student tries several times to make love but Kristyna avoids it for fear of pregnancy, which threatens her life. So she keeps repeating that by doing this she would die. The student misinterprets her and thinks that she would die from the immense love from him if they are separated after this for a long time. He is deeply moved. He soon falls asleep. When he wakes up next morning, he finds a note in his coat from Kristyna telling her doctor’s verdict. After thinking over it, he realizes that he had misinterpreted her statement the previous night. He feels *litost* but can do nothing about it since Kristyna has already left. One of the poets approaches him and fills him with glory, making the student no longer feeling despair.

A similar juxtaposition of sexuality, history and misunderstood words make up the story of Karel, Marketa and Eva in the first chapter. In the last chapter entitled, "The Border", whenever Jan and Edwige make love, she is perfectly silent which prompts Jan to swear he will never repeat the act with her again. Edwiga explains the significance of mass nudity which Jan misunderstands. For Edwiga, nudity for all is an effective regression to the animal structure of human society, probably before enlightenment through the forbidden apple. Jan thinks she is talking

about group sex. The tale of Hanna and Passer is also a reflection of Europeaness. The society adores Passer, who has cancer, but who does not believe the doctors and walks around elated and happy. Hanna meets Passer at the country home of another family and they go picking mushrooms together, wandering to a local café and drinking wine until they slowly walk back. Later Passer says that although he has been forbidden to walk long distances or drink wine anymore, it was one of the happiest moments of his life because Hanna did not treat him as a sick man unlike the way his other friends and acquaintances do. Unfortunately, the trip together sends Passer to the hospital.

The author targets the progressivism of the Clevis family in "The Border". In this story, the teenaged girl seems to be overripe for her age. It upsets all codes of decorum and at the same time unveils the misunderstandings that ensue whenever a new trend is sought to be followed.

Kundera has been deeply influenced by Franz Kafka. Kundera defends Kafka's works as a valuable referendum concerning the life and times of Prague. Kundera leans heavily on Kafka's depiction of Prague for his own delineation of the War and aftermath situations in Europe. To this he adds his own experience of exile and persecution of artists.

Kundera misses Prague. He has shown this thing in his novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. The most appealing thing about this book is the loss of a loved one and then one's attempt at trying to not forget them and honoring their memory. The common human element of the book which is something that he has experienced is exile. It is not an easy thing to do, and the character Tamina's quest to retrieve her husband's love letters is one that he relates to. The book is quite insightful about Prague's ambience through the vivid imagery about Prague.

In the first part of the novel, Kundera describes a photograph dated February 21, 1948, where Vladimír Clementis stands next to Klement Gottwald. When Vladimír Clementis was charged in 1950, denounced and removed from official records and documents, he was erased from the photograph by the state propaganda. The photographer, Karel Hájek was also quarantined. This example from Czechoslovak political history underscores the theme of *forgetting* in his book.

This example is an instance of the politics of memory. It is the political means by which events are remembered and recorded, or discarded. Memories are influenced by political and cultural forces. Government policies and social rules, as well as popular culture and social norms, influence the way events are remembered. The influence of politics on memory is seen in the way history is written and passed on. For the generation born after war in Germany, some believed that there was no reason to continue the guilt of the past. For example, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl instituted policies that would help the next generation to be immune to the negative historical experiences. The terminology addresses the role of politics in shaping collective memory and how remembrances can differ markedly from the objective truth of the events as they happened. It has also been connected with the construction of identity.

Other such issues addressed in this book are politics of identity, nationalism, official history, censorship, social amnesia, *damnatio memoriae* where historical objectivity is tampered with for the emotional and cultural integrity of a nation. A nation which has undergone strife may rejuvenate itself by deliberate amnesia. This propaganda method is contrary to the Marxist view of historical determinism. It is also different from the Nietzschean theory of eternal return. In fact, if the World Wars and their effects

are not remembered and taught to the younger generations, another World War may become imminent. For we try to learn from our past deeds, what is for the good and what is to be avoided. Memorials keep alive the memories of conflict and commemorate general humanity. As Albert Camus has suggested, a record of the struggles of humanity against disasters is like a tribute to the sense of human dignity.

Many readers have remarked on the prominence of sexuality in Kundera's stories. Mark Sturdivant had commented in 1985 that "sexuality becomes a vehicle for expressing a variety of interwoven threads of commentary upon human characteristics, and for ultimately casting a pall of hopelessness and meaninglessness over mankind's fundamental existence."

As in *Litost* the story revolves around the sexual relationship. It starts with introducing Kristyna, who develops a love relationship with a student studying philosophy and poetry. Then, it explains the Czech word *Litost*, and eventually, the student suffers *litost* due to his failure to possess Kristyna sexually.

Since Freudian theory attributes a large proportion of pleasure or in common parlance mood swings to sexuality, we can grant that Kundera has aptly recognized the importance of sex in daily life. Kundera seems to make his readers feel that every other satisfaction – of being honoured, being felicitated, being appreciated – one finds in social life is unfulfilling if not accompanied by satisfaction in one's sexual life. Sex is almost like an antidote to depression and if one has a steady partner in sex there can be nothing more satisfying in life.

Social situations disturb one's sex life and that is why Kundera throws remarkable insight into how personal relationships develop and break surrounding the question of sexual satisfaction. He does not leave love far behind, since he invests sexual pleasure

in compatible partnerships rather than promiscuity. This is exemplified in the Tomas-Tereza-Sabina story. He shows how situations force them to evaluate their emotional dependence on each other and strive for reconciliation.

Without referring to Freud or the psychoanalytic school of thought, Kundera has eloquently described how individuals as well as in groups we live 'in the sur-real sphere of symbols' (61). When he refers to the real, he means the palpable physical world and the present social condition. Con-fusions refer to symbolic thought rather than a sense of the real. To depict such situations the novelist has to accept a profound transformation of the novel's form. The conventional form which was grounded in the central character's adventures has been survived by a narrative of characters and their situations in the context of a larger theoretical or say philosophical enquiry into the question of existence. The novel has thereby become more poetic and rhetorical. The novel incorporates several genres and philosophies and poetry and scientific knowledge to provide an analysis of what Kundera emphasizes as the 'thing the novel alone can discover: man's being' (64).

Kundera also strikes out against what he calls establishment modernism or the modernism of the university. There are fixed rules, classifications and excessive division of labour, specializations and deconstruction that the novel alone is left as a piece of art that connects with life in its entirety. The present circumstances are profoundly hostile to the evolution of art and of the novel in particular. (67).

In the third part of his novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* Kundera describes a 'circle dancing' where the joy and laughter is built up to such a point that the people's steps take them soaring into the sky like laughing angels. Such elements found in the genre of Magic Realism, make the book a postmodern protest

against the death of the novel. It is enforced by Tamina's experience of a vertigo which finds her in a nowhere land of children. The child motif is re-read with the foregrounding of the animal instincts. A child is not the epitome of innocence. Rather, it is love that is innocent, more or less victimized by perverse behaviour. If children are left in a land, like in the novel *The Lord of The Flies* by William Golding, to grow up by themselves, without the tutorship of civilized elders, they would be what Tamina encounters down in an island of the nowhere land she finds herself in. In order to appease the ugly Hugo so that he would go to Prague to recover her dead husband's correspondences with her, Tamina has sex with Hugo. She cannot keep her mind off her deceased husband and betrays herself, as Hugo gives up the idea of going to fetch the letters. In despair Tamina drowns herself. The experience of death or sinking is another surrealist description in the novel. It shows the psychological stress undergone by thousands of Europeans who have been severed from their family members due to the communist versus democratic divide that has marked the Twentieth Century. However, the fact that all the Europeans have been writing about similar topics and experiencing similar dilemmas contribute to show in the final analysis, what Milan Kundera certainly professes, the history of Europe is a single common experience.

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#### **Animal Sensibilities Amidst Human Insensibilities: A Study of Chekov's "Misery" and Premchand's "A Pair of Two Oxen"**

#### **Abstract**

Munshi Premchand and Anton P. Chekhov are two of the great short story writers of 20th Century who have considerable influence on the development of the modern short story. Though Premchand belonged to India and Chekhov belonged to Russia but their writings reflect universal nature and character that is why they are loved not only in their own country but by all over the world. Both have remarkable psychological understanding and their works are replete with what is happening in the minds of his characters rather than external incidents. This paper deals with revealing the exceptional skills of both the short story writers in expressing psychological aspects and sensibilities in their stories. The story "Misery" ("The Lament") by Anton Chekhov deals with human insensitivity to other people's grief. It captures the agony of an old man who has been recently bereaved following the death of his son and his need to speak about his grief and unburden himself. The indifferent and unsympathetic world has no time to respond to his misery. Finally he shares his sadness with his loyal animal friend, the mare of his coach that consoles its master by a warm breath on his hand. Similarly Premchand's knowledge of the human psychology and his appreciation of the ironies of life made him

a stellar writer. He shows remarkable skill by creating the characters of two bulls namely Heera and Moti in his story “A Pair of Two Oxen” (“Do Bailon Ki Katha”). He made them his mouthpiece for conveying the message that animals are more sensible in their behaviour and relationship than human beings. Human beings may fail to reciprocate the love that they have received but animals are better than them because they never fail to acknowledge the favour and love given to them and they try and return them in whatever possible way they can. Their greatness lies in the fact that their writings embody social purpose and social criticism rather than mere entertainment.

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Munshi Premchand, (July 31, 1880 – October 8, 1936) was a famous writer of modern Hindi-Urdu literature. He is generally recognized in India as the foremost Hindi-Urdu writer of the early twentieth century. He is a novel writer, story writer and dramatist. Similarly, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (January 29, 1860- July 15, 1904) is a well-known Russian short story writer and playwright.

All that he wrote has stood the test of time, and nearly seventy after his death, Premchand is still one of India’s best-read authors. His greatness lies in the fact that his writings embody social purpose and social criticism rather than mere entertainment. Literature according to him is a powerful means of educating public opinion. He believed in social evolution and his ideal was equal opportunities for all. Premchand wrote in a very direct and simple style, and his words made their own magic. His protagonists were always the people he observed around him. His knowledge of the human psychology and his appreciation of the ironies of life made him a stellar writer.

The reader feels a part of Premchand’s stories. All his fictional characters are real. They are living and breathing. Not just, blank ink on whitepaper. Premchand brought realism to Hindi literature. He wrote over 300 stories, a dozen novels and two plays. The stories have

been compiled and published as *Maansarovar*. His famous creations are: “Panch Parameshvar”, “Idgah”, “Shatranj Ke Khiladi”, “Poos Ki Raat”, “Bade Ghar Ki Beti”, “Kafan”, “Udhar Ki Ghadi”, “Namak Ka Daroga”, *Gaban*, *Godaan*, and *Nirmala*.

Like Premchand Anton P. Chekhov also wrote sympathetically about characters of all classes, the bored upper classes as well as the deprived poor. His work is known for its unique combination of comedy, tragedy and pathos. He was an early practitioner of the “stream of consciousness” technique used by novelists like Henry James, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. In Chekhov, plot is subordinate to character. Because the short story as a form is too short for the development of character, Chekhov’s stories focus on a particular mood. This new way of writing a story at times poses difficulties to the reader. Chekhov defended his open-ended stories saying “the role of an artist is to ask questions and not to answer them”. The story ‘Misery’, first published in 1886, does not pose any difficulty as it deals with an experience that touches all of us at some point in our lifetime. The story gives an authentic portrayal of human nature that remains unaffected by the sorrows of the world so long as they do not impinge on it at a personal level.

This is a story of a father’s grief over the death of his son. The grief is within him and he desperately wants to speak about it to lighten his burdensome misery. He asks to himself “to whom shall I tell my grief?” But no one is ready to listen to him. The story describes the old man’s urge to share his grief with others, his despair at not being able to find a compassionate audience and his final effort to disgorge his misery by talking to his mare, his one and only companion. It tells us about the self-centred, unresponsive and feelingless nature of human beings in this world. The old man in grief is a sledge driver. He is the protagonist of the story. The other characters who appear briefly during the course of the story are riders on his sledge who have neither the



time nor the inclination to listen to him. They live in a world of their own and cannot sympathetically relate to the old man in grief. The story 'Misery' has a sub title 'To Whom Shall I Tell My Grief?' While the grief is over the loss of his son, his misery is not finding an outlet to unburden his grief.

Iona looks for an opportunity to share the pain of his heart with any one his "fares" on a snowy evening with biting cold. Chekhov describes realistically the shades of darkness all around, heightened by the white snow. We hear a lot of movement of people, but in the darkness no one is visible. He is surrounded by people and yet remains all alone in his grief. The darkness around him is a measure of the darkness within him. He is like a ghost in white (as he is covered by the snowflakes) for he experiences a death-in-life existence.

Iona, while sitting on his cab, sees a ray of hope when he is stopped by an "officer" like gentleman who hires the coach "To Vyborgskaya," ("Misery" 23) Iona is lost in his thought of choosing an appropriate time to share his sorrow with the officer. Seeking an opportunity "Iona looks at his fare and moves his lips. . . . Apparently he means to say something, but nothing comes but a sniff." ("Misery" 23) Meanwhile he gets a response from the officer; "'What?'" ("Misery" 24) enquires the officer." to which "Iona gives a wry smile, and straining his throat, brings out huskily: "My son . . . er . . . my son died this week, sir." ("Misery" 24) The officer shows little concern; "'H'm! What did he die of?'" ("Misery" 24) Iona says "Who can tell! It must have been from fever. . . . He lay three days in the hospital and then he died. . . . God's will." ("Misery" 24) In the process of conversation Iona turns back fully to face the Officer due to which he loses control on his coach and gets a bash from the road; "'Turn around, you devil!" ("Misery" 24) comes out of the darkness. "Have you gone cracked, you old dog?" ("Misery" 24) Look where you are going!". Iona sits in correct position and wants to continue his narration with the officer but the officer is more concerned about his reaching the destination

than listening to the story of Iona, "Drive on! drive on! . . ." says the officer. "We shan't get there till tomorrow going on like this. Hurry up!" ("Misery" 24) Iona obeys his fare's instructions and starts driving the coach carefully and with a hope that after some moments the officer would listen to his story; "Several times he looks round at the officer, but the latter keeps his eyes shut and is apparently disinclined to listen." ("Misery" 24) Iona is helpless therefore "Putting his fare down at Vyborgskaya, Iona stops by a restaurant, and again sits huddled up on the box. . . . Again the wet snow paints him and his horse white." ("Misery" 24) This officer is an example of a person who represents the educated and higher section of the society, but when it comes to showing concern to others he is showing reluctance and insensibilities. Chekhov, through his officer shows how rich people are occupied with their own business and have no time for others; their time is precious but only for themselves.

Time drifts but with extreme agony for Iona and the cold weather is intensifying the pain, Chekhov gives the expression through words "One hour passes, and then another. . . ." ("Misery" 24) Then for a moment Iona feels that fate is favouring him as he gets three young men as fare, they are a bunch of revelers, young, rumbustious (making merry in a noisy way) with not a care of the world. They behave as though they are drunk. One of them is a hunchback. Despite his physical deformity, he feels superior to the old man who is weighed down with grief. All of them have no sympathy for the old man who tries to tell them of his son's death. The old man is gentle and kind to his mare; he does not whip his mare to speed up. This behavior of the young men is an indication of their personality and character. Despite their quarrelsome nature and ill temper Iona welcomes them on his cab and wastes no time in beginning to narrate his story about the death of his son; "My son . . . died this week." ("Misery" 25) To this humpback replies "We must all die, wiping his lips after an attack of

coughing. 'Now, hurry up, hurry up! Gentlemen, I really cannot go any farther like this! When will he get us there?'" ("Misery", p. 25) and then the insult and foul words came hurling at Iona from these young men. One said "Well, just you stimulate him a little in the neck!" ("Misery" 25) the other said "You old pest, do you hear, I'll bone your neck for you! If one treated the like of you with ceremony one would have to go on foot! Do you hear, old serpent Gorinytch! Or do you not care a spit?" ("Misery" 25) In contrast the revelers ride roughshod over his feelings. Iona is happy to see them merry, but they have no eyes to discern the old man's sorrow.

His misery is immense, beyond all bounds. If Iona's heart were to burst and his misery to flow out, it would flood the whole world, it seems, but yet it is not seen. It can swamp the whole world and yet its immensity is not seen. It is within him and no one can even fathom the depths of its intensity. Iona longs for people to whom he can unburden himself. When the revelers are in his sledge, he is comforted with the thought that he has company to share his grief with. To that extent his grief is eased. But when he is back alone in his sledge watching crowds moving to and fro, he realizes that a crowd is no company. "Iona drives a few paces away, bends himself double, and gives himself up to his misery." ("Misery" 26)

His attempts to talk to the officer and the three young men fail and he is again alone. He is alone but he still has his mare. He unburdens his heart to the passive mare. For the first time, he mentions his son's name Kuzma Ionitch. He is gone. He has preceded him to the grave. He asks the mare how she would feel if she had a colt and the colt died. "You'd be sorry. Won't you?" ("Misery" 27) The mare does not answer. It breathes on his hand. But in that unspoken moment the animal's tender and unprotesting looks comfort the old man. He feels that he has touched a sympathetic chord in his mare - the only possession he has still with him. He pours his heart out to her. He has found an outlet for his grief.

Is the mare really listening? Is she compassionate and understanding? Or is the last part of the story just the old man's fancy? The ending is deliberately left inconclusive. But the story drives home the point that humans are basically insensitive to other's pain and lack any involvement and sharing in the grief of fellowmen. The story you have read is written in a straightforward narrative style. What strikes the reader is its quality of simplicity. Chekhov has an eye for detail and he is a photographic and cinematographic realist. It is as though he has a camera that accurately portrays a piece of life. Chekhov once said that "Art tells the truth" and Tolstoy said "Art tells the truth because it expresses the highest feelings of man." The story 'Misery' by Anton Chekhov deals with human insensitivity to other people's grief. It captures the agony of an old man who has been recently bereaved following the death of his son and his need to speak about his grief and unburden himself. The indifferent and unsympathetic world has no time to respond to his misery. The story gives an authentic portrayal of human nature that remains unaffected by the sorrows of the world so long as they do not impinge on it at a personal level.

Premchand's story "A Pair of Two Oxen" begins with a beautiful description of various kinds of animals with their unique characteristics and qualities which included a dog, a cow and an ass but ass turns out be the best amongst all the animals in the animal kingdom. In the words of Premchand "All the virtues of the saints and sages have reached their culminating point in him, yet, man calls him foolish. Such disrespect for virtues has not been seen anywhere else" ("A Pair of Two Oxen" 7) The novelist through this example tries to convey that in this world of insensibilities, complaints, dissatisfaction and 'no-respect-for-others-emotions' attitude an ass is the symbol of contentment and satisfaction and live happily in whatever state he is put to live. But, the simplicity of an ass is not seen anywhere in this world; "Perhaps simplicity is alien for this world." ("A Pair of Two

Oxen”7) Then the novelist moves on to call oxen the “younger brother” of an ass but “The ox sometimes hits also and we have also come across a stubborn ox. It expresses its dissatisfaction in many ways, hence, his rant is lower than that of an ass” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”8)

Premchand, after an interesting beginning, moves on to narrate the story. He narrates that Jhoori Kachchi has two oxen named Heera and Moti; “They both belonged to the Pachchai breed-they were good in look, alert in their work and good physiqued. Since they had lived together for a very long time, they had developed fraternal understanding between them.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”8) They, unlike modern human beings, have time for each other as “they would sit together and hold short discussions with each other.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”8) Though, “we cannot say how one understood what the other was thinking about.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”8) Here Premchand satirizes human beings when he says; “They definitely possessed some secret power which many, who claim to be the most superior amongst all living beings, are exempted from.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”8) Tremendous sense of camaraderie and love is seen between both the oxen; “One used to smell or lick the other to express his love, sometimes they used to entangle their horns also-not with any feeling of enmity, but just for the joy of it and with a feeling of cordiality, just like when friends become very close they start exchanging blows.” Without this, friendship seems hollow, somewhat flimsy, which cannot be trusted much.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”8). Such love and friendship is completely absent from human lives in today’s times as no one feels for others and is engrossed only in selfish business. Friendship is based on selfish motives and once such motives are realized the bond of friendship gets broken. Premchand further describes the qualities of Heera and Moti; “When both these oxen were harnessed to the plough and they would move, shaking their heads, each would try to take the maximum load on his neck. (“A Pair of Two Oxen”8) On the contrary amongst human beings one wants to transfer one’s weight on another’s

back as long as possible. These two oxen show human beings how one can sacrifice for the other and still be happy. How sense of sharing brings loads of happiness and loving others only gives back more love. “After the whole day, when in the afternoon or evening, both were deharnessed, they would lick each other and get rid of their tiredness. When the oil cake and the chaff (cut straw) was poured in the tub, both would get up together, put their mouths into the tub together and would eat together. If one would take his mouth away, the other too would remove his mouth.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”8)

When Jhoori sent oxen to his in-laws’ place both were sad, thinking that they were sold. As they had no tongue otherwise they would have asked; Why are you throwing poor souls out? . . . We never shirked serving you. Whatever you gave us, we ate that. They why did you sell us at the hands of this tyrant? (“A Pair of Two Oxen”9) These words are expression of sense of loyalty towards the master which shows that animals love their master unconditionally but it is the man who doesn’t understand the feeling of the other man leave apart the animals. Human beings today neither have sense of loyalty towards their families nor towards their society, they are concerned only about themselves and their selfish aims. Unlike human beings Heera and Moti are not at all ready to stay in the house of Gaya (Jhoori’s brother in law ) so they revolt against their new house. They desperately wanted to reach their old house as soon as possible. “They both counseled with each other silently, cast a side glance at each other and lay down. When the whole village was sleeping, they both broke loose, and started running towards home. (“A Pair of Two Oxen”9)

This act of Heera and Moti won the praise of one and all in the village except Jhoori’s wife. She started fuming with rage. She said, “How ungrateful these oxen are that they did not work there even for a day. They ran away!” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”10) Despite Jhoori’s kind words and protection the oxen were blamed by his wife

as “shirkers” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”, 10) and she decided to punish both of them and “the attendant was given strict instructions to give only dry chaff to the oxen.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”, 10) as a result of which “The oxen put their mouths into the manger and found it tasteless. There was no greasiness, no juice! What ere they supposed to eat? They started looking hopefully towards the door.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”, p.10). The poor creatures could not get the usual better fodder that day. Even worse was that “the next day Jhoori’s brother-in-law came once again” to take them to his house. They were both harnessed to the carriage. Moti wanted to revolt and “push the carriage into the ditch of the road, but Heera Controlled it.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”, p.11) Premchand here teaches the lesson of tolerance to human beings. Put in the difficult situations human beings revolt immediately. Gaya wanted to teach the oxen “a lesson for the mischief of the day before. . . . gave them the same dry cut grass. He gave oil cakes and wheat meal and everything else to his own two oxen.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”11)

Gaya tortures the oxen and “harnessed the oxen to his plough but the two did not even move” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”11). He beat them mercilessly and “got tired of beating them but the two did not move a step even.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”11). There was a limit to bear the pain not of self but of the friend which made Moti lose temper “when the treacherous man hit Heera number of times on his nose.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”, 11). As a result of which Moti “ran with the plough. The plough, the rope, the yoke, the tillage-everything was broken into pieces.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”11) Here Premchand is at his brilliant best in showing the comparison between nasty human behaviour and tolerant animal behaviour i.e. human insensibilities and amidst animal’s sensibilities. When both of them ran Gaya came running after them with two men having sticks in their hands. There is an interesting conversation between the oxen;

Moti said, “If you say, I shall also let hem have the taste of their own medicine. They are coming with sticks.”

Heera tried to pacify him, “No, brother. Just stand here.”

“If he hits me, I shall also throw down one or two.”

“No, this is not the attribute of our species.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”11)

Finally they were both caught by Gaya and his men and confined to the same treatment. But, all was not bad for the oxen as they found one girl who gave “two roties” to them. It seemed that she understands the pain of these oxen because “Her stemp mother used to beat her. As such, she felt some kind of fraternity with these oxen.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”12) So, when the fire of revolt burns in Moti who says “I shall pick one or two with horns and throw them.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen” 11) Heera pacifies Moti by saying, “. . . that lovely girl who feeds us, is the daughter of the master of this house only. That poor child will become an orphan!” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”11) Moti suggests to “throw the mistress, she is the one who beats the girl.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”, 11) to which Heera replies “But it is forbidden to use our horns on women, why do you forget this?” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”11) But, both were unanimous in their decision to chew the rope to which they were tied and run away as they planned to do so they were visited by the little orphan girl “she patted their heads and said, “I will unite you. Run away quietly otherwise these people will kill you. Today, they were discussing in the house that they shall make you dance to their tune.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”13). She even untied the ropes but the oxen didn’t move because Heera said to Moti that “We can go, but tomorrow this orphan will have to face a lot of problems. Everyone is going to suspect her only.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”13) But then they decided to run with their full force and they had virtually reached out of the reach of Gaya and his men. When Moti said they we should have “killed him” to avoid any kind of threat

of being caught Heera gives a very sensible reply saying “If we had killed him, what would the world have said? He may abandon his religion, but why should we abandon ours?” (“A Pair of Two Oxen” 13).

A lesson can be learnt by human beings for the unity shown by the oxen. When the oxen were enjoying the freedom on the green pasture they were attacked by a bull who was “like an elephant” (“A Pair of Two Oxen” 14), both of them decided to face the bull simultaneously and with a plan. “Both the friends risked their lives and leapt. . . Both the friends chased him till far away. To the extent that the bull was out of breath and fell down” (“A Pair of Two Oxen”, 14).

After their victory over the big bull, Moti entered into the field of peas despite Heera’s warning. Eventually he was caught by the field owner, seeing him caught Heera also let the owner catch him and “both the friends were locked up in the cattle pond.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen, 15) Here both of them faced the worst time of their lives and they thought “Even Gaya was better than this man” .” (“A Pair of Two Oxen, 15) This was the place where “many buffaloes here, many goats, many horses, many donkeys, but no one had blades of hay before them, all of them were lying on the ground like corpses. Many had become so weak that they were unable to stand too” .” (“A Pair of Two Oxen 15) This place is a reflection of how men can be mean and insensible. Heera revolted against this bondage and said “I cannot live like this Moti.” .” (“A Pair of Two Oxen 15) but Moti had lost all his strength but Heera did not give up and “ he thrust his pointed horns into the wall and his hit hard” .” (“A Pair of Two Oxen, p. 16) He succeeded in breaking a substantial part of the wall but listening to the notice the guard came and beat Heera mercilessly. Moti commented on the state of Heera “Ultimately you got a beating, what did you get. . . you might lose your life” (“A Pair of Two Oxen 15). To this Heera’s reply is a message of universal brotherhood for the human beings, more relevant today;

I don’t care. As it is, one has to die. Think, if the wall had been broken down, how many lives might have been saved! So many brethren are enclosed here. None of them has life in him. If this kind of a situation persists for two or three days more, all of us will die” .” (“A Pair of Two Oxen 16) Finally the wall was broken and all the animals escaped. Heera was tied to a thick rope and Moti tried his hard to cut it down but he failed, seeing this Heera said to Moti “You go. Let me remain here. May be we will meet again sometime” (“A Pair of Two Oxen” 17) Listening this “tears welled up in Moti’s eyes. He said, “Do you consider me so selfish, Heera! You and I have lived together for such a long time. Today, when you are in deep trouble, I should have you and go away.” .” (“A Pair of Two Oxen 17) Heera said, “You’ll be beaten badly. People will understand that this is your work.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen 17) Moti said proudly, “The crime for which this bondage fell around your neck, if I’m beaten for it, then what is the problem! At least, the lives of nine or ten animals were saved. They will at least, bless me.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen” 17) Exactly the same happened what both the friends were fearing of “Moti was beaten black and blue and he was also tied with a thick rope” (“A Pair of Two Oxen” 17) and their condition was miserable; “For one week, the two friends lay there tied down. . . Both had become so weak that they could not even rise; they were reduced to skeletons.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen” 17) The day had come when both the oxen were auctioned and were carried by an old bearded man. Both of them realized that they will be slaughtered and were cursing their fates and God. Then on the way they saw the familiar fields and villages and knew that they are close to their home. They felt energetic and decided to run to their house with full energy and reached the home of Jhoori. The bearded man also followed them and quarrelled with Jhoori claiming his ownership as he has bought them in an auction. Jhoori refused to return the oxen and even oxen dragged the old man out of the village. At the end of the story Premchand gives the final message

when one of the oxen says “No one considers our life as life” the other replied “It is only because we are so humble.” (“A Pair of Two Oxen 17)

Thus, the analysis of both the stories shows that human beings may fail to reciprocate the love that they have received but animals are better than them because they never fail to acknowledge the favour and love given to them and they try and return them in whatever possible way they can.

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Jimmy Sharma

### Issues and Conflicts in Jayant Mahapatra’s Poetry

The poetic world of Jayant Mahapatra comprises conflicts, fissures, ruptures, and contradictions of modern life. His poetry expounds surreal images, non linear, fragmented sentences and expressions and free association to portray such experiences and predicament of human beings engrossed in social, economic and cultural milieu. Like the post modernist playwright, Samuel Beckett, Jayant Mahapatra is obsessed with the element of absurdity present in human life and condition. There is a splinter self present in the persona of the poet which is the product of unresolved dilemmas of an alienated Christian life with different rituals, symbols and past from the local Hindu culture and society which is further aggravated by his English language education. He relates his environment to that of his inner feelings and emotions. He is very sensitive in observing a scene, object and event from the outer landscape to dissect his inner landscape through the medium of poem.

Although Jayant Mahapatra has an academic background of science, yet he writes poetry in an appealing manner. His poetry began to appear in the later ’60s and early ’70s along with Mehrotra, Kolatkar, Nandy and Chitre. These poets took venture in experimental poetry. Jayant exhibits full command over language and expression.

Bijay Kumar Das traces the influences of imagist poets like Eliot and Ezra in his poetry as the poet lay emphasis on the images of the poem (Bijay Kumar Das:2001, 25). He writes with passion, emotion and sensitivity through the cadence and music of words. Words are the only instruments to pour out his experience and comment of the world surrounding him. He believes that 'a great poem lets us embark on a set of journey or voyage through symbols and allusions to encompass the human condition.' (*ACLALS Bulletin:1981, 11*)

He seeks to find peace in society. In the words of G.J.V., Jayant is "engaged in writing about the almost inarticulate quest for peace and understanding that all human beings are involved in." (G.J.V. Prasad:1991, 41) He longs for mental repose and poetry has emerged as a medium to voice inner spaces. He is occupied with basic human feelings of depression, guilt, desire, lust and attention in this ultra-modern world. In this context, Bruce King says, "It is a difficult, often obscure poetry of meditation, recording reality as an unknowable flux; it more often deconstructs what is perceived and itself than affirms or celebrates." (Bruce King:1987, 195) He seems to advocate the fact that fixity in language is impossible. He treats the inadequacy of language, the difficulty of people understanding each other, the pangs of being silent and repressed, the mind's imaginings, juxtaposition of the private and public world, putting forth Indian myth and ritual, dreams and identity. There is recurrence of motifs in his poems which further bring unity to his poems and bring forth the themes of loneliness, personal relationships, position of women, value of Indian culture, myth, rituals and (multi) identities of post modern man.

Jayant experiments with form, language, syntax, image, and sound. He alludes to the original experience by the symbolism. Outer landscape is used to depict the inner landscape of mind and soul. He does not emphasize the appearance of what is seen but on subjective feelings which are signal to repressed emotions, desires, hopes, deep anxieties, and fears. The poems become a rostrum for revelation of

unknown truths and hidden desires of the poet's heart. Poetry discovers 'areas of the mind unstructured by rational concept and logic'.

But it takes the intellectual and emotional height to portray complex phenomena of modern life in poetry with the use of fragmented expressions, sentences and unusual images. With sheer literary vigour and language grasp, the poet pours out his persona in an inimitable way. He also records a distance between himself and the surroundings. His world is uncertain, self-doubtful, guilty, obsessed, perplexed, speculative, vital, illuminated and anxious about the changes. He himself says in one of his essays about the growth of writer that with each book he is 'drawn into an inner world of his own making- a world spaced by his own life, of secret allusions, of desire and agony, of a constantly changing alignment between dream and reality.'

Jayant portrays the plight of women as lonely, sufferers, silent, inarticulate, docile, repressed who are left at the will of patriarchal society. The poet himself admits that his mother's image inspires him to articulate her desires and feelings in a poem "A Missing Person": '... a woman/cannot find her reflection in the mirror' The flame represents the burning of unfulfilled desires lurking beneath the unheard heart. She yearns for a listener to share her experiences and emotions.

In another poem 'The Whore House In A Calcutta Street', he describes the realistic portrayal of prostitutes with the help of picturesque images. The poet mentions female sexuality and sexual act in an Indian way. The poet gives a sudden and abrupt opening to the poem when he depicts a house which "smiles wryly into the lighted street". The women in the whorehouse are unfamiliar to the visitors as the visitors are just concerned with the physical gratification. The whores catch 'the startled eye to fall upon'. These whores too have their past left behind with 'looked-after children and of home', 'their... chatter' for which nobody bothers. Their life has 'dark spaces' bringing darkness of social ostracism and loneliness to their lot. There is superfluity in

such life with no future and hope. These women do ‘the sweet, the little things’, ‘to please’ the men visiting them. But if they happen to be ‘a disobeying toy’, men show their ‘wide wilderness’ to satisfy bodily cravings. These women are conditioned to feel insecure with ‘the faint feeling deep at a woman’s centre/ that brings back the discarded things.’ These women are discarded like a used commodity after being physically (mis)used by men. Without acknowledging the presence of their ‘lonely breath’, men feel contented with the physical pleasure. Commenting on the feminist concern of this poem, Himadri Roy says that this poem “seemed to deal with the pains and agonies that these prostitutes suffer in their everyday life...” (Himadri Roy:2006, 133)

The helplessness of ‘Indian woman’ in her famous poem “Dawn” can be traced out, ‘an Indian woman, piled up to her silences,/ Waiting for what the world will only let her do.’ ‘Wait’ is the stereotyped reward given to a woman for being the way society expects her to be. In “A Missing Person”, the poet again refers to a woman ‘waiting as usual...’ with loneliness inscribed all around her. He pictures the darkness of her life with the image of ‘the darkened room’ and her loneliness is shown as she ‘cannot find her reflection in the mirror’. This utter solitude has put her into a pit of depression, disgust and despair. She is unable to express herself throughout her life. The image of ‘the oil lamp’ with ‘drunken yellow flames’ points to her repressed desires lurking beneath the silent heart yearning for the missing person and the missing happiness and contentment in her life.

Landscape is referred constantly in his poems to depict the complexities of human heart. In “Indian Summer”, he presents the contrast of ‘the sombre wind’ along with the loud chants of priests. Their chant let ‘the mouth of India opens’ with religious vigour and intensity. The summer season is associated with dryness, heat, lethargy, and sluggishness. The mornings of Indian summer create refuse- heaps of smoke ‘under the sun’. The Indian woman’s nature of uncomplaining

acceptance is again referred here:

‘The good wife  
lies in my bed  
through the long afternoon;  
dreaming still, unexhausted  
by the deep roar of funeral pyres.’

Jayant also talks about the predicament of life where there is no logic, reason and prudence. In a poem “The Logic”, the poet attempts to find out the logic from his love life. He exploits dramatic monologue with stress on unusual images like ‘the lemon-yellow logic’ (which represents the hollow, sluggish and dreary place of logic in modern life), ‘geometric hands’, ‘troglodytes’, ‘unblemished milk’, ‘scalp’, ‘devoted pads of flesh’, ‘Steep drag’, and ‘practised drivell’. The poet yearns for a solution of a love-ridden enigma where he urges for understanding and mutual comfort with his beloved and appeals to her: ‘Make me small and edible, love’ He has tried to be complacent and adjustable but is finally shattered by his beloved. Thus, he prays to her like a devotee and shows his readiness to help her in what she strives to attain. He will try to give her all comforts of life. He says, ‘My devoted pads of flesh pave the ground/ For what you strove to accomplish’. Towards the end of the poem, he admits that his own nature of silly, nonsense talk hurts him more than the physical and mental pressures and demands of his beloved.

In “Grass”, the image of grass teaches him a great way of life to be humble and ready to move ahead in his life without bothering about the hindrances. The images like ‘a little hymn’, ‘tolerant soil’, ‘a mirror’, ‘the sun’, ‘rot’, ‘the cracked earth of years’, ‘unknown winds’, childlike submissiveness’, ‘tormentors’ give a strong impression of the poet’s message. The process of knowing involves many actions like ‘negotiate’, ‘moving’, ‘throwing’, ‘trailing’, ‘watch’, ‘turning’,



‘making’, ‘marching’, ‘lurching’, ‘reminding’, ‘staggering’, ‘heaving’, ‘watch’, ‘scythe’, ‘know’, ‘sensing’, ‘tear’, ‘waiting’, and ‘dread’.

The poet endeavours to bring reconciliation with his grief, conflicts of inner self and mysterious situations of life. The poet’s persona looks upon grass as the one sharing his ‘great grief across its shoulders, sometimes, trailing it at my side’. He learns the lesson of fortitude and brave attitude: ‘a tolerant soil making its own way/in the light of the sun’. It shows that man should make optimum use of whatever he has attained.

The outer landscape is  
‘just a mirror  
marching away solemnly with me, lurching  
into an ancestral smell of rot, reminding me  
of secrets of my own.’

In the poem “Lost”, the poet relates the female body with seasons changing different moods. He says that in his company, ‘your body ease off the seasons/stretched out on the stone of my breath’. His relationship with his beloved has brought ‘pain and pleasure’ to his heart and he has enough tolerated the ‘lulling silence’ about the conflict between each other. There is ‘a (mental and physical) distance’ between them as ‘her body keeps shrinking in space’. The increasing tension is also present outside: the evenings are ‘heavy,/ the half-light wandering round the room’. The poet’s persona is in doubtful situation even towards the end of the poem. He has not got any response from his beloved and feels himself like a child whose ‘first faith’ is shaken with ‘some defect in a mechanical toy’. He asks himself the reason for this conflict and tension. He feels himself being lost. He tries to trace the way where this incident would ‘lead to?/ To what fateful encounter?’ He is lost like a ‘misplaced watch’.

The expression of being in the state of sub-conscious mind, dream-like state is presented through words and images like ‘dreaming’, ‘sleep’, ‘drunken’, ‘half-woken mind’, ‘dream’. Other words showing oppositions and contrasts are sombrewind/ chant louder, ‘darkened room/the oil lamp, the lighted street/ house’s dark spaces, recline/clasping.

Jayant, on the whole, is the prominent advocate of surrealistic poetry with themes and concerns of the modern man’s countless issues. He has his own distinct and a sharp persona to put his concerns across the readers in a subtle manner. His tone is often very ironic and often he derides others for being hollow and hypocritical. His concerns for the incommunicable and inexplicable situation and plight of modern people can be traced in his poetry. Modern people lack language to communicate and they are lost in the modern humdrum of society. They lack universal human values and are just hypocritical about their religion, rituals and beliefs. They are led by the winds of changes without articulating their own voice and concerns.

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R Indumathi

**Acquiescence Disability :  
A Study of Imaiyam's *Beasts of Burden***

The paper attempts to flash the disability of marginalized people who are getting suppressed and subjugated by the casteist/capitalist society. The paper deals with the sufferings of low-caste people, considered inferior among Dalits, who are enslaved and exploited by the upper-castes as well as within their own community. And also explains how these exploited people are simply acquiescent, surrender and enslaved by upper caste people. Even after independence, marginalized people in India were still suffering slavery at the hands of upper-caste and upper-caste's capitalist attitude towards the low-caste. And yet it's not equitable always blaming upper-caste people for their dominance over lower-caste people. Robert Greene, an American statesmen and orator, said "there is no slavery but ignorance". This fact shows that it is the responsibility of downtrodden who are unable to act against their masters thereby submitting themselves to the slavery to lead a peaceful life without raising question against the mainstream society. A similar crisis is spotted out in this paper with reference to the work of Imaiyam's *Beasts of Burden* with a brief introduction to the Dalit literature.

"Dalit literature" is a literature created with Dalit consciousness about Dalit life. It is significant that Dalit literature owes its origin to a

revolutionary struggle for social and economic change. This explains the various aspects of serious thought in Dalit literature. Dalit literature is closely associated with the hopes for freedom of a group of people who as untouchables are victims of social, economic and cultural inequality. This literature is characterized by a feeling of rebellion against the establishment of negativism and scientificity. Literature is one of the chief media for Dalits to enhance and uplift the entire lower classes and aims to create a consciousness to solve their problem. The characteristics of Dalit literature are in its reaction to exploitation with brutal frankness, thereby exposing the atrocities of higher society with burning anger and hatred, and call for ruthless vengeance against the society and people who have created such inequality and inhuman atmosphere. To challenge the established code of society and organize revenge against it has remained its main character.

Om Prakash Valmiki explains Dalit Literature as ‘it is not only literature of pain but also literature of change. One finds not merely resentment or what is called *aakrosh* in Hindi but also an inner, articulated or unarticulated urge for change. And a standard tool to bring about this change is through education (Valmiki, 2008: 20). This same trend is followed in Tamil Dalit Literature. Dalit Literature in Tamil was formed with the advent of Dravidian Movement and with the principles Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Tamil Dalit Literature has its firm concern over variations in Dalit communities. Tamil Dalit Literature underscores the need to bury differences among Dalit groups and differences in lifestyle, belief, customs and economic condition.

Dalit literature, being a part of Dalit culture, reflects all basic principles of Dalit culture. While considering about Dalit literature in Tamil Nadu, one can say it has grown with the thoughts of Periyar, and his propaganda against casteism, superstition and social and economic propaganda with the Marxist ideology and some Associations for Oppressed people all made strong foundation for the Tamil Dalit

Literature. The street-plays, stage shows, and rallies depicted the cruelties and caste-tyranny imposed on the untouchables and these things created awareness among Dalits about their identities and their rank in social system. All these factors led to the emergence of Dalit Literature in Tamil Nadu. The Dalit identity was subsumed by Dalit writers within influenced by Marxist ideology, social issues that influenced “Tamil Culture”. From the early 1990’s, discrimination of Dalits and social injustice were discussed by the writers which characterized Dalit writings. This was also the period when Tamil literature was increasing attacking the middle-class culture with its anxieties center on honour, social prestige, women chastity and erosion of moral make up in the face of women entering the working place.

Imaiyam, a major Tamil Dalit writer, he opines that urbanization, migration of Dalits to urban pockets as responsible for loss of honour among Dalit women. He also elucidates how Dalit women are forced to commodify themselves in order to hold off poverty and help themselves and their dependents survive in most of his novels. Ignorance, sexual harassments, poverty, anger towards rites and rituals, injustice, slavery, insults is main themes of Dalit literature. The cause of cited facts are evidenced that Dalit writers are in condition to expose sufferings of the individual to the world through literature. This has been well reflected in the works of Imaiyam. Imaiyam's *Beasts of Burden* (1994) exposes Dalit communities, their lives, their culture and their politics. Imaiyam, in this novel, enunciates the plight of lower-caste people who are submerged and experience double subjugation in the society. Imaiyam criticizes the lower caste people who become pseudo Brahmins and act against the people who are considered as subordinate among Dalits.

The title *Koveru Kazhudaigal* means ‘the mules’ which have been used by the Washer men to carry the washed clothes. And it ironically refers to the washer men community and their ordeals.

The story is about a Catholic Poothurai *Vannaar*<sup>1</sup> family, who serves as an agricultural labour of Dalit colony and other caste people in the 'uur<sup>2</sup>. The mules carry the sense here of 'beasts of burden'. Also the story depicts the economical changes occurring in the progress of the novel and developments taking place in the village which are seen throughout the perspectives of the protagonist, Arokkyam in addition to the sensitive portrayal of the sufferings of washer men's community and the exploitation they meet within their own community.

In this novel the plight of Arokkyam affects the reader's mind naturally. Pre-societal norms are forcing Arokkyam to be a slave and she is just submitting to that norms. Capitalism (*Gounder*<sup>3</sup> family's behaviour against Arokkyam) enters into the village and that makes Arokkyam's life much more complicated. Gail Omvedt in her article in *Nirappirikai*<sup>4</sup> points out 'the mother figure in the poetry of Dalit men as a continuing symbol of oppression, and also of struggle, sacrifice and sense of duty.' And she says that 'these women did not challenge nor change greatly the nature of the functions and duties that were traditionally theirs' (*BB*, ii). Arokkyam being a best example for this, but at the same time she is different from symbolic archetype. She is not described objectively, but from within; from the perspective of her own dilemma, within the terms of her own anguish. Her dilemma about how to survive in the society and being economically depressed made them not to think about one's own identity and freedom.

Arokkyam shows a kind of belief towards God, throughout the novel. Arokkyam, a woman of indomitable courage, the pillar of the family, valiantly fights for her rights, but remarkably displays an unshakeable, unquestioning belief in the oppressive caste system. This is clearly revealed in her statement, "We are a humble community. What's the use of getting angry?" (*BB*: 9) this kind of desperate and dejected feelings of Arokkyam is seen throughout the novel without acting against the social norms. She accepted all the rules which were

created by the colony people and the heads of the villages against her family. Her house is located outside the colony which itself reveals the society's reaction to the marginalized.

In the progress of the novel Arokkyam's daughter Mary was raped by Chadayan. It was an unwritten fate that washer women are often raped by the upper caste patrons and they are forced to keep silent so as not to lose their livelihood. This situation forced her to get married with her Aunt's son Diraviyaraj, but her happy married life also ended in a short period after the death of her husband who died because of a snake's sting. Mary's fear towards society leads to the big question mark of her future. She became silenced when she was raped by the upper caste men, Arokkyam is the only person who know about this and she warns Mary do not tell this matter to anybody because Chadayan will conspire against them to throw them away from the village. This made Mary to be silenced. Her individuality, her emotions, her thought to act against the cruel society became suppressed by her mother who led her life according to the pre-societal norms. And Arokkyam consoles her daughter by saying,

We just have to carry on somehow, in the same way that our people and our community always managed, even before our time. You have to have strength of mind and heart. Don't ever let that go. It's like your life-breath. If the breath goes, then the life goes. If we lose heart, then that's it; we're finished. So make your heart as hard as stone. (*BB*: 6)

Arokkyam lets all her happiness, pains, suffering to the feet of God and simply accepts the ordeals meted out to her by both the upper caste and the colony people.

Arokkyam does not want to escape from her primordial life and from her slavishness, don't want to go any other place to survive happily and not ready to throw away her position being a mule. It is not an amazing thing that she is very pessimistic in

this. It is not wonder that this novel being appraised, not because of its literary exposure but for its content, choosing a particular way of exposing and the life it exposed. Some criticized that this novel elucidating outdated problems. But this is the achievement of this novel which those critics taken into consideration. (Aravindan, *Kalachuvadu*)

Commenting on the issue of human rights, Lakshmi Holmstrom in her introduction to the *Beasts of Burden* states

The worst oppression of the caste system, Imaiya suggests, is that his protagonists are made totally dependent upon it for their living. Thus he presents Arokkyam as trapped within the dilemma of her changing times. She has neither the skills nor the economic independence enable her to take risks, and to take the responsibility for change. All the same it is she who fights consistently for what she understands as her rights within the old order; she fights continually for the happiness of her children.” (BB: IV)

Imaiya criticizes the Dalit community itself as responsible for the suppression of another lower community among the Dalits. Even though he has been a Dalit, he does not support the capitalistic behaviour against the other depressed classes and his writing exposes this kind of dejection towards Dalit people who consider themselves as head or leader for all the low communities. M. Vedaśagayakumar, a critic, in his essay, *Tharkalathamizh Ilakkiyathil Dalit Pangalippu* (Dalit’s contribution in contemporary Tamil literature) said that Imaiya’s *Beasts of Burden* describes the life of downtrodden as well as the status of being downtrodden and the pain of it which make the novel’s creative experience. But these sufferings are not included in order to follow rules. Imaiya stands separated from the writers who only narrate Dalit’s anguishes for creating sympathy. This is the first novel which depicts the reality of Dalit existence and the novel

itself revealed the suppression through the view of suppressed and the agony of suppression. (Sanmugasundaram: 2004, 47)

A writer should not confine himself/herself between producing works and making criticisms, but the writer’s work fulfills only when it has its effect on actual life situations. Imaiya does this through his novel, *Koveru Kazhudaigal (Beasts of Burden)*. *Beasts of Burden* depicted the colony people whom Imaiya traced in this novel, forgetting their rank in the society and think themselves as overlord and keep the head- slave distinction within their own society.

Imaiya expressed plainly the obvious truths that how the depressed classes in Tamil Nadu treat the people who were lower than themselves and that ‘upper-depressed classes’ approves and justifies being suppressed by the upper classes in the society. In *Beasts of Burden*, Arokkyam’s family was exploited by the Dalit community who also had the lower rank in the society. Dalit people whom Imaiya discussed in this novel are forgetting their condition in the society and themselves being the reason for the exploitation of the *Vannaar* family, who were considered as lower among Dalits. Arokkyam’s family gets exploited within their own community. Her family members worked hard for the village people both lower and upper classes. They have to wash the clothes of the village people and stitch the clothes if it was torn. Even though they give full dedication to all the jobs which the Naidu families and colony people allots for them, they get only small wages for their hard. It becomes lesser day by day for the reason that the arrival of new tailors and laundry shops in that developing village. Here, Imaiya wants to say that the changes and the civilization occurring in the village make the depressed classes to suffer much more.

Imaiya uses the image of *Kazhudai* (mules) to depict the ordeals of Arokkyam who carries her family’s burden in her back like the mules used by the washer men to carry the bundle of clothes. The

phrase 'beast of burden' symbolically represents *Vannaar* community ordeals and it shows the *Vannaar* community's identity and position in the society. Imaiya's novel *Beasts of Burden*, although a Dalit work, is considered as a non-Dalit novel for it discusses the Dalits dominance over the other lower community instead of supporting Dalits. Imaiya's works stands aside because of the subject he chooses which is uncommon to Dalit literature. Even though all the writers in Tamil Dalit Literature write only about the sufferings of Dalit society, Imaiya on the other hand writes about the oppression within the community, instead of supporting their dominance over the other lower communities. He exhibits these thoughts in all his works. In this novel, *Beasts of Burden*, he speaks about the sufferings of *Vannaar* community who are exploited by the upper caste as well as by their own community.

Concluding this paper with the German philosopher Hegel's quote that "if a man is a slave, his own will is responsible for his slavery, just as it is its will which is responsible if a people is subjugated. Hence the wrong of slavery lies at the door not simply of enslaves or conquerors but of the conquered themselves" (Bulhan 106). Similar to this notion the characters that Imaiya adopted in this novel create confinements within their self and society and they simply accepts the other caste's captivity and don't want to relieve from that confinement. So every suppressed people are liable for their confinement and abetting slavery without reacting against it. It is actually mental disability which makes the downtrodden to suffer slavery.

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Rashmi Attri

### **Discourse of Discontent: Reading JayantParmar's Select Poems**

In the recent years, since the inception of Dalit ideology in 1970, we see the emergence of a parallel body of literature called Dalit literature. Dalit writers have carved a distinct place for themselves in literary scene of Post-Independent India, using different forms such as poetry, short-stories, and autobiographies. More and More Dalit writings, originally written in regional languages are being translated into English to gain wider popularity. This way it is able to connect people across the globe to Dalit experience. The spirit behind the emergence of Dalit literature as a movement is the intellectual leadership of Ambedkar. Today the growing Corpus of Dalit literature in various genres as poetry, autobiographies, and short-stories is getting wider acceptability and recognition. This literature borne out of centuries long suppression, speaks of Dalit pain and anguish born out of discrimination by upper-caste people. This is the literature of protest and reaction against the ills of Indian caste-system and the long subjugation of Dalits' shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope characterise it. Dalit writings focus on new subjectivity, identity and psychic struggle. Dalit philosophy is based on the Belief that low-caste status leads to poverty and exploitation.

Marathi literature is supposed to be the forerunner of the entire body of Modern Dalit literature due to the legacy of Mahatma JyotibaGovindPhule and B. R. Ambedkar in the 1960s. However even before these, writers such as BaburaoBegul, Bandhumadhav had already started writing Dalit literature. Like the Black literature, Dalit writings are characterised by a spirit of militancy, and new found pride. Literature becomes a tool to fight for their rights, identity and place in society. It also seeks to sensitise other classes of India with the issues and concerns of

Among many Dalit writers such as Arjun Dangle, ShrankumarLimbale, Harish Mangalam and OmprakashValmiki, JayantParmar is one such Gujarati Dalit bilingual poet who writes both in Gujarati and Urdu. There is Dalit poetry in Hindi, Marathi, Tamil and other regional languages of India, but not in Urdu. Hence JayantParmar felt the need of writing in Urdu as well, which he learnt with conscious efforts. "I bought a copy of Urdu script from a roadside market I found Urdu the most effective medium of my creative expression..." (qtd. inKidwai) he is also honoured with the GujaratiUrduSahityaAkademyaward 2001. Since he is also a painter, his poetry is replete with images which strengthen his poetry. He has evolved from painter to an accomplished poet. It is very challenging to write in Urdu and express his revolutionary fire in a language that is characterised by sentimental exoticism. Gopi ChandNarang, a well known Urdu critic in this regard aptly remarks:

Urdu is the cultural language of minority, but JayantParmar's predicament represents a minority within minority. In other words this marginalised voice is subaltern within subaltern. Subdued in the haze of pain, this is a sigh of leaves falling in the autumn sun. In the backdrop of sad colours; poems with the theme of 'mother' shocks the readers. If one could be lost into the text, one can discover it

in the words of rags of historical pains and discrimination that has been taken for granted and has been going on for ages.(Narang)

Parmar has published three collections of poetry namely: *Aur*, his first collection of poetry which appeared in 2001. About its title Parmar said “there is invisible mountain behind the elevated peaks. Apparent is not the truth and I intended to search beyond it . . . I want to discover myself through my poems” (*Urduyouthforum*). *Aur* was followed by two more collections namely *Pencil Aur Doosri Nezmein* (2006), and *Manind* (2008).

My paper explores Jayant Parmar’s select poems translated into English from Urdu and Gujarati, in the light of Dalit consciousness. I will also talk of history of Dalit literature in Gujarat. The paper concludes how post colonialism has revived the marginalized subjectivities. There are varied facets to Jayant Parmar’s poetic craft. But the focus of my paper is on his Dalit concerns expressed in the above mentioned collections.

The publication of *Akrosh*, a poetry journal of Dalit panther on April 14<sup>th</sup> 1978, led to the birth and growth of Dalit writings in Gujarat. Since then there is no looking back. Though in the beginning Dalit writings in Gujarat, as elsewhere, faced problems, but it gradually found strong foothold mainly after the anti-reservation agitation in Gujarat in 1981 and 1985. Today Dalit literature in Gujarat exists in its own right as distinct genre. It lands freshness to the mainstream Gujarati literature. Now three anthologies of Gujarati Dalit literature are available namely, *The Silver Lining*, (Poetry), *Tongues of Fire* (Short stories) and *Eklavya*. Gujarati Dalit literature also records the history of long subjugation leading to the pain and suffering. It chronicles individual and collective suffering coupled with the hope for the equalitarian society. There is expectation from the readers as well; as Neerav Patel, a Gujarati Dalit bard says: “I wish you to be not

only my readers but also an empathiser, then only and only then my pain could end” (qtd. in Vankar). So there is protest, anger revolt and at the same time a sympathetic attitude and support from the readers is asked for.

Like other genres Dalit poetry also takes the form of protest against the ills of Indian social fabric. “Dalit poetry is the flourishing form in Dalit literature. The entire universe of Dalit feeling seems to have descended into poetic form. Innumerable aspects of Individual as well as social experiences reveal themselves . . . if one decides to evaluate Dalit poetry in brief, one can say that Dalit poetry is the impassioned voice of the third generation of the Ambedkarite Movement. It can be seen standing up against subjugation, humiliation and atrocities, can be heard singing, intoxicated of the dawn of new life.” (Dangle xii). We can say that Dalit poetry is a form of applied art with inherent aim of promoting fraternity and equality to all. In order to achieve this objective, Dalit poetry uses different set of symbols, metaphors and critique. Since the main objective of Dalit poetry or Dalit literature is to liberate Dalits from the long subjugation under castiest tradition it is not written in traditional metre. Here the focus is on rendering the authentic lived experiences. Dalit writings reject Sanskrit symbolism which according to Ambedkar is the castiest language. For all these reasons conventional aesthetics does not work in Dalit poetry. Jayant Parmar also uses his poetic form as a weapon to fight against the oppression of Dalits in Gujarat and rest of India.

Jayant Parmar spent his childhood in the Muslim dominated area of Ahmedabad and developed a liking for Urdu and decided to learn it with the help of books. He opted to write in Urdu as he found “Urdu the most effective medium of his creative expression” (*urduyouthforum.org*). In his poetry the focus is on probing human predicament through his personal anguish ‘Smell of hell pit’ as he prefers to address it. It is this smell which inspires him to write more and becomes a metaphor of creativity for him. His poetry speaks of his



poverty, subjugation and anguish. He does not write about the experiences of wishful past, he does not even notice any beauty around him. Since he is also a painter his poems possess a pictorial quality. About his own poems the poet says “My poems do reveal deep senses of agony and pain. One might hear in them a tone of assertion rather than a note of apology” Being a painter his poetry has pictorial quality as well. It was at the age of fourteen that he took up brush to earn a livelihood.

Journey of his life started from the slums of Ahmedabad; which later on also become the backdrop of his poetry. Unlike the towering buildings of Ahmedabad, his locality suggested the struggle of the downtrodden people of India. About his parents he tells that his father was a factory worker and his mother was illiterate Dalit. Quite early in his life he knew that he had to fend for himself. The poem entitled *The stench of the Hell-Pit* speaks about these childhood experiences which is so overpowering that

That even today before going to the office  
When I polish my shoes with cherry polish...  
The stench of the hell – pit  
Reaches his office. (qtd. in Narang)

Parmar is the potent voice of the Dalits in Gujarat. His poetry captures the suffering and struggle of all the downtrodden and oppressed classes of India. Shouldering the responsibility of voicing the stories of deprivation of the oppressed people, as he clearly states in his poem entitled “DalitonkeLiye”: “*Tere dukh ka mahakavya mein likhunga sooraj ki jalti chhaati par*” (Parmar, *Pencil* 44). His fight is not ordinary one as he says ‘Meri Jang Roti kinanhin’. He is rather fighting for his Identity. The poet feels powerful with the Pen which he uses as a weapon. Now the Dalits appear as newly created social, religious and political community. (Dharnadkar). As the polio stricken hands:

Asks a broken blue pencil  
Lying next to one foot  
Can you write?  
The pencil hesitates and says  
Yes, I can write. (Parmar, *Pencil* 2).

The predicament of Dalits is mirrored in the poem called “Pencil and The paper-1” where the poet describes the physical pain that the poet went through, and how this pain affected him so deeply that it has become permanent part of his being because while :

In the Old times  
They used to write  
On ordinary leaves  
On the back of a tree  
On palm leaves

But the black accounts  
Of tyranny  
Were inscribed  
On [his] body.  
Even Today...! (Parmar, *The Last*)

The poem ends with the exclamatory mark.

The poem called “Hands” again describes the despicable condition of have nots. The poet using sharp words and irony writes:

I had asked for home  
And they buried me alive....  
I had asked for bread  
And they put live coals on my tongue (Parmar, *Hands*)

The same feeling is further expressed in the poem called “The Portrait”, where describing the despicable plight of the Dalits the poet writes:

I can clearly count his ribs  
 Sweeping the streets.  
 His dreams have been buried in the waste paper heap  
 Till that day he has been kicked.  
 Tolerated the tyranny  
 Silently.  
 But today from the sweat  
 I smell dynamite (qtd. in Narang).

Here we find the note of defiance. This is an appalling situation which he depicts in powerful imagery. The approval of this ill treatment of Dalits by rest of Indian populace leaves the poet dumbfounded.

In the poem in “Zaat-I” Jayant again shows how even teachers—the moral guards—discriminated against him and made him sit outside the classroom. He was treated like an animal and thus all his dreams started collapsing one by one: “Khwabkaekekphoolmurjhagaya, bahutgussaaya.” (Parmar, *Manind*66). This shows how the downtrodden are denied basic human rights.

According to GopiChandNarang “*The Morning Breeze*” by Parmar is the most effective Dalit poem of Urdu in which the soul burdened by centuries of pain becomes part of the “blood-coloured sun”. The poet says that the memory of the pain caused by the tyranny and torture that he had to bear in his childhood has become permanent feeling with him: “The fire that is ablaze in me/ will never extinguish”. He uses the image of blood coloured sun to express how he wishes to “spin the sun in his fingers, like the weapon of Lord Krishna /and hurl it on those- / who cut my tongue /...on those who severed the head/of my flower like small daughter / and burnt it;’ In the end the poet moans ‘give me the blood-coloured sun! / O morning breeze. . . .’ (qtd. in Narang).

The poem entitled “Meeraji” expresses his sense of alienation, dejection when he describes the sufferings that his mother had to go through for being a downtrodden “I saw my mother / Burning in the hearth, /In place of firewood” (qtd. in Narang)

Then there are poems where this mood of anger gives way to the feeling of revenge as we see in the poem called “Manu” where we find his scathing attack on Brahmanical hegemony of caste system given by Manu. We find the tone of defiance here. However though revolutionary such poems also point towards the note of positive change in Indian society. The poet decries against the caste system and is sure of taking revenge on Manu by hanging him on the tree in front of his house. The tone of anger is evident as the poet writes:

In front of those house  
 on the branch of neem tree... stripping you naked  
 I will hang you ...  
 I will flay your skin...

in the same way you stripped my father naked and struck him down.

Since the poet now has learnt to :  
 Soar like a falcon;  
 To spring like a tiger;  
 To use words as weapons. (Parmar, “Poems” 283)

Here the imagery is very powerful. This change in the tone from sympathy to aggression and finally accepting the fact of being Dalit. There is hope for the future.

In one of his poems called “The Will of a Dalit Poet” Jayant, has again expressed the helplessness and vulnerability of Dalits in the lines.

He is himself a wounded shadow  
 He has no existence  
 There is little difference  
 Between him and a broken cup ... (qtd. in Kidwai)

The poet in the end sounds optimistic as we see in the lines:

But now  
He is looking for his existence  
He is looking for himself  
He is proud to call himself a Dalit poet.  
(Parmar, The Last)

The poet here seems to have compromised with his Dalit Identity and even celebrates it. The poet ends the poem with the note of acceptance and the spirit of peace. He even takes pride in his Dalit identity. So his rebellious attitude is soon replaced by acceptance of Dalitness with pride. "He merges his poetic individuality into nameless masses" (Kidwai).

In his poem "Hazaro Haath" translated into English as "Thousand Hands", the poet while narrating the history of century long oppression and injustice, expresses hope for the better Indian society based on equality and justice. He weaves the vision of better society. The poet describes the how the upper class people subdued the Dalits through violent means:

Maine uthayasarapna  
Aurunhone  
Meri garden mein zanjeeren pehnade in  
Hath mein jhandaleker jab mein rah se nikla  
Unhone mere Haath kaat diye  
Lekinik din  
Mere khoon se  
Bhanjardharti hoginarm  
Aur hazaron hath ugainge  
Mere hath  
Hazon hath  
Aur zulmkia akhiraat (*Pencil 52*)

But the poet is now sure that his blood and sufferings will not go waste, these downtrodden people will see better tomorrow. The poet expresses the hope for the future where there will be no discrimination in the society on the basis on caste and creed. The poet explores the new found freedom which is the outcome of strong disapproval and alienation. He says:

Fajarkapehlastarazarror aye ga  
Safar mein ab ke kinarazaroor aye ga (*Manind 52*)

These lines from his *Manind* collection again strike the note of hope. Though Parmar uses common day-to-day words in his poetry yet attains great aesthetic heights. His poetry is very bold and candid as it is based on his lived experiences. His is the real voice of the marginalised, their anguish, pain and struggle.

"The Morning Breeze" which according to Gopichand Narang can be called the most effective Dalit Poem of Urdu is again pathetic documentation of sufferings and the pain becomes the part of the "blood Coloured sun". Here the poet talks about taking revenge on all those who crushed his Dalit identity in so many ways. The use of blood coloured imagery is very evocative as we see in the lines below:

Give me the Blood coloured sun...  
Which never sets  
I will spin it in my fingers  
Like the weapon of Lord Krishna  
And hurl it on those  
Who cut my tongue...  
(qtd. in Narang).

To conclude we can say that Jayant Parmar constitutes an important part of Dalit writers and Literature. We as readers feel rewarded with the insights that we get into the Dalit psyche through his poems which speak of the collective pain of all the downtrodden people.

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Bandana Bal Chandnani

### A Stylistic Study of Ruskin Bond

Stylistics is a critical method that analyzes literary works on the basis of style. Its practitioners focus on analyzing a writer's stylistic choices with regard to diction, syntax, phonology, figurative language, vocabulary and even spatial and graphic characterization. Peter Barry says "Stylistics is a critical approach which uses the methods and findings of the science of linguistics in the analysis of literary texts... its aim is to show how the technical linguistics features of a literary work, such as the grammatical structure of sentences, contribute to its overall meaning and effects" (203). M.A.K. Haillday says stylistics is description of literary texts using the categories of description of the language as a whole, and the comparison of each text with others by the same and by different authors. In analyzing the literary works, stylisticians explore topics such as whether writers use everyday speech or elevated language, whether they use periodic or loose sentences and whether they employ predominantly visual or auditory images.

The style of an author is governed and modified by the attitude he bears towards his audience and the special delight he takes in the act of composition. It is the result and the final expression of his prevailing outlook on the totality of existence. Style "... is a

means by which a human being gains contact with others; it is personality clothed in words, character embodied in speech. If handwriting reveals character, style reveals it still more.” Gustave Flaubert says, “Style is life! It is very life-blood of thought! E. Gibbons puts it, more briefly: “Style is the image of character.” (Murray, 353)

Ruskin Bond, an Indian author of British descent, a living legend for over forty five years, has been ceaselessly portraying life and his precious experiences through various genres of literature – short story, novel, essay, poetry, travelogue, memoir, editorial column etc. He is born in an English family but his mind is occupied by Indian culture, nuance and ethos. His work elucidates the tinge and tone of the Indian and the English life. Bond has chiselled a niche in the treasure-trove of the Indian fiction in English by his outstanding *modus operandi* of child delineation, invigorating style and authentic portrayal of Indian life.

Bond’s style unmistakably carries the mark of his graciousness. It is the ‘dress of his modest thought’ and cordial personality. It is marked by aptness of expression, clarity of vision and lucidity of notion which confirms more his modest disposition and accentuates the virtues he possesses and commands. Swapan Kumar Banerjee says, “The crystal clearness in his writing shows the child-like, pure heart he is gifted with.”(Banerjee 4). His uncomplicated and transparent style never loses its charm like the serenity of the Himalayas. He writes with energy, enthusiasm and expertise. The humble acceptance of Bond about his narrative art and thematic pattern emphasise his modesty:

Among writers, I am not one of the big guns. I am not even a little gun. I’m just a pebble lying on the beach. But I like to think that I’m a smooth, round, colourful pebble, and that someone will pick me up, derive a little pleasure

from holding me, and possibly even put me in his, or her, pocket. Could you be that wanderer by the sea? I shall nestle there, close to you. I shall try to make you feel better. And if you tire of me, you can always throw me back into the sea. Perhaps a kindly wave will wash me ashore again, and someone else will pick me up. (Bond, Lamp, xi)

The fictional world of Bond focuses the truth of day-to-day experiences in its most crystallised form. The commonplace theme of Bond is elevated by the lucidity and clarity of his style and his desire to “tell a good story.” The artistic value of his stories lies in his method of execution. Kempton has rightly observed, “a noble theme may sound merely pretentious under poor telling.” Form and technique are the vital elements of fiction: “The way of telling is the mark of good fiction: scene, detail, dialogue all the elements that make an imaginative creation of life.” Bond has achieved a perfect craftsmanship by paying attention to every detail and “working with loving care” (Bond, Lamp, 195). He is content to present his lofty thoughts through lucid narration and eloquent expression. He states forth his invigorating and refreshing ideas without using any demanding devices or ambiguous articulation. He seems to go with the opinion of F.L. Lucas who says “... it is bad manners to give them [readers] needless trouble. Therefore clarity. It is bad manners to waste their time. Therefore brevity.” His explicit use of language with positive adornment enriches his style. About the clarity in style, Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric*: “Style to be good must be clear, as is proved by the fact that speech which fails to convey a plain meaning fail to do just what speech has to do.” Bond’s well-structured and comprehensive style is the result of his persistent efforts. He exerts his soul to write vividly and forcibly. He has often being questioned why his “style is so simple” (Bond, *Delhi*, xii). He says that his style is in fact “deceptively simple, for no two sentences are really alike. It is clarity that I am

striving to attain, not simplicity... I've spent forty years trying to simplify my style and clarify my thoughts!... I have always tried to achieve a prose that is easy and conversational (Bond, *Delhi*, xii).

The words of F. L. Lucas go in favour of Bond's lucid style: "... This is all affection – fiddling with phrases and trifling with cadences! It is easier to criticise but to achieve clarity is the difficult task: "just as 'common sense' is far from common, simple English can prove in practice far from simple to attain" (Lucas, 17)

David Lodge has also pointed out "style is not a decorative embellishment upon subject matter, but the very medium in which the subject is turned into art" (Lodge 5) The apparent simplicity in Bond's writing is crystallisation and culmination of his art. The simplicity is also symbolic of the milieu and characters in his stories. Almost all his characters are drawn from hilly regions and rustic life living in the foothills or mid-hills of the Himalayas. Bond's language aptly goes with the character portrayed. The language used by the characters never seems to violate their social class, status and age. It never loses the ground of reality. Praising his style Namita Gokhale says: "The simplicity of Bond's writing style has the hallmark of a great writer. The unpretentious, underplayed quality of his work, its control and mastery, helps the reader to effortlessly navigate the meandering flow of ideas and events" (Gokhle 11).

Bond weaves magic with the sheer simplicity of his words. The use of his effective diction is marked by harmony. The dictum "By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" well goes for Bond's art. Bond's adherence to the accepted patterns and selection of words coincide with Jonathan Swift: "Proper words in proper places make the true definition of a style." Words seem to flow from Bond's pen with the ease of a mountain stream, sometimes rapid like a torrent and sometime

languorous like a river. His rare command of words is discernible in his use of the right word at the right place. His choice of words adds charm to his style. About his rich vocabulary, Manish D. Bhatt writes, "He can produce maximum effect by the use of minimum words, so the reader understands the meaning of each and every word without labour." In "The Leopard" through the use of two phrases "a beautiful leopard" and "specimen," Bond highlights his love for the creatures of jungle and the attitude of ruthless hunters towards them. After killing the leopard, in great good humour the haughty hunters ask Bond: "Isn't he a fine specimen?" (Bond, *Collected*, 152) Bond answers: "He was a beautiful leopard" (Bond, *Collected* 152). The words "specimen" and "beautiful" speak volumes. It reveals their mindset – Bond's love for soul and the hunters' passion for matter. Sometimes the very name of the characters become suggestive and denotes the meaning. The name of Keemat Lal that means 'something valuable and rarely found stone' in the story "A Case for Inspector Lal" conveys the sense. Keemat Lal loses his promotion for saving an innocent girl, Kusum, from the strict law that may have crushed her gentle spirit for the crime she has committed in self-defence. Keemat Lal gets nothing from the worldly law but he becomes 'valuable' in the eyes of readers for his gesture of kindness. So he is a priceless (Keemat) Lal (valuable stone).

Bond's language has virile force and a mastery which conveys the maximum of meaning in the fewest and simplest words. Bond elegantly infuses the tempo of Indian life and culture into English expression. He uses words from Hindi to add flavour to his writing. This goes well with the thoughts of H. Hoijer, who says that the interaction of language and other aspects of culture are so close that no part of the culture of a particular group can properly be studied in isolation from the linguistic symbols in use.

Bond's direct rendering of the vernacular expressions add local colour to his characters and story-line. The general use of Hindi words (code-mixing, code switching and hybridisation) captures the rhythm of vernacular in English and becomes integral with total pattern. The expression is not imposed rather it sprouts out spontaneously with the demand of story. Sometimes Bond gives the meaning of these words otherwise he directly employs them. The following words of Hindi are used in the story "A Handful of Nuts": "Seeda-sada," "Khatmals," "Dast," "Kachi," "Big nasha," "Writer sahib," "Filmi," "Beedi," "Tongawallah," "Maidaan," "ullu-ka-patha," "rakshasni." The casual use of these words indicates Bond's proficiency in Hindi and insight into Indian culture.

The vernacular expression culturally specific vocabulary and context-sensitive topics make Bond's pictures lively and genuine. In *A Flight of Pigeons*, he talks about the life of English women in Hindu and Muslim houses. His direct and frequent use of Hindustani words in demanding context grip the attention of reader: "dolie," "chatty," "missy-baba," "dulhan," "Angrezans," "Padri-Sahib," "Lalin," "Memsahib," "lado," "chachi," "wallah," "Khan-begum," "beti," "churail," "dhobi," "hai, hai," "bhai." Here he has amply exploited not only Hindi words but also expressions as well that provide distinctive identity to his language. He has translated Indian expressions into English. The Indian reader enjoys the handling of English in such an interesting way: "Drown yourself in a handful of water," "held me on his knee," "no one comes into this house except over my dead body," "go your way," "he would not lift his hand against women," "don't weep child" (this expression is used twice as is done in Hindi common parlance), "they will receive nothing but kindness from my hand," "it is the talk of the mohalla," "fire ranging in your wife's bosom," "in the

name of Allah," "upon my head" (whenever a character gets angry he uses it. It is used three times in the text.); "you must take me for a pumpkin." These Hindi words and expressions authenticate Bond's characterization. Bond seems to agree with David Lodge who says: "... reality is structured by the novelists not only in the particular characters, events, and objects in which he represents it, but initially in the words and arrangements of words with which he creates these characters, events and objects." (Lodge 17)

Bond has created a certain texture and tone through language that defines theme and meaning. The most charming quality of his language is its simplicity and explicitness. His occasional use of Latin and French phrases and terms are comprehensible. It is because he puts them into a detail narrative. His lexical innovation is also very fascinating: "the strangest" (Bond, *Rusty Goes*, 99), "Cinderfella" (Bond, *Rain*, 25), "disgustipating" (Bond, *Stranger*, 63), "Scooterist" (Bond, *Rusty Boy*, 46). Bond rarely uses sentences of complicated grammatical construction with such dependent and subordinate clauses, as make the sense difficult to follow. His pithily expressed concise and short sentence helps to comprehend meaning in its fullest sense. His rare use of long sentence is made comprehensible by use of the dash.

Accuracy and precision, the hallmark features of Bond's evocative style sprout from his minutely observed and vividly described scenes and settings and characterization. He observes things that others would fail to notice and makes them come alive through skilful handling of lucid prose. Like an efficient sculptor, he carves out colourful and expressive images by his exact description and picturesque delineation. The pictures that effloresce from his fiction garden are simple yet heartfelt. He says: "My forte is observation, recollection, and reflection" (Bond, *India* 17). His fictional world gleams with realistic and graphic description of

scene and background. He enlivens the atmosphere with vibrant and intense illustration before leading us towards the crux of story. This helps the reader to gauge the importance of the image portrayed.

Bond through his interesting narrative illustrates a world of interesting shape and size, of form and design, of rhythm and order. He records the life truthfully and artistically. He often depicts the familiar situations and scenes with which the reader is well aware but it is his close observation, fidelity to detail and total involvement which infuse charm to his delineation. Here is a scene from the railway compartment. There could not have been a more accurate picture of the din and bustle inside the railway compartment. The narrator is journeying with his friend Suraj in the third class compartment. The variety is striking here:

We slept fitfully that night, continually shifting our positions on the hard bench of the third-class compartment; Suraj with his head against my shoulder, I with my feet on my bedding roll. Above us, a Sikh farmer slept vigorously, his healthy snores reverberating through the compartment. A woman with her brood of four or five children occupied the bunk opposite; they had knocked over their earthen surahi, smashing it and flooding the compartment. Two young men in the corner played cards and exchanged lewd jokes. No general companionship was at all evident, but whenever the train drew into a station everyone cooperated in trying to prevent people on the outside from entering the already crowded compartment; and if someone did manage to get in—usually by crawling through a window—he would fall in with the same policy of keeping others out. (Bond, *Delhi*, 409-10)

The minute observation of scenes and its invocation bring Bond closer to Anglo-Indian writers – Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Foster. An Indian writer rarely observes and records the common happenings around as does an English writer. The Indian writers simply ignore it because of being too accustomed to it. When a non-Indian writer comes across it, he gets fascinated by it and automatically he represents it through his writings.

The vivid descriptions of scenes provide an understanding of the situation and condition of the protagonist. In *The Room on the Roof* Mr. Harrison thrashed Rusty when he defied him and visited the bazaar. Rusty ran away. With no other place to move, he came to bazaar. The noise and hubbub of bazaar tempted him in the morning. But it is now deserted and forlorn. The depiction of the scene explicitly focuses the condition of lonely and dismayed Rusty:

The smart shops and restaurants were closed. In the bazaar, oil lamps hung outside each doorway; people were asleep on the steps and platforms of shopfronts, some huddled in blankets, others rolled tight into themselves. The road, which during the day was a busy, noisy crush of people and animals, was quiet and deserted. Only a lean dog still sniffed in the gutter. A woman sang in a room high above the street—a plaintive, tremulous song—and in the far distance a jackal cried to the moon. (Bond, *Collected*, 573)

Bond a master artist aims to become clear in his expression so he gives detailed account of scenes and settings. Sometimes the eccentricities of the characters and the funny situations create boisterous laughter. Bond presents a scene of crowded platform in “Sita and the River.” The effort of the people to get in or out the train even before the train had come to a stop presents slapstick comedy:



For a few moments there was chaos. The crowd surged backwards and forwards. No one could get out. No one could get in! Fifty people were leaving the train, a hundred were catching it! No one wanted to give way. But every problem has a solution somewhere, provided one looks for it. And this particular problem was solved by a man climbing out of a window. Others followed his example. The pressure at the doors eased and people started squeezing into their compartments. (Bond, *Collected*, 181-182)

Besides this awareness of the comic, Bond also possesses in a large degree, a rare command of wit which appears very frequently in his epigrammatic statements and delightful dialogues. His epigram could be seen especially in his philosophical ideas. Passing comment on the futility of wealth, Bond writes in *The India I love*: “If death was a thing that money could buy / The rich they would live, and the poor they would die” (35).

Bond’s style is marked by the subtlety of expression and visualization. The frequent use of auditory imageries adds a charm to it. It makes the graceful description pleasing. He creates sound imageries directly observing the various components of nature and man made world. The very sensitive ears of Bond never fail to hear both cacophony and symphony: the blares of the horns, the jingles of the tonga, the cow and the school bells, chunk-chunk of a night jar, hoo-hoo of the wind while moving in the branches of tall deodar, rattling and swishing of the rain on the corrugated tin roofs, the clip-clop of a pony carriage, the creaking of the wheels of a bullock cart over rough country roads, the sound made by the dry and thirsty earth, as it sucks at a sprinkling of water, sound produced by a child while drinking thirstily water running down his chin and throat, creaking of a door at its hinges, the warbling of

the birds, the roaring and chattering of the animals, the whispering of the plants. The exhausting list of the aural imageries heightens the effect of Bond’s invigorating style and racy language. Bond is of the opinion that these often ignored tunes of nature and of life have a healing power and capacity to change the dull and dreary mood. He eagerly records the impression that it creates on him:

Gentle rain on a tin roof is one of my favourite sounds. And early in the morning, when the rain has stopped, there are other sounds I like to hear—a crow shaking the raindrops from his feathers and cawing rather disconsolately; babblers and bulbuls bustling in and out of bushes and long grass in search of worms and insects; the sweet, ascending thrill of the Himalayan whistling-thrush; dogs rushing through damp undergrowth. (Bond, *Rain*, 108)

Images play a vital role in Bond’s literature and secure an outstanding place for him in the array of visual artists. His appealing and sensuous images make the description forceful and effective. Illuminating images enlighten the understanding of the reader and denote to his writing the rich poetic sensibility. They are subtle and appropriate and emanate itself with the need of situation. The images deftly incorporate all kind of sense qualities: auditory, tactile, kinaesthetic, gustatory, thermal and olfactory and enrich the power of language. Some recurrent images are: lizards scuttling on the wall and roofs; the mountain path dipped through oak, rhododendron and maple; the murmuring sounds of brooks and rivulets; the rustling of dry leaves and grass; the shadow of clouds on the Mussoorie hills; the chorus of insects at twilight outside his window; the beauty of first snowfall in the mountains; the slushy and muddy roads in rainy season; people found leisurely spending time, smoking hookah or chewing *paan* (beetle); the buzzing of the flies on the sweets; barefoot boys riding buffaloes or chewing on sticks of sugarcane; people relishing *jallebies*, *golgappas*, *tikkies* by the

roadside vendor; stray dogs and cows moving in the alleyways; pot bellied shaped man. Bond's images cause a mental reproduction of sensations. The use of wide and speculative imageries is an invaluable resource of his language.

Bond's use of appropriate and vivid figure of speech is one of the rare charms of his style. It spills out spontaneously. He by his unique talent makes them very apt and suggestive. His similes are very simple, precise and effective. It is always marked by clarity and exactness and by the extraordinary quality of saying exactly what is supposed to be said. Describing Ruth in *A Flight of Pigeons* Bond writes: She is a pretty girl "with raven black hair and dark, lustrous eyes" (3); "She shone like Zohra, the morning star" (46); "She was like a rose touched by a breath of wind, a doe-like creature" (47); she was "like a frightened doe" (73).

Bond has almost exclusively confined himself to the form of short story 'chips from fiction workshop.' He enjoys writing short story because of its brevity and the free play it allows with themes, style and characterization. A.J. Merson has rightly pointed out that "much of short story today is due to the diversity and unexpectedness of the subjects" and that "manner as well as matter further reveals the individuality of the writer." (Merson 120). O' Connor argues that short story manages to embody 'our own attitude to life' (45). Bond feels it is the best medium suited to his temperament. His stories are marked by restraint, reticence and moderation both in theme and style.

Bond has introduced a qualitative quantity of incidents and effects through short story: a blind man's imaginative perception of another blind young woman; a peanut seller selling nuts for years sitting at a place whose identity is never being noticed and who is all alone even being surrounded by the people; a poor villager returns home contemplating why he has been duped; a child covers

miles alone to find the river hidden behind the mountain; the local politician giving free taxi rides to his voters; a narrow escape of a man from a house where two sisters committed suicide and the ghosts of the dead sisters kill the person who unfortunately arrives there; the ghost of a whistling boy who saves the narrator from danger; a servant taking care of the house of his master for years in hope of his returning; the petty quarrels followed by quick reconciliation in a joint family; a rumour caused by a sweeper's remark resulted in the collapse of a bank; a kite maker reflecting upon the changes that the time has brought; a strong wrestler's or a poor beggar's miserable plight; the woes of people who lost home and family during the riots of partition; problems faced by a freelancer in eking out his livelihood; a loving lady feeds a boy and wins the heart by her generosity; a youth becomes nostalgic visiting the place of his childhood days. The theme may be undoubtedly 'anything,' but its presentation carries the impression being of 'unified and whole.' Bond surpasses in presenting the music of life of the people around him in realistic manner within the limited range of the short story and the novella.

The personal 'I' is prominent everywhere in Bond's literature. It becomes more persuasive with his first person narrative and imparts a certain credibility and genuineness to his stories. The narrator in most of the cases is a freelancer who struggles to make out his position in the literary world or an Anglo-Indian boy who gets fascinated by Indian nuances or a man meeting someone on the road. The person met could be anyone – a thief, a retard, an epileptic boy, a small girl, a recluse, a vendor and sometimes a ghost. The artist says James Joyce remains like God in this creation, within or behind, or beyond and above his handiwork. Bond remains silent yet eloquent, unseen yet ever present behind the subjects of his writings. Almost every story discloses some facts

of his life. This self exposé is often clothed in a web of fancy. The reader can form more or less an accurate idea about him, his life and his character.

He deals with the ordinary life of ordinary people in a gay compassionate manner that adds a charm to what he describes. Bond's authentic projection of theme and character agrees with David Lodge:

... life, not language, is the novelist's medium: that it is the way he manipulates and organizes and evaluates the life or, more precisely, the imitation – life of his fictions, that constitutes his literary activity; that his language is merely a transparent window through which the reader regards this life – the writer's responsibility being merely to keep the glass clean. (Lodge 3)

Oscar Wilde says that "One's style is one's signature always" (Lodge 3) goes well with Bond's style. Bond has developed his individual style of narration. His artistic excellence and art of story-telling is something unique. His narrative is marked with simplicity of tone and depth of meaning. He adds to his style classical discipline, a deeper poetic vision, a sense of discernment, an auditory imagination, a developed onomatopoeic sense and a fine sense of humour. He respects his vocation of writer and pays as much attention to his style as his content. His prose does not gain effect by a laboured artifice but with a floating rhythm and spontaneity of expression that signals the spontaneity of life itself. It is his special skill that makes his delightful and unsurpassable simple prose appears effortless. The author reads the complex psychology of his characters and describes it in his distinctive clarity of style. His hallmark literary style has always been a simple choice of words, woven together in a breathtaking manner, sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph.

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## Pramthesh Bhattacharya

### Literature in Society : Some Observations

That literature and society are inalienable from each other is undeniable: the two are so closely related to each other and are so much interdependent on each other that the two unmistakably influence each other that the two unmistakably influence each other. Patently, the role of literature in society is immense and is all-pervasive. Literature is not only the product of society but also shapes it; it not only reflects society but also corrects and addresses an audience who are also social beings. Inevitably, a literary artist's work not only mirrors the Zeitgeist or the spirit of the age but also gives a new twist and direction to it. While mirroring the society of its time, literature also aims at improving it, and thus T.S. Eliot rightly observes that it "serves ends beyond itself", though it is not "required to be aware of these ends" (Eliot 37).

Joseph Addison clearly points out that his aim as writer is to paint the picture of the society of his time with a view to improving the morals and manners of his contemporaries. Again, Bhanani Bhattacharya, a distinguished twentieth century Indian English fictionist of global fame, states in his famous essay titled "Literature and social Reality" that social reality is "the soul of art" (*The Aryan Path* 392), and further holds: "Art is not necessarily for art's sake. Purposeless

art or literature which is much in vogue does not appear to me a sound judgment.” (*The Sunday Standard* VII). In fact, the entire social set-up economic, political, conceptual, sociological, ideological, etc. – determines the direction and character of the literature of the age, and *vice versa* that is, the literature of an age also moulds, and brings about changes in, the society of its time.

True, literature plays a very significant role in society as it is a repository and chronicle of the social of an age in which it is created and side by side it contributes to the necessary changes in it. Undoubtedly, the author is shaped by the social set-up of his age, but he has also the capabilities to mould it. A great man of letters is the creation as well as the creator of the age in which he lives. The students and literary historians, who keep in view a process of social growth, miss the real point or issue, for they at once ignore the genius of the man of letters who can manage to transcend the bounds of jetsam that the stream of time carries into the gulf of oblivion. Such a literature is meant only for the hour; only that literature lasts forever which is steeped in social reality and the genuine welfare of society. Undoubtedly, literature is a social phenomenon, using bounds of race and country.

Some people believe that literature can be dissociated from the age the society to which it belongs. But it cannot be, for the literature which is solely concerned with emotions and sense of beauty, and not with social issues, is more or less ephemeral in character. Such a literature is hopelessly romantic and may be morbidly called *fin de siècle* (decadent). Instead of being conserved with the realities of human existence, it creates a sort of ‘palace of Art’ or ‘ivory Tower’ where it isolates itself from the freshening current of life. There can be no doubt, however, that this literature also derives, in a measure, its character from the character of the society where it is created. Instead of canalizing the progressive urge inherent in the society, it picks out the colorful as its medium language, a social creation. Such literary

devices as symbolism, myth, allegory, meter, etc. are social in their very nature. They are conventions and norms which could have arisen only in society. Literature imitates life, and life is, in a large measure, a social reality. The poet, the dramatist or the fictionist is himself a member of society, possesses a specific social status, and receives some degree of social recognition. So it is an admitted fact that literature has come into existence and has grown in close relation with certain social institutions. There will be no proper, worthwhile literature if it dissociated from social function. A large majority of the questions dealt in literary works are social questions which are concerned with traditions, conventions, norms symbols and myths related to a particular society. Consequently, literature and society are interwoven internally as well externally, and literature indubitably plays a very vital role in the society of its time as well as of the future times.

Let us illustrate our above assertions from the Western and Indian literatures. Chaucer, the father of English poetry, depicts in *The Canterbury Tales* the entire society of the fourteenth century England with the definite intention of improving it by satirizing the evils prevalent in the varied walks of life. His works clearly intend to reform the people belonging to various professions: doctors, lawyers, merchants, churchmen, peasants, squires, knights and others, excepting the monarch. See how he exposes and laughs at the doctor’s love for gold, his greed and miserliness in “Prologue” to *The Canterbury Tales*: “He kepte that he wan in pestilence./For gold in phisik is a codial./Therefore he lovede gold in special.” (Prologue, 21).

The greatest writer of the world, Shakespeare was deeply concerned with the life of his time, i.e. the second and half of the sixteenth century and the early years of the seventeenth century and wanted to better it as much as possible. He paints the lamentable condition of social life in *Hamlet* when he states that the times are ‘out of joints’. He exposes the evils in life with the desire to eradicate them

so as to set right the times which were ‘out of joints’. He asserts through the words of Prince Hamlet that the purpose of writing “was and is to hold as ‘there the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.’” (*Hamlet* 288). In his matchless play Shakespeare assails the vices like ingratitude, lust, treachery, unlawful ambition, inaction, vanity, jealousy, revenge, breach of filial ties, etc. to make society better and ensure a better future for humanity.

John Milton’s literature-poetry, drama and prose pamphlets-are a glaring instance of social preoccupation. In *Paradise Lost* “Lycidas” and other works, he depicts and exposes the spirit of his age with a view to reforming the society. He calls the courtiers and the followers of King Charles II as ‘Belial’s sons’ in *Paradise Lost*, Book I and describes sardonically the followers of the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church in “Lycidas” thus: “The hungry sheep look up but are not fed” and calls the Pope as ‘The triple tyrant’. He condemns the low morals, avarice, voluptuousness and all-round corruption that had crept into the society of his age, and tries to reinstate virtues, austerity and Puritanism in every walk of life. Little wonder the aim of writing *Paradise Lost*, the greatest epic in the English language till today, was to cite his own words from the poem, to “...assert eternal Providence./ .And justify the ways of God to men.” (*Paradise Lost*, 2).

More than Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, all the eminent English writers of the Eighteenth century – Alexander Pope, Addison, Steele Doctor Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith and others – are explicitly and deeply concerned with social degeneration and the necessity of its uplift. The greatest and most representative writer of that period, Pope neatly portrays in his poetical masterpiece *The Rape of the Lock*, perhaps the greatest mock heroic poem of the world, the beliefs, fashions, frivolities, whims, etc. of Queen Anne’s time. It pained all the peculiarities of the artificial town life of the age – its parties, cards,

toilettes, lapdogs, tea/coffee-drinking, idle vanities, etc. – satirically with the most delicate wit in order to set the society right and put it on a proper pedestal. The literary works of Addison, Doctor Johnson and their contemporaries are an attempt to achieve the same aim of elevating the society.

One of the best examples of the men of letters, changing and imparting a new form to the society is the French Revolution of 1789 and the writer – philosophers behind it. The watch- words of the French Revolution, viz. Equality, Liberty and Fraternity, were given by the illustrious French writers of the age, namely, Voltaire and Rousseau. It was the first and the greatest socio- political upheaval in world history, and the attempt to bring about a revolutionary change in society for its betterment and uplift wads initiated, inspired and dominated by the French literatures’ of the period. The great budding English writers such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey wholeheartedly and actively participated in the socio- political upheaval and Wordsworth visited France several times. Wordsworth was so much enthusiastic about it and the possibility of the dawn of the resplendent future of humanity that he ejaculated joyfully:”Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,/But to be young was very heaven!” (Wordsworth 529)

Like his friend Wordsworth, Coleridge hailed the French Revolution, for it gave man the dream of pant isocracy, utopian community in which all would be of equal rank or social position. At the downfall of Bastille, he felt the surge of a new life springing before his eyes, an era of emancipation:

No fetter will or mind shall know  
 And eloquence shall fearless flow.  
 Yes! Liberty the soul of life shall resign,  
 Shall throb in every pulse flow through

Every vein! (*Selections from Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 89).

The other English romantic poets like Southey, Byron and Shelley also through their poetry tried to better the society by championing Voltaire and Rousseau's ideas which mainly gave birth to the French Revolution. They pleaded for revolutionary idealism steeped in humanity to uplift the society.

The most representative author of the Victorian age. Lord Tennyson deals with the tendencies the aspirations and the problems that agitated the minds of the people of his age. What is very remarkable about him is that he offered plausible solutions to all the problems which disturbed and tormented the society of that period. He was able to give a distinct message to his contemporaries so as to better their lot. In *The Princess*, the poet focuses on the question of the higher education of women and their place in the fast changing conditions of society. His *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* shows the revulsion of feeling which had occurred in many minds when the rapid development of science seemed to threaten the very foundations of religion, and commerce was filling the world with the sordid greed of gain. In *The Palace of Art*, the poet describes and condemns the spirit of aestheticism whose sole religion is the worship of beauty and knowledge for their own sake, and which ignores human responsibility and obligations to one's fellowmen. Maud gives a dramatic rendering of the revolt of a cultured mind against the hypocrisy and corruptions of a society degraded by the worship of Mammon. And *In Memoriam* pleads for the triumph of faith and love over death and of hope over doubt for the benefit of the society. Matthew Arnold, a distinguished Victorian who foreshadowed the modern times, urged people to ward off the prevalent social maladies off sickening haste, divided aims, overwork, heartlessness, etc. Thus he writes in his exquisite long poem, "The Scholar Gipsy":

Before this strange disease of modern life,

With its sick hurry, its divided aims,  
Its heads o'ertaxed its palsied hearts, was rife-  
Fly hence, our contact fear!....  
For strong the infection of our mental strife,  
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest?  
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,  
Like us distracted, and like us unblest. (Arnold 147).

More than Arnold, the Victorian prose writers and fictionists like Carlyle, Ruskin, Newman, and Dickens. Thackeray and many others were almost possessed with the indefatigable zeal to reform the society of varied evil caused by industrialization, materialism, scientific spirit leading to skepticism, etc.

The first really satisfying product of the modern movement was T.S Eliot's Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock. The First World War shattered the entire social structure of the period. As such beneath the 'bracelated arm' and perfumed dress of his women fashion, sham, emptiness, cup, marmalade, tea, etc. In other words, Eliot's Prufrock expresses, and oblong pleads for the eradication of the depression feeling of weariness, boredom and emptiness which is the keynote of the modern mechanical society. Eliot's magnum opus, *The Wasteland*, depicts the solution to this terrible situation in Indian view of detachment and peace and therefore ends the poem with "Shantih Shantih shantih". The other men of letters of the modern age such as W.B Yeats, Auden, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Virginia Wolf, E.M. Forster, George Orwell and others are equally concerned with the contemporary social problems and suggest ways to combat them so as to make human life worthwhile and satisfying.

Coming to Indian English literature, we clearly notice that most of the writers- poets, dramatists, fictionists and prose writers – such

as Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Mulkraj Anand, R.K. Narayan .Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Chaman Nahal, Grish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani have been preoccupied with Indian ethos and the desire to better the society. Under the puissant, abiding influence of Mahatma Gandhi even after his death, most of them could not think of literature without social realism and purpose. Tagore's famous lyric from *Gitanjali* beginning as

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!....  
 He is there where the tiller is tilling the ground and  
 Where the path- maker is breaking stones. He is with them  
 In sun and in shower and his garment is covered with  
 dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on  
 the dusty soil.

(Tagore 8-9)

The same is of the novels like *Untouchable* and *Coolie* by Anand, *Kanthapura* by Raja Rao, so Many hungers! and all other works by Bhanani Bhattacharya, and all the plays by Mahesh Dattani. In fact, innumerable literary works by Indian English writers evince their preoccupation with social issues and with the uplift of society.

To conclude, literature and society are inseparable from each other, and the former doubtless plays a key fore in strengthening and improving the society by showing the way to tackle the problems threatening its very fabric. The writer must be quick to discern, and objectively present, the real tends in social life; the direction towards which society is moving and at the same time should give a proper direction to society. This is why a great write becomes something of a prophet. Carlyle and Marx certainly could bring about a radical, almost a complete, transformation in the entire society in which they happened to live. In a word, even a great author is moulded the Time-Spirit, but

he also shapes his age and becomes its creator, to a great extent. Hence, it is almost impossible to measure correctly the immense power of literature and its fathomless value for society.

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**Shaista Irshad & Shrikrishan Rai**

### **The Impact of Translations of the *Bhagawad Gita***

This paper is an attempt to elucidate the impact of translation in India and Europe during the years of colonialism which was undoubtedly very emphatic. It not only enlightened the British with Indian knowledge but also enabled them to rule over India. We will see in this paper that the impact of translation of Indian literature written in Sanskrit led to the dawn of movements like ‘Romanticism’ and ‘Mysticism’ in the history of English literature.

Warren Hastings, the Governor General of British India (1774-85) was of the belief that it was imperative for any British ruler of India aspiring to rule effectively and competently over Indian subjects. For this purpose he felt the need of understanding the spirit, culture and tradition of India enshrined in one of its most popular scriptures. The epoch making date of 1785 scattered the light of Indian knowledge all over the world. It was date of publication of the translation of the *Bhagwad Gita* by Charles Wilkins in European language in London under the sponsorship of the British East India Company at the recommendation of Warren Hastings. Wilkins made this wonderful Sanskrit scripture available to the Europeans in an English Prose rendering along with ample notes; the rendering had been done directly

from the Sanskrit original and not via Persian or Arabic. The efforts of the then contemporary English Scholars who were involved in the translation of Indian Literature, were triggered by this concept directly or indirectly. This translation of the work into English proved to be a revelation. The west came into a direct intellectual contact with the mystical-philosophical East.

After having a glance at the causes of translation of the *Bhagwad Gita* now let’s shift our attention to the impact of these translations. These translations provided an understanding of Indian mindset to the British rulers. After this enlightenment of Indian psyche through these Hindu scriptures they found it very easy to touch the chord of Indian heart and accomplished their aim to rule for a long time. It also became a paradigm of inspiration for the romantic poets of the eighteenth century like William Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Robert Southey, P.B. Shelley, John Keats etc. ‘Blake was among the first of European Idealists able to think his own tradition of thought with the *Bhagwad Gita*’: this was observed by Northrop Fry in his study of William Blake entitled *Fearful Symmetry*. This candid remark of Fry is very significant because it highlights the role of the *Gita* in shaping the thoughts of the eldest romantic poet of the Romantic era. *William Blake: Poet and Mystic* acknowledges in the thirteenth chapter on the sources of Blake’s philosophical doctrines the similarity between the thoughts of the *Bhagwad Gita* and those expressed in the poetry of William Blake. The poet seems to have been captivated by India for he sings the praise of country in much esteemed words in his epic *Milton*:

And all nations wept in affliction family by family;  
Germany wept towards France & Italy: England wept and trembled  
Towards America: India rose up from his Golden Bed:  
As one awakened in the night.

The use of the expression ‘golden bed’ is pointed to Blake’s awareness of Ancient India’s superiority- material, religious cultural and spiritual which he learnt most probably from the translations. The ‘*triguna*’ theory of the *Bhagwad Gita* can also be found at the back of Blake’s threefold classification of the children of Los in his epic *Milton* (7): the ‘Elect’, the ‘Redeemed’, the ‘Reprobate’ which represent *sattva, rajas and tamas*,

Blake’s famous doctrine of emanation resembles the Indian concept of *ansha-anshi*. The seventh verse of the fifteenth chapter of the *Bhagwad Gita* turns it as follows:

*mamaivanso jivaloke jivabhutah sanatanah  
manahsasthani ’ndriyani praktisthani karsati*

Wilkins had rendered it in the following way:

(It is even a portion of myself that in this animal world is universal spirit of all things. It draweth together the five organs and the mind, which is the sixth, that it may obtain a body, and that it may leave it again.)

In the verse given here, Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna that all the embodied souls are only manifestation of a fraction of His Being. Thus, the verse contains the seeds of the emanation doctrine and in all probability it encouraged Blake to formulate his theory. Blake’s proclaimed view that ‘God is Man and exists in us and we in Him’ is truly ‘Upanishadic’ and has the backing of the *Bhagwad Gita*. Again his theory propounded in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 23, clearly alludes to the chapter called ‘*Vibhuti yoga*’ of the *Bhagwad Gita* particularly the forty-first verse. The concept of the ‘Great Whore’ is virtually the concept of *Maya* finds resemblance with thirteenth and fourteenth verses of its seventh chapter. The 4 Zoas of Blake’s vision can be very easily interpreted in terms of the four *Purusharthas* of the Hindus- *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha*. He echoes in the

following verse from ‘*America: A prophesy*’: “Everything that lives is holy, life delight in life,/ Because the soul of sweet delight can never be defiled.” The thought of the very first verse of *Ishavasyopanisad* which runs as follows: “*Ishavasyopanisad starve yatikinc jagatyam jagat*’. Robert Ernest Hume rendered it: (By the lord (Isa) enveloped must this all be—Whatever moving thing there is in the moving word.) In *A vision of the Last Judgment*, not only in thought but also in phraseology does the passage from his writing resemble the passage from the fifty-eighth verse of the eighteenth chapter of the *Bhagwad Gita*. Naturally, the logical conclusion is that the English poet had formulated his theory on the basis of Hindu text.

Wordsworth’s ‘Immortality Ode’ is considered as ‘his most finally satisfying human work’ by Professor G. Wilson Knight. It is said that the great ‘Ode’ had been written under the influence of the Indian philosophy as enshrined in the *Bhagwad Gita* which Wordsworth had read quite thoroughly in its English prose translation by Charles Wilkins. It must be noted here that the Hindu Scripture had been hailed very enthusiastically by the entire Western world in general and by Great Britain in particular when it appeared in a European language as has been frankly admitted by Mr. Schweitzer.

Wordsworth knew Hindu mythology to a considerable extent is clear from his reference to ‘Gangawatarana’ or the descent of the Ganges on the earth in the following passage from his “Excursion”:

... then as the Hindus draw  
Their holy Ganges from a skyeey fount  
Even so to deduce the stream of human life  
From seats of power divine; and hope, or trust  
That our existence winds her stately course  
Beneath the sun, like Ganges, to make apart  
Of a living Ocean;

(Book III, 254-60)

Wordsworth had deep appreciation of Indian thoughts and had no inhibitions whatever in making a poetic use of them. Indeed he was ready to embrace the creed of the Pagons as he declared very eloquently in his famous sonnet 'the World is too much with us' (1802): 'Great God I'd rather be/ A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn' It was the time of Wordsworth's stay in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century, when the country was brimming with enthusiasm of Indian wisdom as enshrined in the *Bhagwad Gita* and *Abhijanasakuntalam* and many other Sanskrit texts that had been made available to Europe in European Languages by the eminent Orientalists of the day such as Sir William Jones, Sir Charles Wilkins and Georg Foster. As everybody knows, Goethe had waxed lyrical when he read Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* in the German prose of Georg Foster, done from the English version of Jones, as early as 1791.

Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode' is believed to have been written under the influence of Indian philosophy as presented in the *Gita* of Wilkins English rendering and in the Upanishads of Duperron's Latin version plus earlier preliminary work in the field done by scholars like Alexander Dow and Nathaniel Halhed, and even the notes of John Marshall, sent from India to the Cambridge Platonist Henry More

The Ode is divided into 11 stanzas of unequal lengths having 5 clear cut movements. Stanza I-IV constitutes the psychological background against which the poet's thesis regarding the immortality of the soul – the central and pivotal philosophy – has been developed. In the terminology of the *Gita* stanza V can be termed as the 'Ode *samkhayyoga*.' i.e. its discourse on knowledge divine. The stanza concerned subscribes the Hindu doctrine of Metempsychosis: 'The soul that rises with us, our life's star,/ Hath had elsewhere its setting,/ And commeth from afar:'

The third movement of the poem is available in the sixth and seventh stanzas. The *Gita* could have called them '*maya-yoga*' (i.e.

discourse on Matter or Maya in the form of the Earth). The fourth movement of the 'Ode' can be called in idioms of *Gita* '*purushottamyoga*' or 'discourse about the best person that a pure child definitely is'. In stanza IX which is the crux of the poem, we find intimations of Immortality from the recollections of early childhood. In the *Gita* we can call this movement of the 'Ode' '*Brahmavidyayoga*' or 'discourse on the externality and immortality of the soul'. The stanza tenth of the Ode can be related with *Jnana-Karma-Yoga* or 'discourse establishing the near relationship and even a kind of identity between *jnana* or knowledge and *karma* or action. The final movement of the poem in XI stanza is termed as *Moksha-Yoga* or 'a discourse on the liberation from all tensions' according to the *Gita*. Thus 'Ode' is a Hindu poem saturated with Hindu philosophy and mythology. The most crucial chapter of the *Gita* is verse 22 which had been made familiar to the West by Mr. Halhed who had quoted the original verse in Devanagari script along with an English verse translation of some several years before Wilkins's English prose rendering of the *Gita* appeared. Thus the discussion of the most controversial poem of Wordsworth clearly proves that the poet was under the spell of Hindu religion and philosophy at the time of composition of 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'.

Having been claimed as 'Metaphysician, Logician and Bard' by Charles Lamb, S.T. Coleridge (1772-1834) was the most perceptive, deep as well as voracious reader and William Wordsworth's bosom friend and Robert Southey's brother-in-law. The extract from Coleridge's unpublished works, reproduced in John H Muirhead's book titled *Coleridge as Philosopher*, provides an unmistakable and significant evidence of his fair acquaintance with the works of Orientalists of the day like Sir William Jones, and Charles Wilkins and of his earlier enthrallment with Indian philosophy and religion and also of his subsequent disenchantment with them. It makes a specific mention of the *Bhagavad Gita* and displays Coleridge's

close acquaintance with several aspects of Hinduism and with its inherent weaknesses.

His ‘Religious Musings’ (1796) and ‘Ode to the Departing Year’ have candid expressions of the religious and metaphysical speculations of the *Gita* and the Hindu concept of *Rta*. His knowledge of *Gita* by coming across Wilkins’s translation of it is quite evident from the fact that he quotes a very long passage from its eleventh chapter, covering pages 91-93 of Wilkins’s book, in his philosophical lecture that he had delivered on 4 January 1819 at the Crown and Anchor, Strand.

In *Biographia Literaria* (1817) India is mentioned as one of the four countries where the analysis of the mind had reached its noon and manhood while experimental research was still in its dawn and infancy. In the same work, he makes use of one of the myths of India regarding the situation of the earth; he calls it ‘the Brahman creed’, which refers to Pauranic geography expressed in a verse by the Hindi poet Padmakara. In his poetic play entitled *Osorio* (1797) Coleridge puts his feelings regarding Vishnu, expressed in his letter to John Thelwall:

O! would to Allah  
The raven and the Seamew were appointed  
To bring me food—or rather that my soul  
Could drink in life from the universal air

The same speech was transposed in ‘Remorse’ (IV.iii.13-20) and repeated in the dramatic fragment entitled *The Triumph of Loyalty* (begun and abandoned in 1800).

In September 1796, Coleridge wrote a sonnet entitled ‘On a Homeward Journey upon hearing of the Birth of a Son’: “Mixed with such feelings as perplex the soul/ Self-questioned in her sleep; and some have said/ We lived, ere yet this robe of flesh we wore.” As

asserted by the Great German mentor of Coleridge namely, Fredrich Von Schlegel (1772-1829) Coleridge in this sonnet uses the twenty-second verse of the second chapter of the Hindu scriptures. The original Sanskrit verse can be transliterated thus;

*vasani jirnani yatha vihaya  
navani grhnati nara'parani  
tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany-  
anyani samyati navani dehi*

Charles Wilkins rendered to it in the following way:

(As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new,  
even so the soul, having quitted its old mortal frames, entereth  
into others which are new.)

It must be noted that this verse of the *Gita* had become very popular with the Romantic poets of England. Southey cites it in Wilkin’s translation in a footnote in his *The Curse of Kehama* and Shelly seems to have used in one of the Choruses to his poetic drama *Hellas*.

Another poem of Coleridge entitled ‘Greek Ode on Astronomy’ reflects the Hindu philosophy of Upanishads. The famous lyric of Coleridge entitled ‘Eolian Harp’ composed 1795, and published in 1796 imbibes many ideas which have been derived from the *Gita*: “Thus God would be the Universal Soul/ Mechanized matter as the organic harps/ And each one’s tube be that, which each calls I.” These lines cited above articulate the supra-pantheistic philosophy enshrined in the verses of the *Gita*.

In poem *The Curse of Kehama*, Southey has been able capture the true spirit of India and her manners. In the ‘preface’ to the poem, he does appear to be quite hostile to the mythology of the Hindus, for he asserts there the religion of the Hindus is ‘of all false religions the most monstrous in its fables, and the most fatal in its effects.’ But there is no denying that he, nevertheless, felt strongly

fascinated by its intricacies and complexities and had used the best of his poetic talents in its delineation.

The central motif of the poem is that ‘curses are like young chickens: they always come home to roost.’ This proverb Southey had learnt from William Tylor. According to Professor Dowden, the maxim was turned into Greek by Coleridge to serve as motto to *The Curse of Kehama*. It is very appealing to note that the purpose of the unfailing impact of curses is typically Indian. The *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the Puranas have plethora paradigm of stories of the curses of the sages which never went amiss. The curse of Durvasha against Shakuntala in Kalidasa’s famous play is a brilliant example of this. And Southey and all enlightened English men of letters were fully aware of the Sanskrit play in the English and Latin translation of Sir William Jones. There are 9 allusions in *The Curse of Kehama* to the *Bhagawad Gita* clearly stated by the poet himself in the footnotes including the mention of the work in the ‘Preface’ to the poem. The most crucial section of Southey’s Indian epic, is canto II and it is entitled ‘The curse. Southey exploits the concept in the following speech of Arvalan, the slain son of King Kehama:

Art thou not powerful . . . even like a God?  
 And must I, through my years of wondering,  
 Shivering and naked to the elements,  
 In wretchedness await  
 The hour of Yama’s wrath?  
 I thought thou wouldst embody me anew,  
 Undying as I am . . . Yea, re-create me . . . Father, is this all?  
 This all? And thou Almighty!

(*The Poetical Works of Robert Southey* 553)

In the speech of Arvalan here we find the concept of Eternity and Immortality of the soul as developed in the *Bhagawad Gita* Chapter II, Verses 20-24.

It must be placed on record that twentieth, twenty-first, twenty second, twenty third and twenty fourth verses of Chapter second of the *Gita* used by Southey in this poetical work had inspired the American mystical poet Waldo Emerson to compose his famous poem “Brahma”. John Drew is of the firm view that *The Curse of Kehama* had played an important part in the process of recharging English poetry by making familiar the imagery of the Asiatics, especially the Indians.

India emerged by the close of the eighteenth century as almost synonymous with imagination and that all romantic writers believed that she was the original home of culture and civilization. In words G. Wilson Knight ‘India is magnetic to Shelly. The impact of The Curse of Kehama on Shelly’s magnum opus, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), is very clear. It provides the largest number of references to India. The entire action of the play takes place in India. In the first act the second voice declares: “Never such a sound before/ To the Indian waves we bore” (lines 3-4). ‘The Sensitive Plant’ (1820) addressed to Mary Godwin, in all probability, contain 2 allusions to India: “She bore in a basket of Indian woof,/ Into the rough woods far aloof” (lines 155-58). And again it in the same way “And Indian Plants of scent and hue/ The sweetest that ever were fed on dew” lines 205-08). The Drama entitled *Hellas* written in 1821 is saturated also with references to India:

We strew these opiate flowers  
 On the restless pillow;  
 They were stript from orient bowers.  
 By the Indian billow

Shelley confesses very eloquently and unequivocally in the second-verse paragraph of the *Alastor* or the *Spirit of Solitude*: “Favour my solemn song, for I have loved/Thee ever, and thee only: I have watched “The sentiments expressed in these lines are surcharged with religious and metaphysical spirit of India and readily recalls the words of Adi Shankaracharya.

John Keats poem *Endymion* was influenced by *The Curse of Kehama* and thus as a result was inspired by *The Gita*. It was investigated by Dorothy Hewlett in her Book *A Life of John Keats* (New York 1950). The greatest tribute to India is paid by Keats in the form of the creation of the character called 'Indian made' in his romance '*Endymion*'. Through the following words of *Endymion*, addressed to the Indian made, the poet has given expression to his own appreciation of India and of all that India stands for: her religion, mythology and philosophy: "My sweetest Indian, here, / Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast / My life from too thin breathing" (Book IV, line 648-50).

To conclude, we can put across that the work of translation which was initiated with the intention to understand India and Indian sensibility, culminated as a source of inspiration for the English writers. The concepts mentioned in the Indian texts became universalized only after the translations which enabled the later literary artists to imbibe and infuse Indian concepts into their writings and compositions.

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### Book Rivew

**Susheel Kumar Sharma. *The Door is Half Open*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors. 2012. ISBN: 978-81-8435-341-9. pages 141, ₹ 150.00/ US \$ 10.00 /UK £ 15.00**

*The Door is Half Open* contains 52 poems, some of which focus on the harsh realities of life, some on the casualness of life while some others just deal with the bonds in life. The book opens with an invocation to the goddess Ganga under the title 'Ganga Mata: A Prayer'. The poet asks for the blessings of the goddess of purity and serenity to grant him success in his work by saying "Allow me to have my way, O *Suranadi*! Grant me my wish, O *Girija*!" (p. 2). Like the continuous and uninterrupted flow of the Ganges the poet's thoughts flow in this and other poems. One will witness mythological contexts in the poet's references to Lord Hanumana's Big Temple, Magha, Kumbh, Bhagirathi, Bhishma's tale and many others in this poem. The grandiloquence of style gives the poem an epical status. Traditional images are beautifully contrasted to the modern ones. The poem, thus, ceases to remain a simple and traditional prayer and becomes a piece of post-modern literature where various sorts of contrasts and collages are present. The poems in the collection are the representations of modern scenario and conventional themes.

The use of innovative similes in 'Spineless-II' and 'Agony' gives the poems a metaphysical touch. The poet perhaps accepts Bruce Prescott's view: "No one image or metaphor is adequate to describe

conscience” and therefore makes an effort to describe conscience in ‘Spineless-II’ by comparing it to several living beings like a cat, old father, pigeon chicken and non-living things like pudding, computer screen, electric bulb and dew drops etc. The twelve similes in this poem thus become metaphysical conceits as one has to exert one’s mind to find a correlation between the apparently unconnected objects from various fields like science, nature, eatables etc and conscience. Contemporary ‘crisis’, ‘shattered dreams’ and ‘dilemma’ of the past century can be witnessed in some of the poems. The collection inspires the readers to take a step and ‘meditate’ ‘across the Lethe’ ‘in the lap of nature’. The book shows the glimpses of a ‘struggle’ through the agonies ‘from left to right’ to get ‘heavenly love’ or ‘colours’ in life. One will find a perfect blending of materialism, spirituality and transcendentalism in these poems. These poems are Indian in essence yet modern in style.

Some poems in the collection symbolizes negativity and emptiness of modern material life through the heaps of the negative images that evoke the feelings of *jugupsa*:

...the intact skulls of the  
 Young innocent children are found  
 In the big drain behind the house,  
 When the mutilated organs of the  
 Young are found  
 Choking the drain across the door ... . (p.56)

‘Nithari and Beyond’ is a parody of Kalidas’s famous poem *Meghaduta* where *Megha* (a cloud) is sent as a messenger by Yaksha to his beloved wife to convey his deep pangs of love. Which way will be traversed by the cloud and how he will identify the exact place of the wife has been described by Yaksha. Kalidasa gives a glorious picture of the then India, of her beautiful and bountiful land, buildings, rivers, mountains and people etc in his description. In the first stanza

of ‘Nithari and Beyond’ a reference all this has been made. But in this poem it is Yaksha who is travelling and has to identify India, at the behest of the narrator, on account of all negative aspects of Indian life. The sarcasm of the poet is at its best when the narrator sings, “I love my Indiiaaa...” (p. 57). One wonders at what good is there in this country for which one should love this country so much so that even the delicacy, softness and the carefree attitude of childhood have been lost and their place has been taken by the horrors of death in this poem. Susheel showcases an alternative realistic picture of the blunt and brutal reality of the Indian society in contrast to that presented by Kalidasa.

The affairs, psyche and political scenario of the country have been described in the poems like ‘Agony’, ‘Democracy: Old and New’, ‘For A Bride Who Thinks of Suicide’, ‘Nithari and Beyond’ and ‘Poverty: Some Scenes’. India is considered to be a developing country, but who is developing in reality God only knows – the ground reality remains that the rich is becoming richer and the poor, poorer. The poet has brought the deplorable condition of the society particularly that of the human beings to the fore:

Hunger doesn’t  
 Trouble me anymore —  
 I now know how to fight street dogs  
 After a *brahma bhoja*  
 In any locality. (p. 37)

There is a startling variety in the poems in the collection both in terms of the subject-matter and style. The reader will sense the epical status in one poem, metaphysical twist in the other, fine blending of reality and imagination in the third and so on. Even the glimpses of family bonds and relationships in the present time have been highlighted in the poems like ‘Vicious Circle’, ‘Memories’, ‘O Beloved’, ‘Granny’ and ‘Relationships on a Holiday’ etc. ‘Agony’ deals with the heinous

crime of a gang rape; the victim suffers the pangs throughout her life and becomes just like a bird in cage, who is alive but all her spirit is lost and there is no hope of life. One will find new variety and style in this collection of poems which is commendable and worth reading.

The poet has drawn the readers' attention to two overwhelming ills of the contemporary society i.e. female feticide and corruption. It is a matter of shame for a country like India where goddess Durga, Kali, Saraswati are worshipped but their images, 'female foetuses', get aborted. A female child is discriminated against and is not at all welcome in some parts of the country. The poet brings out rootlessness, hollowness and hypocrisy of the society in his poems beautifully. 'For a Bride Who Thinks of Suicide' presents frustrations of modern age, futility of life and the miseries of newly-wed brides who are burnt, hanged or drowned on one pretext or another. They endure atrocities of the time and there is no way out for them. Not only the present condition of women is clearly described but also the tortures and pain which she suffers, the mental agony she undergoes is portrayed in a sympathetic tone.

Poems like 'Colours' and 'Heavenly Love' are entirely different from the other poems as they despite being romantic in character are sombre in nature. These poems are full of vibrant life and are kaleidoscopic in nature as they describe the beauty and spontaneity of nature. The dance and joys of leaves, blooming of flowers, flights of butterfly, the moments of happiness are expressed through the wings of poesy. The transience and temporality of life is beautifully explored in the poems. In 'Heavenly Love' the chirping of birds, the ripples of rivers, the buds of roses, the blades of grass all depict the scenic beauty of nature in a typical Wordsworthian style.

The book has an elaborate and lengthy section called 'Glossary' which will enable the readers to understand connotations and denotations of the words related to Indian life, traditions and

customs and myths. The third section 'Afterwords' contains the views of six eminent critics, poets and scholars on the contents of *The Door is Half Open*. It would be interesting for readers to come across various interpretations of the poems by persons from different corners of the world. Gavriel Navarro appreciates the poet for his 'command of language, engaging wit, breadth of detail and scope, touching familiarity.' (p. 131) Kenneth Lumpkin remarks that the poet 'manages to blend not only cultural traditions but also the micro with the macro.' (p.134). It should be noted positively that the collection of poems opens a new door for modern poetry.

The poet with the help of his deep psychological insight and keen observation uses traditional and modern imagery in the poems. The poet has drawn themes from various fields; the titles are catchy and express the main themes well. This book presents a journey which starts from prayers to goddess Ganga then travels through various routes with 'Dilemma', 'Shattered Dreams', 'Crisis' but the poet decides to take 'One Step Together' to end 'Grief'. 'Memories' take one back to the phase of 'Tiny Tots' where the world was full of 'Mangoes', 'Gifts' in the 'Lap of Nature' and one finally finds a solace in 'Liberation at Varanasi'. The book contains various 'colours' of life which will definitely be appreciated by the readers of different hues and tastes. The poet has put his heart and soul to present a new variety of poems whose purpose is not only to delight but to instruct as well. Thus, it will not be wrong to say the poems in *The Door is Half Open* exemplify that 'a pen is mightier than a sword'.

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