

ISSN 0970-1443
Registration No. 29063/76
Vol. XCI (No.1&2)
Jan.-Mar./Apr.-Jun. 2016

The Vedic Path, Vol.XCI (No.1&2) Jan.-Mar./Apr.-Jun. 2016

The Vedic Path

Quarterly Journal of Vedic, Indological & Scientific Research

Peer-reviewed, Research Journal
ISSN 0970-1443
Registration no. 29063/76

indexed at

www.worldcat.org

Guide to Indian Periodical Literature

Originally published as *The Vedic Magazine*
form 1906 to 1935
and thereafter as *The Vedic Path*

Editor: Prof. Shrawan K Sharma

www.thevedicpath.in
thevedicpath@kv.ac.in
+91-9412074666

Quarterly Journal of
Gurukula Kangri Vishwavidyalaya,
Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India

CONTENTS

Acharya Ramchandra Shukla's Interpretation of the Rasa Theory	M.S. Kushwaha	1-11
Politics of Misrepresentation and Mis(s)-governance : A Critique of Neo-liberal Model of Development in India	Umed Singh	12-29
Resurrecting Shabar Culture and Identity: Use of Oral Narratives in Mahasweta Devi's <i>The Book of the Hunter</i>	Renu Bhadola Dangwal & Shakuntala Kunwar	30-46
Rasana Atreya's <i>The Temple is Not My Father : A Pleading for Devadasi</i>	Charu Sharma	47-55
Masculinism in <i>Munnabhai MBBS: Radical Comedy, Conservative Ideology</i>	Aman Sharma	56-68
The Cultural and Literary Impact of Svetlana Alexievich	Shubha Tiwari	69-78
The Artist and the Commercial City in Rushdie's Novels	Anuradha Bhattacharyya	79-86
Racial Prejudice in William Faulkner's <i>Light in August</i>	Ravindra Kumar	87-97
Breaking the Myth of Nation and Nationalism: Tagore's <i>The Home and the World</i>	Prasenjit Panda	98-107
Traversing Voids : Cross-Civilizational Clash in Saul Bellow's <i>Henderson the Rain King</i>	Navjot Khosla	108-119
The Labyrinths of the Human Mind : Gauzing Trials and Tribulation of Women in the Fiction of Anita Desai	Archana Bhatnagar	120-132

Understanding the Meaning of a Text: Indian Theory of <i>Dhvani</i> and Western Theory of Deconstruction:	Ashima Shrawan	133–153
Art and Artificiality: A Study of Nissim Ezekiel's Three Plays	Anita Arora	154–169
Dynamics of Discord in the Poetry of Kamala Das	Kiran Sharma	170–178
Magic Realism in the Short Stories of Manoj Das	Anjo Rani	179–188
List of Contributors		189

M.S. Kushwaha

Acharya Ramchandra Shukla's Interpretation of the Rasa Theory

Acharya Ramchandra Shukla (1884 - 1841) is the first (and still unparalleled)¹ Hindi scholar to offer a highly original and unorthodox interpretation of Bharata's *rasa* theory. Though fully cognizant of Bharata's formulation, he nowhere talks of his *rasa-sūtra* or its acknowledged interpretations. Instead, he offers his own definition of *rasa*. According to him, "the state of the unfettered heart" (*hādyā kṛmuktāvasthā*¹) is called the state of *rasa*" (RM 5). This unfettered state of the heart occurs when a person rises above his selfish interests (which bind his heart) and gets rid of the feeling of his separate entity. In other words, he forgets himself completely and remains just as pure feeling (RM 5). As he observes at another place (CM-I 147), the experience of *rasa* is marked by

- (i) annihilation of the separate identity of the experiencer during the experience
- (ii) and sharing of that experience by all *sahādayas* (sensitive readers). He does not believe that a mechanical application of Bharata's *rasa*-formula is enough to ensure the presence of *rasa* in a poetic composition. His comment is noteworthy :

Since the poets began to aim at fulfilling the condition of *rasa* just by enumerating *vibhāvas* (determinants), *anubhāvas* (physical manifestation of emotions) and *vyabhicārībhāvas* (temporary emotional states), it was almost forgotten that the foremost task of a poet

is to present such subjects as could become ¹*lambana* (the object) of various emotions of the reader or listener. It was unfortunate to assume that the mere portrayal of a character expressing love, laughter, sorrow, anger etc., is sufficient for the consummation of *rasa* as well as the full realization of *rasa* on the part of the reader. A reader or listener, too, has his heart. He does not read or listen to any poetic composition just to watch other people laughing, weeping, angering, etc. He reads it to find such subjects as would attract and absorb him and make him laugh, weep or fume.

(RM 110)

"The full realization of *rasa* on the part of the reader, according to Acharya Shukla, is possible only when the ¹*lambana* of the ¹*śraya*'s emotion becomes also the ¹*lambana* of the same emotion of the reader" (RM 111). "And this depends on the depiction of the ¹*lambana* of an emotion in such a manner that it becomes the ¹*lambana* of the same motion of all human beings" (CM-I 134). This is exactly what *s¹dhara^a»kara^a* implies.

For a poet, the depiction of *bh¹vas* (emotions) is not so important as the depiction of *vibh¹va*, specially ¹*lambana vibh¹va* (object of emotion)². Acharya Shukla stresses this point when he says:

If a poet has drawn a word-picture of any ¹*lambana* or object of human emotions, he has virtually done his job. It is not mandatory for him to show as ¹*śraya* (experiencer of an emotion) experiencing those emotions – dancing in joy or weeping in sorrow. I consider the vivid description of the ¹*lambana* alone

as fully capable of generating *rasa*-experience (call it *bh¹va*-experience, if you like) in a listener

(RM 101)

In this connection he asserts also that descriptions of nature are not only contributory but also independent ¹*lambana* (object) of our emotions" (RM 78).

Rasa, for him, is not a spiritual experience. He categorically states that, according to him, "there is no scope for the word 'spiritual' (*adhy¹atma*) anywhere in the realm of poetry and art" (RM 55). Nor can the *rasa*-experience be described as *alaukika* (non-worldly), having no connection with this world (CM-I 146). The word ¹*nanda* (joy), too, does not express the true nature of *rasa*-experience. The epithets, *lokottara* (transcendental) and *anirvacan^{ya}* (indescribable), neither save it from its meaninglessness nor atone for its employment (RM 70). To him, *rasa* is not fundamentally different from *bh¹va* (emotion). He makes it even more explicit when he says that it is the *bh¹va* of a character which is experienced by the reader or listener as *rasa*" (RM 116). He states clearly that "the description of all objects that can become the ¹*lambana* of our emotions is within the domain of *rasa*, for, *bh¹vas*, too, are grasped as *rasas*" (RM 101). *Rasas* are nothing but the *bh¹vas* grasped in the state of the unfettered heart. But even in that state the *bh¹vas* do not lose their original character. Acharya Shukla quips:

Do anger, sorrow, disgust, etc. enter the heart of the listener or reader in the shape of 'ananda' (joy)? Do they cast off their original nature completely? Is nothing left over? Does the mere fact of becoming *vibh¹va* [i.e., being treated in a poetical composition] deprive them of their nature, and lend them a unitary

character? Do the various kinds of sorrow appear to be the kinds of joy? Does the sight or hearing of Harishchandra demanding shroud from Shaivy¹, who was weeping for her dead child, elicit laughter rather than tears from us? (RM 71)

Similarly, the shedding of tears by spectators during the performance of a tragedy can hardly be explained by saying that 'tears are also shed in joy'. The spectators in reality experience sorrow. But since this sorrow is experienced in an emancipated state of the heart, it takes on the quality of *rasa* (CM-I 148).

It is worth stressing that Acharya Shukla does not attach any spiritual or mystical connotation to the word '*nanda*'. For him, '*nanda*', like the *rasa*-experience itself, is purely a mental phenomenon.³ To him, the word '*nanda*' has rather hedonistic implications; he takes it to mean '*vyaktigata sukha-bhoga*' or self-centred enjoyment (CM-I, 148). It is this connotation of the word '*nanda*' which leads him to denounce it and declare that it has greatly reduced the importance of poetry and turned it into an instrument of entertainment (RM 71). "If the ultimate aim of poetry", says Acharya Shukla, "is to entertain the mind, to make it happy or joyful, it just becomes an object of indulgence" (RM 20). Obviously Acharya Shukla does not subscribe to this view. According to him, "the ultimate aim of poetry is to vividly represent the poignant aspects of the world, and to establish a harmonious relationship of the human heart with them" (RM 19). The *rasa*-experience helps in establishing this relationship by liberating the heart from selfish and immediate interests. "The repetition of such an experience", observes Acharya Shukla, "purifies our emotions, and secures and maintains our emotional relationship with the rest of the world" (RM

5). *Rasa* experience thus serves a higher purpose than merely affording '*nanda*'. Acharya Shukla's own definition of *rasa* is perfectly in sync with his lofty notion of poetry.

Acharya Shukla's independence of mind is seen at its best in his extending the frontier of *rasa*-experience. He is probably the only scholar to claim that *rasa*-experience is not confined to literature alone; it can also be had in real life. His essay '*Rasatmaka-bodha ke Vividha Rōpa*' (Various Forms of *Rasa*-perception)⁵ is written to demonstrate the possibility of *rasa*-experience in actual life. Of course, these life-emotions, like literary emotions, will have to fulfil the conditions mentioned in the beginning. Not all raw emotions qualify for *rasa*-experience. This distinction is brought out clearly in Acharya Shukla's analysis of so called *sthāyi-bhavas* (the permanent states). To take an example, his analysis of *krodha* (anger) is adduced below: "If we are angry with someone who has hurt us or our relatives, our anger will not have the quality of *rasa*. But if we are filled with anger when we see or hear about the cruel deeds of an oppressor, our anger will acquire the state of *rasa*" (CM-I 148).

In the like manner, Acharya Shukla has shown, with sufficient illustrations, that all *sthāyi-bhavas* are capable of attaining the state of *rasa* in real life situations. His examples are drawn from the fields of both direct perception (*pratyak-a*) and memory (*smāti*). Acharya Shukla arrives at the conclusion that "*rasa*-experience is not radically different from experiences based on direct perception or memory; it is rather a refined form of those experiences" (CM-I 149). This, he adds, is also reinforced by the traditional view that emotions lying as *vasana* (latent impressions) are evoked in the form of *rasa* (CM-I 149).

,charya Shukla is not only sure of *rasa*-experience in actual life but also accords it great importance. He boldly declares: "Those who cannot reach this state [of *rasa* in real life] do possess inferior and narrow hearts. Poetry is beyond their reach even though they are called poets. For the success of word-poetry, the study of world-poetry is absolutely necessary" (CM-I 149).

,charya Shukla does not accept the role of *vynjan*¹ or *dhvani* (suggestion) in *rasa* realization. *Vynjan*¹, according to him, aims at *bodha* (cognition) while *rasa* is a matter of *anubhøti* (feeling). Obviously these are two different kinds of experiences. To characterize the experience of *bh¹va* as *vy^ag¹rtha* (suggested meaning) is not very appropriate. "Vy^ag¹rtha is always a fact or idea and expressed in the form of 'somebody is in love or somebody is angry', it cannot give the taste of love or anger" (CM-II 130). Acharya Shukla feels that the word 'vynjana' should not be used in connection with *bhava* or *rasa* (CM-II 131).

The same idea is expressed when he says at another place (RM 147) that the mere combination of *vibh¹va*, *anubh¹va* and *sancari bh¹vas* cannot make a spectator or audience experience a *bh¹va* just by dint of *vynjan*¹. Such a combination may, for instance, suggest the *bh¹va* of *lajj¹* (shame/bashfulness) but this suggestion will produce in the reader's mind just an image of *lajj¹*; it cannot make him experience the emotion of *lajj¹*.

Acharya Shukla's independence of mind is displayed also in his analysis of *bh¹vas* and their classifications. It is specially noticeable in his treatment of so-called *sth¹yi-bh¹vas*. Of Bharata's eight *sth¹y»-bh¹vas*, Acharya Shukla accepts only *rati* as a true *sth¹y»-bh¹va*. He does not include

uts¹ha (one of the *sth¹y»-bh¹vas* enumerated by Bharata) even among the *bh¹vas*; it is considered an impulse and linked with *¶ila* (character)⁵. Except *rati* and *uts¹ha*, all *sth¹y»-bh¹vas* are taken to be primary emotions. According to him, the corresponding *sth¹y» bh¹vas* are as follows:

<i>bh¹vas</i> (emotion)	<i>sth¹y» da¶a</i> (permanent state)
<i>R¹ga</i> (attraction)	<i>Rati</i> (love)
<i>H¹sa</i> (laughter)	X
<i>A¶carya</i> (wonder)	X
<i>~øka</i> (sorrow)	<i>Sant¹pa</i> (anguish, suffering)
<i>Bhaya</i> (fear)	<i>A¶ank¹</i> (apprehension)
<i>Krodha</i> (anger)	<i>Vaira</i> (enmity)
<i>Jugups¹</i> (disgust, aversion)	<i>Virati</i> (indifference)

It may be noted here that *r¹ga* is Acharya Shukla's own coinage, and that in two cases there are no nameable corresponding *sth¹y»* (permanent) states.

The main difference between *bh¹va* and its *sth¹y»-da¶¹* is that while *bh¹va* is addressed to one ¹*lambana* on one occasion, *sth¹y»-bh¹va* is drawn to the same ¹*lambana* on several occasions. Secondly, *anubh¹vas* are associated with *bh¹vas* (including *sanc¹ri bh¹vas*), not with their *sth¹y» bh¹va*. Thirdly, the experience of *bh¹va* is characterized by the absence of *buddhi* (intellect) while the latter has a conspicuous presence at the permanent state (RM 127).

There is also a higher state called '¶ila', when an emotion is naturalized and becomes a trait of one's character. A person in whom *h¹sa* is naturalized is characterized by cheerfulness and a sense of humour.

Acharya Shukla divides principal emotions, so-called *sth¹y»-bh¹vas* into two groups: painful and pleasant (*sukh¹traka*). The first includes *¶oka*, *kr¹odha*, *bhaya*, and *jugups¹*, and the second consists of *r¹ga*, *h¹sa*, *uts¹ha* and *¶carya*. They retain their character even during the experience of *rasa*. As noted earlier, sorrowful emotions lose their sting simply because they are experienced in the state of the unfettered heart.

Sanc¹ri bh¹vas, too, are divided into four categories: (i) painful (e.g. *tr¹sa* or fright); (ii) pleasant (e.g. *garva* or pride); (iii) both painful and pleasant (e.g. *sm¹Åti* or recollection); and (iv) indifferent (e.g. *vitarka* or reasoning). Acharya Shukla provides a detailed and penetrating exposition of the nature and character of various *sanc¹ri bh¹vas*, and, at places, offers suggestions for change in the traditional view. He observes, for instance, that *¶lasya* (lethargy) should not be considered a *sanc¹ri* of some dominant *bhava* (RM 163). He further adds that *sanc¹ri bh¹vas* may occur as independent *bh¹vas*, and include other *sanc¹ri bh¹vas* within them. He cites the examples of *lajj¹* (bashfulness) and *asuy¹* (envy) which may include *avahittha* (dissimulation) and *amar¶a* or indignation, respectively (RM 147).

The main difference between *sth¹y»-bh¹vas* and *sanc¹ri bh¹vas* lies in the fact that only those *bh¹vas*, whose *¶lambanas* are of a generalized nature, are included among *sth¹y»-bh¹vas*. The rest are counted among *sanc¹ri bh¹vas* (RM, 148). The same idea is expressed again when he observes that dominant *bh¹vas* are those *bh¹vas* which, being expressed by some character, are equally shared by the audience (RM 146). *Sanc¹ri bh¹vas*, expressed by a character, need not be experienced in the same manner by the audience.

Acharya Shukla is of the view that a *sth¹y»-bh¹va* unaccompanied by a *sanc¹ri bh¹va* or a *sanc¹ri bh¹va* unaccompanied by a *sth¹y»-bh¹va* is capable of evoking some emotional experience in the reader. It may not have the full force of a *rasa*-experience but nevertheless it is grasped by the reader as *rasa* (RM 173).

In his treatment of *bh¹vas* Acharya Shukla is undoubtedly influenced by his study of psychology, specially *The Foundations of Character* by Alexander F. Shand (1914) but this influence is not allowed to override his discretion. As a matter of fact, it is his own perception which ultimately determines his judgement.⁶

On the whole, Acharya Shukla's approach to the *rasa*-theory is scientific and rational; it is based on his own aesthetic experience rather than authority. Without completely rejecting the traditional view, he offers a new version of the *rasa*-theory which is more realistic and sensible.

The main tenets of Acharya Shukla's version of the *rasa*-theory may be summed up as follows:

1. *Rasa* is defined as the state of *h¹Ådaya k» mukt¹vasth¹* (the unfettered heart).
2. *Rasa* is neither *alaukika* (unworldly) nor it is characterized by *¶nanda* (joy).
3. To conceive *rasa* as *¶nanda* is not only to depreciate *rasa* but also to demean the purpose of poetry.
4. There is no basic difference between *bh¹va* and *rasa*. An emotion experienced in the state of *h¹Ådaya k» mukt¹vasth¹* is called *rasa*.

5. The *sth¹y»-bh¹vas* include both pleasant and painful *bh¹vas*. These *bh¹vas* retain their character even during the *rasa*-experience.

6. The *sth¹y»-bh¹vas*, except *rati*, are not truly *sth¹y*. They are primary emotions, and differ from the real *sth¹y»-bh¹vas*.

7. *Rasa* is experiential, not *vy;g¹rtha* (suggested meaning). It is a kind of feeling rather than cognition.

8. *Rasa*-experience is not confined to literature; it can be had in real life.

9. The worldly-*rasa* is not qualitatively different from literary *rasa*. On the contrary, the experience of *rasa* in actual life is necessary for the success of the portrayal of *rasa* in literature.

10. For *rasa*-realization, the depiction of *vibh¹vas* is more important than the depiction of *bh¹vas*.

11. Natural scenes need not be employed as *udd»pana vibh¹va*; they can very well serve as *¹lambana vibh¹va*.

12. A mere combination of *vibh¹va*, *anubh¹va* and *sanc¹ri bh¹vas* does not ensure the *rasa*-experience.

Notes :

¹Perhaps the only exception is Rakesh Gupta, but his work, *Psychological Studies in Rasa* (1950), was written in English. Moreover, unlike Dr. Gupta, Acharya Shukla does not demolish the postulates of Bharata's theory; he only redefines them in the light of his own experience as *sahaĀdaya*.

²The following statements of Acharya Shukla are noteworthy:

"*Vibh¹va* is of paramount importance in poetry" (RM, 77)

"*lambana* is of prime importance in poetry" (RM, 109)

³Vishwanath Prasad Misra in his 'Introduction' to *Rasa-Mim¹ns¹* (p.3) rightly observes that Acharya Shukla was not in favour of extending the discussion of poetry beyond *manomaya koṅa* (the mental level). He further adds that the tradition of treating *rasa* as *alaukika* (unworldly) has had its origin in philosopher-commentators.

⁴The essay is included in *Chint¹ma^ai*, Vol. I.

⁵However, he justifies the inclusion of *uts¹ha* in main *bh¹vas* from the view point of *rasa*-experience (RM, 131).

⁶This view is reinforced by his full-length essay on *uts¹ha*, *lajj¹*, *gl¹ni*, *bhaya*, *krodha* and other *bh¹vas* (emotions), included in *Chint¹ma^ai*, Vol. I.

Works Cited:

Chint¹ma^ai, Vol. I . Allahabad: Lokbharati, 2002. Print. Referred to as CM-I.

Chint¹ma^ai, Vol. II, ed. Vishwanath Prasad Misra. Varanasi: Nagri Pracharni Sabha, V.S. 2041. Print. Referred to as CM-II.

Rasa-Mim¹;s¹, ed. Vishwanath Prasad Misra. Varanasi: Kashi Nagri Pracharni Sabha, 5th Edition (V.S. 2039). Print. Referred to as RM.

Umed Singh

**Politics of Misrepresentation and Mis(s)-
governance : A Critique of Neo-liberal Model
of Development in India**

The terms 'postcolonialism' and 'postcoloniality' assumed wider significance and acceptability especially after the publication of Edward Said's seminal book *Orientalism* in 1978. The writers like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Ashish Nandy and Mahatma Gandhi etc. enriched, in their own individual ways, the vast body of literature which has now been characterized as postcolonial writings. Besides being a serious academic discipline in our University Teaching Departments, 'postcolonialism' the unbroken term, is a potent intellectual and critical movement which renews our perception about history, literature, culture, politics and language of both the colonizers and the colonized. As a result the task of re-reading and rewriting of history and other intellectual resources has become indispensable not only for the students of literature but for all the enlightened citizens of the country. Spivak's main contribution to Postcolonial theory came with her specific definition of the term 'subaltern'. Edward said describes the politics of misrepresentation by way of exposing the politics of the binary division of the world into two categories: the Orient and the Occident or the west and the rest. He also points out the intricacies of cultural forms of colonialism and elaborates the notion of cultural imperialism. Homi K. Bhabha talks in terms of hybridity. Franz Fanon, who was trained as a psychoanalyst, traced the causes of violence and mental sickness in the oppressive ideology of

colonialism. He opines that ideology of colonialism hurts both colonizers and the colonised. Ashish Nandy talks about a colonialism that "colonises minds in addition to bodies" and that produces "cultural and psychological pathologies" (Nandy vii) that refuse to disappear even after the demise or termination of colonial rule.

In the light of the above, the present paper attempts to critique the Neo-liberal model of development in India, especially after 1990s when India opted for and adopted the policies of neo-liberal free market and free trade.

The postcolonial India is a complex phenomenon where tradition and modernity, the rich and the poor, the secular and the sectarian, the Shining India and the Suffering India, scientific India and superstitious India, corporate world and slum dogs exist side by side uncomfortably, albeit both categories maintain peace outwardly. In fact, they are two distinct entities moving in their respective orbits. And the orbits never overlap. There is not one India but many Indias, it assumes many forms, and its form changes with the change in the status of a person who happens to be the narrative voice in the 'polyphonic' (Bakhtin) grand narrative of India. India appears different to different people. For the rich; it is land of immense riches; for the poor, it is a land of despair, disease and disasters mostly man-made; for the MNCs, it is country with vast human and material resources, abundant market potential where the surplus of the world (goods, food, medicines, technologies etc.) can easily be dumped; for the politicians, it is land of gullible people who have 'freedom of choice' to choose its leaders from the pool of the tainted and corrupt leaders; for the media industry, it is a country which offers a wide variety of viewers who remain glued to TV for sensational news,

Govt.-sponsored news showcasing India's growing GDP, the rise and fall of Sensex Market, and the tele-serials which promote complacency and an attitude of unthinking conformism among the masses; for the Big Industrial Houses, it is a country which supplies the cheapest unskilled labor to the factories and where the land of the farmers can be forcibly taken away; and for the Entertainment Industry, it is a country that will expect women in stereotypical roles of a dutiful and obedient wife and a sacrificing mother. She is either portrayed as an embodiment of *Shakti* or a sex object for the satisfaction of the male gaze. More often than not in Hindi cinema majority of them end up in brothel houses and call-girls rackets. The contradictions of Shining India and Suffering India are strikingly very strong and deep. The paradox of poverty amidst plenty is beautifully portrayed both in fiction and cinema. Some of the notable examples are: Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* or films like *Pipli Live*, *Paan Singh Tomer* and *Slum dog Millionaire*. The film directors and the novelist express the same thing differently. The mode of representation may be different in each case but the reality remains the same.

Today we are living in the post-industrial society which hinges on capitalist system of economy and where the laws of "free market" and neo-liberalism leaves little room for the growth of socialist and democratic institutions. With too much scope for the growth of the tendencies of corruption, private profit and unequal and uneven growth, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow at an alarming rate which not only hinders the growth of a healthy society but also questions

our credentials as a welfare state and a nation claiming the right to lead the world in the twenty first century.

The drive for total privatization in the name of 'development', 'globalization' and 'free market' has reduced everything to a commodity. The disturbing trend of Disinvestment has virtually sold everything to the private firms which make quick profit through their well-gearred network and promotional schemes. The private firms manage the basic infrastructure of the society and a parallel system has been created to deprive the common man of the basic amenities like education, health, public transport, and the services of a free, fair and neutral media. In some cases even *dharnas*, strikes, agitations are sponsored by the vested interests who want to enter into the enterprise of profit. The quality of education in the Govt. institutions, the quality of health services in the Govt. hospitals and the inefficiency and apathy of Govt. officials in various departments speak volumes of the collusion between the Govt. and the private entrepreneurs. The efficient public sector system is deliberately made dysfunctional and efficient manpower is systematically de-motivated so that private sector may take over the system. One can see this phenomenon in Govt. schools and Govt. hospitals, Govt.-patronized Parsar Bharti, Indian Airlines, Public Prosecutors representing the people of the state in the Courts of Law. Here I am talking about the general trend and not of exceptions. Highly paid teachers and highly paid doctors will not deliver and a parallel system and an expensive one will take care of everything because heavy profit is involved in this business. Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020* captures the true picture of educational institutions in India:

No, any Govt. work, especially in education, requires a fee.

'Get used to it'. He then listed out the palms we had to grease in order to open a place to teach kids in our country. Apart from the UGC, we had to apply to AICTE, or the All India Council for Technical education. They clear the engineering colleges. Also, every private college requires a government university affiliation. For that, we had to get approvals from the Vice Chancellor of a state university. Shukla-ji's connections and a generous envelope would do the trick.

'Otherwise the Vice-Chancellor can create a lot of hassle,' Bedi said, speaking from past experience. (Bhagat138).

The privatization of education has not only defeated the concept of welfare state but also made education a rare and expensive commodity available only to the moneyed class. The poor are forced to join the Govt. institutions which are infamous for lack of work culture, lack of discipline, lack of infrastructure and absenteeism. This is the state of affairs in Govt. funded universities which are being run by unacademic and worldly wise Vice Chancellors who know how to get into the office of power and how to stay there for maximum number of years. We are witnessing this scene in the state universities in Haryana. The tenure of a Vice Chancellor begins and ends with construction projects which involves cores of rupees as commission to all those who matter in the corridors of power. A noted social activist Dr. D.R Chaudhary has this to say in this context:

Thus, a Haryana University is run as a fief of the Vice Chancellor. In such a situation a Vice Chancellor tends to act as a despot in the university and a spineless servitor of the power- that-be as the incumbent, more often than not, is appointed not on the basis of his academic attainments and credentials but on caste and political considerations. Merit is at discount in every field and even in the recruitment of class four employees it is the wish of the political masters which has the decisive say.

The autocratic university structure inhibits free thinking rendering meaningful teaching and research activity impossible. This has made Haryana universities a breeding ground for mediocrities. And mediocrity sets its own norms. (75)

It appears that there is deep-rooted conspiracy to maintain the status quo and to keep our young generation uneducated and unemployable. One should not overlook the fact that a few families are ruling over this vast country of 121 crores of people who are struggling to understand the causes of their poverty, disease and their defeated and frustrated dreams. If the Govt. is determined to deliver, there are ways and means to do it efficiently and there are no handicaps and hindrances. Majority of people cannot afford high fee in public schools which are flourishing due to the culture of no-work and indiscipline in the Govt. institutions. Thus the Govt. is encouraging a parallel system which is accountable to nobody and no one. The standards of education are diluted in the name of compulsory education. With board examinations abolished, the poor man's children go to school for mid-day meals and paltry amount of scholarship which hardly serve any purpose except to keep these children unskilled, illiterate and

ignorant. This is the lot of majority of people in India for whom India is not going to shine as their children will never learn skills and expertise to compete with the children of the well-to-do families. The poor get poorer and the rich get richer and the rich continue to control the leavers of power. Govt. is silently siding with the rich in order to keep the poor poorer. Nothing can be more unfortunate than this aspect of the failure of our system. A noted academic Prof. B.S Dahiya rightly observes:

Earlier, education was viewed as social service or welfare activity, managed by the Govt. as well as private societies and individuals. The buildings for schools and colleges used to be in towns and villages. Today, all these 'global', 'international', 'world-class' schools, colleges, and universities in the private sectors are put up on the farmlands along the National and State Highways. These rare monuments shine like five-star hotels, having no resemblances to a school or college building. The fact that in quite a few cases hotels and marriage-palaces have been converted into colleges of technology or education, without any modification whatsoever, clearly shows that the looks reveal the spirit of these institutions. In any case, both educational institutions and hotels or marriage-palaces are run by businessmen on the principles of making maximum investments and earning maximum profits. (133)

One can read frequently in the newspaper that an expectant mother delivered her baby in the corridor of the hospital. Either it is a sick Govt. hospital where nurses and doctors routinely refer the patients to the private hospitals or it is a corporate /private hospital that routinely refuses to attend to the poor patients. *The Tribune* (March

2, 2012) carried a similar news with this heading: "Fatehabad Doctor Turn away Expectant Woman". The infrastructure created for public health in the Public Sector is hopelessly so inadequate that it cannot deliver to the satisfaction of the people. That is why Govt. hospitals have become infamous either for referring the patients to city hospitals or conducting autopsy on the dead bodies. Where is the mechanism for the distribution of economic resources that can "improve the nutrition, health, and education of the poor?" (Weisskopf 42). It does not seem to be working anywhere despite the fact that Constitution of India clearly underlines this provision. The absence of this mechanism impacts adversely not only the general well being of people but also their productive potential. Unfortunately the vast human potential is being wasted due to poor quality governance by our leaders most of whom are corrupt and lack imagination. They would collectively suppress and stifle every single voice raised against corruption, maladministration and mis-governance. This phenomenon was most visible during Ann Hazare's recent campaign against corruption. Many a times these lonely voices are either silenced or not heard at all. Our young men and women prove themselves as good doctors and good software engineers and good technocrats the moment they migrate to other countries. It is a pity that we cannot harness our own human resources.

In Nehru's famous speech (Tryst with Destiny) delivered on 14 Aug. 1947, in the wake of India's freedom, he "talked not just about freedom from British rule, but also about his grand vision of independent India" (Sen 204). The vision was to bring about democracy and freedom in all spheres of life—social, economic, political—so that every citizen could realize his /her potential without being

discriminated against on the basis of caste, class, religion, gender, sexual orientation and region. The vision was to "constitute into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic, and to secure to all its citizens: justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship; equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of individual and the unity and integrity of the nation" (Telumbde 11). The grand vision of Nehru has not been fulfilled till date despite the fact that our leaders refer to it proudly and talk about it loudly. The class barriers and the inequality emanating from this source is continuously maintained by the vested interests. Recently the some states have gone to polls and every political party tried to woo the voters of minority community in way or the other. Every time before the elections, the political parties make their poll sop more attractive: free cycle, free laptop, free electricity and water, reservation for minority communities, reservation for Brahmins on economic basis, reservation for women and so and so forth. This is the politics of appeasement which has done more harm than good. The Govt. has to indentify the poor people in every identity group and devise plans to extend help to all those who genuinely deserve help. As of now the attempt to remove the class barriers and economic inequality are nowhere in sight. Gender is an additional factor to societal inequality and if a woman happens to be from a lower caste, then the deprivation and inequality get doubled. This deprivation is neither conducive for the growth of democracy nor for societal cohesion. The people will respect a political system that allows them to have "a real sense of community with one another as fellow members of the larger society" (Weisskopf 42). The people in our society hardly have any such sense of security and

sense of community with fellow members of society. The caste rules India and Reservation Policy dictate the terms of our future plans. The frequent strikes, road and rail blockage, *bandhs*, agitations, communal riots, naxal-insurgency in states and other incidents of violence are symptoms of an unhealthy society and an insensitive State. The people are fed with the insensitive system and they routinely squat on railway track and Highways to get the attention of the authorities for their most ordinary problems like lack of water and electricity, choked sewerage line, police inaction in serious crimes like rape, extortion, murder, kidnapping, dacoity etc. There are innumerable instances when FIR is lodged by the police only when people force a road blockage. If a remedy is not found immediately, the system will collapse and the anarchy and not the rule of law will govern us.

Another issue that highlights the failure of democratic institutions and that alienates people from the mainstream is the issue of land acquisition. The lands of peasants are being taken away by force and the people are not left with any option but to protest against the anti-farmer policies framed by the Govt. The individuals are pitted against the State which uses people and military force to silence the protesters. It is not uncommon for them to be shot dead in cold-blood. Numerous such cases have been reported across the country. The places like Gorakhpur (Haryana), Singur, Nandigram, Kalinganagar, Jiatpur and Bhata Parsaul have become a metaphor of mis-governance and State repression. Such agitating groups are branded as 'misguided elements', 'Naxalites' or 'Maoists', which apparently gives the state the license to 'eliminate' them.

The 'Naxalites' are not born Naxalites but creation of our corrupt and inefficient system of Governance. The programmes and policies announced periodically in the Union Budget appear very ambitious and socialistic in nature but when it comes to the execution of such schemes, the poor at tail end receives nothing and the fact had already been admitted and endorsed by our Late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1980s. The time has changed since then but the level of corruption has increased manifold during the intervening period. We doubt whether or not our democratic institutions are growing with the passage of time. The present and the proposed land acquisition policy(LARR 2011) hardly takes into consideration the issue of social justice and the efficient use of resources. The Bill includes in its ambit factors like "social impact assessment, adequate notification and consent of 80 per cent of the affected community"(Dhru), but the bill is either silent or ambiguous about so many factors which impact the lives of the displaced persons and other sharecroppers, farm laborers and artisans who used to make their living from farmland grabbed by the Govt. The questions like how the amount of compensation be determined, whether future price or historical prices are going to be used for determining the exact amount of compensation, and the solutions to the other problems likely to be faced by the displaced persons remain unanswered. It has been commonly observed that the land acquired for industrialization or for any 'public' purpose benefits everyone except the farmers whose land has been acquired for setting up an industrial plant or anything of this type. The estate value of the adjoining areas gets doubled and tripled overnight and property dealers, the police and public servants make quick profit by facilitating the sale and purchase of land deals in that particular area.

The politicians purchase Benami property and make quick profits which run in crores of rupees. The process of land acquisition in the name of 'development' is very selective and here also the rich manage to get their land released and only the land of the poor and the impoverished small peasants is forcibly acquired through the use of coercive methods. The CLU Scam during the Congress regime in Haryana is a case in point. There is no denying the fact that except the displaced farmer, everyone gets benefited from the land acquisition enterprise. Aundhati Roy's anger is not wholly unjustified:

India lives in her villages, we're told, in every other sanctimonious public speech. That's bullshit. It's just another fig leaf from the Government's bulging wardrobe. India doesn't live in her villages. India dies in her villages. India gets kicked in her villages. India lives in her cities. India's villages live only to serve her cities. Her villages are her citizen's vassals and for that reason must be controlled and kept alive, but only just... [The state is] a giant poverty-producing machine, masterful in its method of pitting the poor against the very poor, of flinging crumbs to the wretched so that they dissipate their energies fighting each other, while peace (and advertising) reigns in the Master's Lodge." (Roy 71)

The unholy nexus between politicians and media, and between politicians, bureaucrats and corporate world is not only a permanent source of corruption but also undermines people's faith in the democratic institutions. The 2G Spectrum Scam, the Commonwealth Games Scam, the Mining Scams in Orissa and Karnataka and the Nira Radia tapes are only a few examples of the recent cases of corruption involving high-profile politicians and corporate

giants. The failure of our grand vision and the resultant despair caused to millions of people of this country has been satirically depicted in *Pipli Live* which shows how a rich nation is systematically failing the majority of its population. The media is a big business these days and it is owned by the rich and people in power. It is least shaken by human misery and continuously run after TRP (Target Rating Point), it focuses its camera on profit-making images and events. As Anand Teltunde points out:

Barring the fanciful concern for the "bottom of the pyramid", largely the 77% population earning less than Rs 20 a day is naturally excluded from it [development model]. The entire game gets played with the balance 23%, the so-called middle and upper class of this country... . Nonetheless no Indian considers himself below middle class unless she/ he sleeps on the road and begs for food. ... Neo-liberalism, as an ideology, pulverizes society into individuals and preaches to them to compete for their selfish ends. These discrete individuals with an ever-increasing appetite for more and more consumption do not have time to ponder over the Nathas [character in *Pipli Live*] of this world or the odds of the system until they begin to affect their own life (11).

The people will continue to protest as they fail to relate to this system meaningfully. The disconnect people and their representatives is growing at an alarming rate as was evident during Anna Hazare's fast in New Delhi. The country's wealth and power is concentrated in a few hands. It is a dangerous trend which will thwart all our democratic aspirations. "There are as many as 315 crore patis out of 543 MPs in the previous Lok Sabha" (Ibid). Prof B.S Dahiya rightly observes:

The large-scale suicides among farmers, and the wide-spread unrest leading to violent agitations, expose our so-called democratic governments. Compared to the Land Alienation Act the British introduced, our present-day policy shows how in the name of development the farmers are being made landless, the forest-dwellers are forced into taking the arms, and millions in the rural sector are rendered homeless..as a matter of fact it creates an inhuman gap between one and many, between the minority of small manipulators and majority of simple cultivators. (22)

Land is the most-sought-after assets in the age of globalization. The big corporate firms collectively owned by Business Houses, cricketers, politicians, bureaucrats, actors, builders and media tycoons are on a buying spree to purchase large tracts of agriculture land. The state governments have enacted special laws for the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZ). These are created for the investors by acquiring thousands of acres of fertile farmland from the farmers who depend on agriculture land for their subsistence.

The majority of people do not know what is happening to them and why. They feel bewildered like Nathia and Budhia of *Pipli Live*. They do not know the author and architect of their poverty, disease and deprivation. The middle-class is too complacent to think of any radical change. This class loves to live in newly-found luxury and naturally hates any progressive idea for change. The rich are comfortable in their cozy compartments of elitism.

The inequality of wealth and assets is so gross that "top 5 percent people possess 38 percent of total assets

and the bottom of 60percent owning a mere 13 percent" (Sachar, *Tribune*, Dec.3,2013). The children belonging to underprivileged sections of society suffer from mal-nutrition and do menial jobs to support their families

When we talk of development, we have to ensure that we develop as one nation through the combined efforts and aspirations of various social groups residing within the territory of this country, and the minorities get as much attention as they deserve. If one part develops at the cost of the other, and if the number of poor people grows with the growing number of billionaires, then it is no development. It is only self-deception.

There is an urgent need to develop a mode of Governance and a model of development that takes care of those factors which account for India's uneven growth. The prime factors for this phenomenon can be easily identified : Caste-based Reservation Policy, poor quality of Governance, the problem of much -talked -about black money, corrupt and unaccountable bureaucracy, overstated nationalism and xenophobia, our attitude towards minorities (we look upon them as vote bank!), commercialization of the media. The noted journalist Kuldip Nayar expresses his concerns about the deteriorating standards of journalism: "Of course, there are temptations galore, junkets, club memberships, shares and suit lengths and even though there is no emergency, they are willing to fall in line and crawl" (*Tribune*, Feb. 26, 2012). The need of the hour is retrieve our traditional morality and to strengthen our "ethos of independence, democracy and welfare state"(Ibid).

The ethos of our pluralistic society demands that we are sensitive to the problems of various identity groups

including the minorities who feel out of place in the county that routinely boasts of its unity in diversity. The reduction in economic disparities can restore their faith in our democratic institutions. We have to evolve mechanism not only to eradicate mass poverty but also economic inequality both among individuals and between various identity groups in the society. The people feel attached only with that system which ensures fair availability of opportunities and equal access to important resources of the society. It a challenge before all of us to reintegrate our divided societies and make our share of sacrifice for a better India. "We all have to do our bit. For change we need revolution. A real revolution can only happen when people ask themselves-what is my sacrifice?(Bhagat 264).

There is little doubt about the fact that since 1990s India has emerged on the global scene as a formidable economic and the pace of economic growth has been very notable at least in terms of the statistics of economic parameters. The GDP and slightly- less- than double figure of economic growth rate speaks volumes our rising power at the global level. But in the glare of prosperity and rising figures of Sensex we tend to overlook the vital question of inequalities in the distribution of economic resources and employment opportunities. The uncomfortable question arises - why gains of economic growth are not unevenly and equally distributed among the people? This inequality is a major cause of concern for every sensitive individual. The poverty, unemployment, disease and lack of affordable medical facilities, lack of education, insensitivity towards environment and natural resources, rising graph of crime, gender inequalities, corruption in our day-to-day life and the growing incidents of internal insurgencies are some of the signs of the sickness of our body-politic.

The hope lies with millions of our young men and women whose energy and vision can change the course of events in the days to come. Once awakened, these young minds will work hard in order to wipe out the last traces of corruption, deprivation, discrimination and the culture of elitism from the bruised face of our society. There is an urgent need to promote a democratic common culture that can dismantle the broad divisions created by the vested interests. These divisions have to be dismantled by the combined efforts of the people from various walks of life—teachers, persons from media, theatre and cinema, politicians, workers, engineers and economists, farmers and farm house owners. Everyone has equal responsibility but some have to do it more vigorously than the others. Raymond Williams aptly underlines the need for the creation of a democratic common culture: "To create a society whose values are at once commonly created and criticised, and where the discussions and exclusions of class may be replaced by the reality of common and equal membership. This still, is the idea of a common culture" (Williams 208).

Work Cited:

Bhagat, Chetan. *Revolution 2020*. New Delhi: Rupa Publication, 2011. Print.

Chaudhary, D.R. *Haryana at Crossroads*, New Delhi: NBT, 2007. Print

Dahiya, Bhim.S. *The Rise of Haryana and Fall of Democracy*. Rohtak: Shanti Parkashan, 2012. Print.

Dhru, Kelly A. *Acquisition of Land for Development Projects in India: The Road Ahead*. Ahmedabad: Research Foundation for Governance, 2010.

Nandy, Ashish. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*.

New Delhi: OUP. 2010 Print.

Nayar, Kuldeep. "A Lifetime is not Enough". Conversation with Aruti Nayar, *The Tribune*, Spectrum, Feb. 26. 2012. Print

Pipli Live. Dir. Anusha Rizvi. Prod. Aamir Khan. 2010. Film

Roy, Arundhati, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2001. Print.

Sachar, Rajinder. "Failure to Follow the Path of Socialism". *The Tribune*, Spectrum, Dec. 3, 2013. Print

Sen, Amartya. *The Argumentative Indian*, London: Penguin Books, 2005. Print

Teltumbde, Anand. "Enveloped in the Peace of Dead" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLV No 36.10.11. Print

Weisskopf, Thomas .E. "Why Worry about Inequality in the Booming Indian Economy?" *EPW* Vol. XLVI No 47, No19, Nov.19, 2011. Print

Williams, Raymond. "Culture and Revolution: A Response" in Terry Eagleton and Brain Wicker ed. *From Culture to Revolution*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1968.(4851). Print

Renu Bhadola Dangwal & Shakuntala Kunwar

**Resurrecting Shabar Culture and Identity:
Use of Oral Narratives in Mahasweta Devi's
*The Book of the Hunter***

"I have taken from oral tradition, used it and now my work is going back to oral tradition ... yes, this kind of 'give and take' is something that is bound to happen and it should be like this."

(Mahasweta Devi qtd. in Mojares)

The study of literature has undergone radical changes in the last few decades. The most considerable questions in today's literary scenario concern the dynamic and heterogeneous nature of literature and literary studies, the problem of boundaries which demarcate literature from non-literary studies and most of all the connection of literature with other forms of cultural studies. The fact that language and culture influence each other has been well established by researchers like Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf stating that different linguistic usage cause different cultural world views (Sapir-Whorf hypothesis). As far as literature is concerned, it has always been instrumental to understand the different aspects of living and culture. In modern times, it has assumed a greater responsibility to reflect social and cultural image and has expanded its frontiers to include and address some of the terms and situations which had traditionally been treated outside its scope. The confluence of literature, culture and identity still posits remarkable possibilities to study this trajectory from the perspective of narratives as used in literature.

The word narrative has gained ubiquitous prominence in all human discourse in recent past few decades acquiring considerable amount of significance in psychology, anthropology, language, literature, and cultural studies. Narrativity and human life coexist with each other. In fact, life may itself be described as a series of narrative accounts of one's lived experiences and it is language that contextualizes life in the form of narration. Narrative or story is any spoken or written account of connected events both in prose and poetry. People express their experience of life through narratives. William Labov, an American linguist who is more popularly regarded as the father of Sociolinguistics considers that day-to-day conversation, oral memoirs, folk tales, histories, short stories, novels, poetic and prose epics, and more recent visual media, all the wide range of human activities of communication extend over the narrative study. In an important statement he says, "all these forms of communication ... draw upon the fundamental human capacity to transfer experience from one person to another through oral narratives of personal experience" (Labov1). With the development of Sociolinguistic researches in 1960s, this emphasis on "spontaneous recounting of experience" (2) has increased tremendously. Due to its expressive quality, such oral narratives or narratives in general are makers of living reality of an individual as well as of the world around. As in the words of David Herman, "Narrative is a mode of representation tailor-made for gauging the felt quality of lived experiences" (Herman). As human beings have always perceived, presented and interpreted world around themselves in the form of narratives, it may be said that the whole conception of life revolves round these innumerable real life narrative representations. Anything is sensed and perceived within

the backdrop of narrative structure of life. Bryan Appleyard's comment published in the *Sunday Times Magazine* strengthens the role of narration or stories in life. He writes:

We tell stories to ourselves; of our journey from birth to death, friends, families, who we are and who we want to be. Or public stories about history and politics, about our country, our race or our religion... Or maybe it is about a life long struggle for salvation or liberation. Either way—however large or small the story—the human impulse is to make sense of each moment by referring it to a larger narrative. (qtd. in Cobley 1)

However simple these narratives may appear like, they contain immense possibility of reducing themselves to abstract theories and laws as has been well described by Paul Cobley in his study on narratives. In the history of development of different disciplines and principles, it will be found that all the branches of enquiry and exposition have evolved out from these real life oral narratives. Viewed from this perspective, the interconnection of history, politics, language, literature, anthropology, psychology, cultural studies would appear to be more clear and inter-related. Literature represents, interprets and expands these narratives of daily life and thereby comments on the culture and identity of an individual, group and community for oral narratives not only make the matrix of communication possible but also construct identity. Paul Cobley in his detailed study of narratives says that oral narratives serve "mnemonic purpose" (38). With their "repetitions" and "stock devices", oral cultures not only contain details of their past and present but, as Cobley says, they also contribute significantly to the "formation and maintenance of the self-image of peoples" (38). It is in such a way that narratives represent "large-scale identities such as nation" (38).

By excavating the narrative-world of Shabar tribal community represented by Mahasweta Devi in her *The Book of the Hunter*, the present paper brings into close preview the much wider relationship of narrative, culture and identity. It is well known that the resurrection of tribes, their identity and their rehabilitation has always remained the paramount object of the life and works of Mahasweta Devi, the foremost literary writer, journalist and social-activist of this age. It is so that her influential body of work constitutes a detailed research into the oral history of tribes including Mundas, Santhals, Oraons, Hos and Shabars. She underpins the deep layers of their culture by employing narratives widely spread out among these communities in the works like *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, *The Book of the Hunter*, *Imaginary Maps*, *Bashai Tudu*, *Titu Mir*, and many others. For strengthening the socio-political status of tribes and for their "rehabilitation in history", Devi considers oral lore the most important tool which have been lost in the long process of "becoming uprooted" (Devi, Preface x-xi). She borrows vast variety of her narrative material from diverse sources including Bengali literature, folk tales and oral lore, songs prevalent in tribal and underprivileged community, her own readings of different historical and ethnographic sources, and her own first-hand direct interaction with these people.

In *The Book of the Hunter*, Devi specifically builds up the narrative world of Shabars as, according to her, it is a less known tribal community as compared to Santhals, Mundas or Oraons. Shabar or Sabar or Byadh (hunter) is one of the schedule tribes in India belonging to Jharkhand, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa. It is also one of such tribes who were classified as 'criminal tribes' under Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 during British rule

and have been suffering from social stigma of being labeled as 'criminals' since then. Commenting on their socio-cultural identity, Devi writes:

[I]t is evident that the Lodha Shabars enjoyed a high status in society those days, since on Kanaisar Hill the Lodha priest used to sit above and the brahman priest below, till 1982. Also, the puja at Guptamani temple on Bombay Road is entrusted to a lineage of Lodha priests. Once upon a time the Lodhas in those forested areas were quite respected. There are still signs of that today. I do not know why the British rulers declared them to be 'criminal' in 1871. That stigma is still operative among people of other groups who live in Medinipur. (ix)

To meet her purpose of resurrection of Shabar identity and culture, Devi chooses the device of narrative because the traits of any kind of tradition, culture and identity can be found in their original forms only in narratives. Her creative writings bear strong witness to her meticulous efforts which she makes to gather narrative accounts of these tribes. While revealing her acquaintance of oral narratives and folk-lore prevalent among Lodha Shabar, Devi writes in the preface to the book:

The Lodhas have helped out by writing about themselves in *Bortika* There I found information that Kalketu was their founding father, that good fortune resulted from the hunting of the golden monitor lizard on the eighth day of Durga Puja, that Lord Jagannath of Puri was originally a Lodha god, and that brahmins are unworthy of a Lodha's obeisance because a certain brahman stole the deity's image from them. One could say in support of this that till date a Shabar first performs the worship service at the Jagannath Temple in Puri. (ix)

Devi presents the panoramic view of Shabar life on the basis of her material basically gathered from the epic poem *Abhyamangal* composed by Kabikankan Mukundaram Chakrabarti, the greatest medieval poet of Bengal. She derives mainly from the *Byadhkhanda* section of this epic which contains intimate knowledge of the life and culture of the hunting tribes. The novel, which is set in the sixteenth century Bengal, centers around the life of two couples, brahman Mukundram and his wife, and Phuli and Kalya. By contrasting the lives of these two couples, Devi exposes the unknown and untold secrets of Shabar community in West Bengal of that time. In one detailed matrix, Devi has weaved and tied countless tales and oral narratives which make her work a whole compendium of tribal life and culture. As a folklorist and a researcher, she is not just interested in exposing and accounting the worth of these narratives but also tries to examine whether a particular narrative relates and reflects present beliefs of an individual, group or community and sheds light on the past religious or cultural beliefs. Before coming to the principle folk narrative in the novel, Devi introduces Mukundaram, the central character in the novel, and constructs the world of Daminya, his village to construct his narrative-identity which is "a person's internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose" (Crossley Abstract). Thus, she establishes a narrative-world-structure at the very outset of the novel to develop the principle narrative. In the first few lines of the novel, Mukunda has been depicted doing his self assessment by narrating his own journey of life: "WE HAVEN'T HAD TROUBLE since we came to Ararha, eh? The granary is filled with paddy and there are cows in the shed. We're doing just fine" (Devi, *The Book* 1).

In the course of narrative exposition of Mukundram's life-story, Devi uses multiple references derived from folklore which are suggestive of deep socio-cultural signification. It further reveals how innumerable routine stories, which human beings usually say and listen to, compose the broader narrative of their life, beginning from birth to death. Researchers have shown that the stories children listen from their parents constitute their individual and group psychology, motivate their course of living, and play instrumental role in building their identity. Narrative references may be seen working as motif and weaving the fabric of life, enriching it with the context and the meanings. All kinds of religious-cultural myths, folk tales, folk-songs, legendary tales, real-life stories are the different projections of narratives which Devi utilizes to their maximum possibilities for her purpose. The tales, which Mukunda's mother used to tell him about his forefathers keep on reminding him of his duties towards his family and further motivate him to write. His future ambition to know and write the story of Shabars carries the impression of those stories which he had heard about his ancestors. His mother's words reverberate in his mind whenever he thinks of his childhood past: "Your grandfather was Jagannath Mahamisra, a knowledgeable and talented man indeed! He ate only vegetarian food, and spent his days worshipping Gopal. One gained merit merely by setting once eye upon him! He had wide renown, as if he was the all embracing sun!" (14).

Similarly the stories of the past which Devi puts in the mouth of her spokesmen, throw light on the old ways of travelling, farming, celebrating festivals and so on of the rural Bengal of sixteenth century. These individual stories make significant comments on the demographic,

geographic, and socio-economic transformation of society. Devi has used both poetic and prose narratives to bring out the different cultural and social practices of these rural folks. The kind of folk-songs Ganesh, an elderly peasant sings in the book, are fine examples of such oral lore. Ganesh calculates about the rain and other such things on the joints of his fingers, a technique which he has learnt from his elder ones to conjecture about natural phenomena. These popular techniques are the asset of tribal community which she claims to give recognition. When Mukunda asks him as how he knows about rain with so much of certainty, Ganesh replies:

If the light fortnight's ninth day sees too much rain,
That year will never see rain again.
But when there's just a drop or two,
Paddy grows to great, great height,
The fish multiply day and night. (6)

Similarly, as Mukunda informs:

Ashadh's rain, only in name.
Paddy grows from Ashadh's rain.
Bhadra's rain swells heads of grain.
Ashwin's rain is all in vain. (54-55)

Such poetic pieces and songs as quoted above manifest wisdom gathered during long years of observation by community people. Such narratives as they circulate from person to person and generation to generation provide a background for particular belief system or ritual. The repeated practice of believing and doing something gradually leads to permanent way of doing, believing and thinking. Such patterns of working and believing may be seen as forming the set tradition and culture in different social groups and communities. The introduction of

Sannyasi Thakur shows Devi's understanding of this mechanism and she further develops his story in the novel to answer as why the *chalkuto* vine, trees of *sheora* and *chatim* are not be planted at home or why the dates of *mogha* and *aslesha* are considered as inauspicious. Sannyasi Thakur, who does not accept anything readymade unlike others, had planted *sheora* and *chatim* trees all around his house yard. But as his lady love elopes with someone, he gets crazy, roars madly, and leaves the village in her search. Incidents like these have made the people of Daminya believe in planting of "cremation ground trees" (8) in home yard as inauspicious. Ganesh says to Mukunda, "You see Bhagna, if you plant *sheora* and *chatim* trees, a *chalkuto* vine in your yard, you invite total ruin. Sannyasi Thakur didn't go by any of this" (11). The character of Thakur is a creation of fact and fiction but Devi uses it to lend the narrative details a touch of authenticity and originality. As William Labov and Joshua Waletzky have elaborated in their article "Narrative Analysis: Oral Narratives of Personal Experience" that complex narratives cannot be analyzed until the more simple and fundamental narratives are analyzed in regard to their originating functions. "Such fundamental structures," as they say, "are to be found in the oral versions of personal experiences: not the products of expert story tellers that have been retold many times, but the original production of a representative sample of the population" (Labov and Waletzky 3). Sannyasi Thakur seems to be testimonizing the stories related with inauspicious trees.

Devi's analysis of oral tradition of Shabar community by filtering out the narratives prevalent in it goes hand in hand with the recent developments in social theory which Margaret R. Somers discusses in her article. While

discussing about the "rigidifying aspects of identity into a misleading categorical entity" (606), she suggests to bring together the study of identity and narrativity. The concept of narrative has long been studied as "a *mode of representation*" (606) but since 1960s and 1970s, as Somers informs, academicians and theorists of different fields have been reconceptualizing and refiguring the concept of narrativity. Somers writes:

While the older interpretation of narrative was limited to that of a representational form, the new approaches define narrative and narrativity as concepts of social epistemology and social ontology. These concepts posit that it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities ... all of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple, changing) by being located or locating ourselves ... in social narratives rarely of our own making. (606)

Devi's engagement with the narrative world of Shabar is clearly indicative of her employment of these narratives as a tool to study the social-ontological growth of Shabar tribes to further reconstitute their identity. Shabars, who are basically hunter or Akhetiyas and Byadhs, as they are called in local language, are dwellers of forests. Her exposition of their life adds to the reconstruction of their historiography and redefines and reconstructs their identity. She depicts them as one of the kinds of innumerable native communities who are not to be lost in the general tags given to them in civilized societies as doms, washermen, chandals, or cobblers. They are Shabars—people who live in the lap of nature, who have their own social and cultural trends and on the basis of

these , Devi claims their autonomous entity and dignity like other social groups. She informs that Shabars do not live in social hierarchies and treat everyone as equal. Even women-folk enjoy equal rights in their communities. When in the novel , Mukunda talks to Kalya Shabar about the violence people like him commit against living creatures, Kalya replies, "Did you or I make up the way things are? The goddess Abhayachandi has given you puja for work, books, a granary and a cowshed, while she gave us the jungle. We're Shabars, you hear, children of jungle!" (52).

In support of her claim to privilege Shabar culture, Devi makes Tejota, an elderly woman who had been blessed by her father Danko with his ancestral knowledge, narrate the age-old story prevalent among Shabars to Mukunda. The story dates back to the ancient time when Shabars lived with other forest creatures in the deep interiors and were blessed by the goddess Abhayachandi against all fears. The king of the town that had sprung outside the forest wanted to build a temple as everyone in the town thought of the image of the goddess. Then a brahman priest stole the stone image in the greed of gold but was later cursed by the goddess and died along with his family persons. Thus the king and the Shabars both had sinned and provoked goddess' annoyance. The goddess said to king:

The Shabars have sinned as well—why did they trust a brahman? In time, the Shabars will be scattered in all directions, and be called by many names. But they will not grant respect to brahmans or touch their feet in reverent greeting. They will suffer hardship if they ever place their trust in anyone other than the children of the forest. Your sin is also great, so you won't be able to keep me. The stone slab no longer has my image on it If you do want to offer puja to me, only blue *gandharaj* flowers will

do. And remember the consequences of this brahman's act! (69).

Tejota further tells about Kalketu and Phullora who are no less than any mythical god and goddess in Shabar community. They were actually the lumps of clay which goddess made as man and woman after feeling pity for Shabars's long years of miseries and blessed them with life. They were promised to be called as Meghaban and Meghabati when Kalketu would become king. Thus Kalketu and Phulloa lived hunting and selling the meat when one day Kalketu brought the divine flowers for the temple, the priest kicked him saying, "'You hunter! Your clothes are stained with the blood of animals, you're polluted by birth and race! These are the flowers you dare to bring Ma?!'" (70). After such trials, goddess blessed him appearing in the form of golden monitor lizard and said, "don't ever show what's in the royal treasury to anyone, or else you will meet with ruin. The Akhetiyas will be swallowed up by darkness again. Spend seven pots of riches every day. Every morning you'll find it's been replenished" (71). Next day Kalketu found himself as king Meghaban who then ruled for millions of years. But this time, it was his treasurer who tried to see the heavenly treasure. As it happened, the forest enveloped the temple and goddess said:

It's the treasure's fault that this disaster happened, Megha! The other kings would have come at the break of dawn to conquer Gujarat, so I'm turning the city into forest again. Now your son will never be king, Megha. But my dear son, I will be waiting here! If some other Akhetiya ever catches sight of the golden monitor lizard on Durgashtami, he will be king! (72)

The story contains reference of betrayal and disrespect to goddess' proclamation and breakage of the

sanctity of her laws. It is so that Shabars do not allow alien forces to corrupt their rituals and customs, they do not bow before brahmins as Kalachand says, "Their ways and rules are different. They don't treat the king as their king, and they don't bow to greet a brahmin" (56). In fact, in some of the places, Shabar priest holds a position higher than that of a brahmin priest even today.

Devi's narration of the life of Shabar people thus brings out the oral culture of tribal people like Shabars where documentation is maintained basically in the form of mutual dialogues and stories. She views the lack of the same as one of the primary reasons of deterioration in cultural values in urban communities and therefore considers it to be very important to preserve these ethnic-values by preserving these communities and their traditions. In the novel, the act of telling stories itself has gained a lot of prominence. At many places Devi has made reference of the story-telling—an act which cannot be ignored in the study of tribal and other native cultures. All her characters, Ganesh, Daibki, Mukundaram, and Tejota, may be located in the mode of story-telling. These stories are presented by her in usual life experiences of dream-sequences, past-event narration, future-stories, stories of local heroes and folk-tales. Her own narration of these multiple threads of stories gives organic unity to the novel. Creating these types of narrative situations, Devi addresses the key issues of tribe folks such as poor wages, the need for drinking water, education, health and sanitation, land-grabbing and so on.

Devi also presents a sharp contrast between two different cultures—one is of prosperous, civilized class and the other of uneducated, wild tribes and authorizes power to the latter. In the novel, she depicts how people belonging

to the former world learn things in schools and colleges and depend on books for their knowledge, whereas people like Kalya learn everything either by their own experience or by listening to their elders and forefathers. Their knowledge is not limited to one particular individual or class but belongs to everyone. The knowledge acquired by tribal community is more empirical in nature rather than theoretical. It is orality that prevails in tribal and rural communities. Mukunda, when he enquires Kalya about his source of knowledge, feels surprised to know Kalya's knowledge about goddess Abhayachandi. Kalya says, "Listen Thakur, it was not from reading books! Every Shabar knows it" (52). Devi projects and glorifies this immense amount of wisdom which tribes possess in their collective memories and experiences and uses it to counter the hegemonic power structures of urban societies which claim that knowledge flows down from their modern temples of education and institutions. She considers that these tribes generate knowledge of immense potential and thus possess power of their own kind. This attack on the institutionalized and elite-class learning can be witnessed in almost all her works. In this book also she assaults this misconception that forest dwelling Shabars could know anything. Devi's comment on Mukunda is important in this regard: "In his arrogance, stemming from the prolonged study of numerous Sanskrit texts, he believed that knowledge only came from the formal cultivation of learning. He was not conscious that he possessed this arrogance" (55).

Thus, through such oral narratives prevalent in Shabar community, Devi rewrites the historiography of these unsung tribes. She claims the same status-quo for these hunter-gatherers as is claimed by the other mainstream citizens of the nation. By throwing light on

the hidden corners of their lives and by singing of their heroes, myths and legends, Devi tries to develop their familial kinship with other communities. Further, by giving words to oral forms of conversation and communication, Mahasweta Devi privileges to oral discourse which is considered less-equipped in comparison to written discourse. She not only uses oral records for recreating historiography of her subject but with her faithful documentation of events and sheer directness evades away the imperfections associated with the name of oral discourse, namely "faithfulness and memory of its transmitters and receivers" (Coley 32). *The Book of the Hunter* is a detailed depiction of narrative of her selection which she tries to render in "totality of events without resorting to a high degree of compression and omission" (32). Devi chooses narrative form as it suits her purpose to restore tribal culture and solidify their identity. No other form and method would have done this as better as narrative mode, more particularly in the nation which has old oral history and where diverse cultures depend on "stories of human action to store, organize and communicate what they know" (33). Writing of her choice for narratives brought from folk legends and myths, Devi says, "I have a reverence for materials collected from folklore, for they reveal how the common people have looked at an experience in the past and look at it now To capture the continuities between past and present held together in the folk imagination, I bring legends, mythical figures and mythical happenings into a contemporary setting, and make an ironic use of these... ." (qtd. in Mojares). The present paper, in the light of this study, emphasizes the need of using myriads of oral narratives present in the form of stories, family-sagas, legends, myths, collective memories with their local flavour of idioms and traditional folk forms so that these

stories can further be circulated among these indigenous community and others. Devi feels the urgent need for this process to be followed. Such account of the culture and tradition of these aboriginals, as corroborated by them in their oral narratives, is the only potent way to seek their identity and equality.

Works Cited:

- Cobley, Paul. *Narrative*. New Critical Idiom Series. London & New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.
- Crossley, Michele L. "Narrative Psychology, Trauma and the Study of Self/Identity." Abstract to the paper published in *Theory & Psychology*. Vol.10.4 (2000): 527-546. *Sage Journals*. Web. 18 June 2015.
<tap.sagepub.com/content/10/4/527.short?rss=1&ssource=mfc>.
- Devi, Mahasweta. *The Book of the Hunter*. Trans. Sagaree and Mandira Sengupta. Calcutta: Seagull, 2009. Print.
- . Preface. *The Book of the Hunter*. By Devi. Trans. Sagaree and Mandira Sengupta. Calcutta: Seagull, 2009. Print.
- Herman, David. "Cognitive Narratology." *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. Hamburg: Hamburg University Press. Peter Hunn et al, eds. 13 March 2013. Web. 14 Dec 2015.
<hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php?title=Cognitive_Narratology&oldid=2058>.
- Labov, William. "Oral Narratives of Personal Experience." *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language Sciences*. Web. 14 December 2015.

https://scholar.google.co.in/scholar?q=related:GAbSRDCchSAJ:scholar.google.com/&hl=en&as_sdt=0,5>.

Labov, William and Joshua Waletzky. "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience." *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7.1-4. Web. 22 May 2016.

<www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/user_upload/.../bamberg_journal_narrative.pdf>.

Mojares, Resil B. "Mahasweta Devi: Biography." *Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation*. Web. 15 Dec. 2015.

<www.rmaf.org.ph/newrmaf/main/awardees/awardee/biography/273>.

Somers. R Margaret. "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach." *Theory and Society* 23 (1994): 605-649. Web. 19 May 2015.

<deepblue.lib.umich.edu/...42/.../11186_2004_Article_BF00992905.pdf?...>.

Renu Bhadola Dangwal, Department of Sciences and Humanities, National Institute of Technology, Uttarakhand, Srinagar, Garhwal E-mail: rbdangwal@nituk.ac.in

Charu Sharma

Rasana Atreya's The Temple is Not My Father : A Pleading for Devadasi

Whenever the connection between literature and society is talked about, the oft-quoted line is "Literature is the mirror of society." Yes, this is very much true, but this line doesn't state the complete truth. Literature, by presenting before us certain other different and at times, even hereby altogether unknown aspects of society fulfils its function of serving as 'the mirror of society' only when it, without any bias, makes us equally aware of the ugly and dark face of the same society and encourages us to take remedial steps. Only such literature can be, in the real sense of the term, termed influential which helps its readers in making efforts towards increasingly improved and better manner of living.

The foundation of literature lies in the thoughts, feelings and actions of the mankind. And it is humans who collectively form the society. On the one hand, a section of literature sings the saga of an individual's life while on the otherhand, a different section of literature, taking an individual as a representative of the society, gives us a threadbare portrait of the workings of the same society. And that is where the 'black blood of rotteness and death' running through the veins of society comes into picture in the form of social evils.

Shelley has called poets "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind." And when it comes to spreading the awareness about the social evils and the various guises it takes, literature has made a very strong, unequivocal and

unmatched contribution. Literature has charged up the minds and emotions of its readers so much that people have been inspired to start such movements that have altered the entire lifestyle of the humans. For example, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* hit hard at the system of slavery widespread in the U.S. which treated humans as property. Such was the influence of this novel on the minds of the readers that it gave them an entirely new perspective towards slavery which eventually turned into a movement against slavery and ultimately its abolition. This is the power of literature.

In India, in the name of religious tradition the ancient practice of 'Devadasi' still persists in some parts. Devadasi, the very word, when mentioned, brings to mind two very different and contradictory images. On the surface, the meaning this word connotes is 'a servant of God.' Sounds pious, right? But the very next moment, another meaning or you can say, a modern-day and much often talked-about meaning that starts sprinting in my mind is 'prostitution.' Yes, prostitution. And then I wonder how these two extremely contradictory meanings reconcile with each other, weaving and thereby representing the starkly ugly reality of Devadasi's life in the modern age.

Originating in Southern India and continuing even today in spite of being outlawed around fifty years back, the tradition of dedicating young girls to Goddess Yellamma- the goddess of fertility (a powerful force whose cult is thousands of years old with followers spread across southern India), has ruined the lives of innumerable innocent young girls. These girls are reverently called 'Devadasis, 'literally meaning slaves of God whereas in reality they are 'sanctified prostitutes.' Earlier started as a religious practice and afterwards believed to be a measure

to make fortune smile on a poverty and drought-stricken family, this ancient custom of dedicating young girls in the service of God later became a convenient way to avoid unaffordable dowry and finally transformed the girls from slaves of the goddess to victims of sexual slavery when after reaching puberty their virginity started being auctioned to the highest bidder after which they could never marry and cannot have family life. And thus such girls became bread-winners of their family as whatever money Devadasis earned it went straight to their families, with their parents acting as pimps. This ancient Devadasi custom is prevalent even today and anti-slavery campaigners estimate that there are at least twenty-five devadasis in the state of Karnataka alone.

Turning a blind eye to this life-devastating custom the superstitious society forces the girls, once turned into Devadasis, to live two separate and mutually opposing lives in their one existence and eventually leaves them on the fringe of society, cursed and condemned forever. When in the temples these women, wearing necklaces made of pearls and white shells which demarcates them as Devadasis, are considered qualified enough to give blessings to people coming to the temple and even perform rituals associated with the Goddess. However, outside the temples when they are no longer Devadasis these same women are ostracised and shunned by the society because everyone is well-aware of the sexual slavery happening inside the temple in the name of religion.

Unlike the widows of Vrindavan whose pathetic plight after coming into the notice worldwide has attracted several organisations and institutions who have come forward to alleviate their suffering and duly support the cause, the Devadasis have yet to find a staunch supporter who can

bring them out of the abject poverty they are seeped in and help them in living a normal, healthy and dignified life by removing the stigma attached to it. And in this scenario, a very highly surprising fact is that very few people in the world are even aware of the existence of Devadasis. And as a result, we find a meagre amount of readable authentic literature that talks about Devadasis and focuses on their plight. However recently when I came across a novella *The Temple is Not My Father: a Story Set in India*, authored by Rasana Atreya it was a pleasant surprise because this short novel through its heart-rending and poignant story aptly summarises the life that still a major section of the Devadasis is leading today.

The story revolves around the life Godavari, a former devadasi is leading and the happy future she wants to secure for her eight-year old daughter Sreeja. Godavari, when she was a seven year-old chirpy innocent girl, she was dedicated to goddess Yellamma by her hard-hearted, greedy father because desperate to have a male child, he thought that he was being punished and the only way out was a great sacrifice which actually meant dedicating a girl who hasn't attained puberty, to the Goddess. At that time her mother unsuccessfully tried to prevent this ghastly act from happening. Desperate to save Godavari, despite already having five daughters, she promised to keep having children until they had a son but all her pleadings and wailing fell on the deaf ears of Godavari's father and the villagers who in spite of knowing well the reality behind this dedication to slavery of God and inwardly despising it, thought it best to keep mum as they were tied by ancient blind belief in the custom of dedication and were in no mood to invite the wrath of the Goddess by opposing it. In spite of being illiterate, Godavari's mother had enough experience of

the worldly ways to comprehend the different tactics which the patriarchal culture had devised to chain down females and strip them off their dignity and confidence.

But little Godavari was overjoyed seeing herself dressed in the brand new clothes "feeling important and pretty" as "it wasn't every day that a girl got married - and to the Goddess herself!". She thought "why couldn't her mother understand that this was an honour, something bestowed upon only a chosen few?" Blinded by her love for her father, little Godavari was too small to be aware of the horrifying truth behind the beauty of those new clothes and the devilishly dark actuality of the marriage to Goddess. And later when the truth dawned upon her it was already too late. She had already been abused by several men and her family was living on her earnings as a sexual slave of the temple. To top it all, she had become mother, as it usually happens, to a fatherless child, Sreeja at a very young age.

Rasana tells us "A long time ago, being married to the Goddess was indeed an honour. This was back when classical dance and music were an integral part of temple worship. Then, women like her enjoyed high status in society." But with the decline in the number of patron kings the temples fell to bad days and to escape the life of poverty and misery, the Devadasis were forced to resort to other ways of earning which easily led to sanctified prostitution. And by the time Godavari was dedicated, a Devadasi had already started being equated with a prostitute. Therefore, once out of the temple, Godavari found herself shunned and cursed by the society. Even her siblings who had survived on her income as a Devadasi and her relatives cut off ties with her. But without putting blame on her superstitious and greedy father and the ridiculous

custom she was ensnared in, Godavari accepted it as the fate's design and started living with her daughter on the outskirts of the village on the little money in the small house which was provided by her mother. "It was important that she remember that no matter how small the house... it was hers, and hers alone" and "she was so much better off than other women in her situation."

When little Sreeja affected by the absence of friends and the faces villagers make on seeing her inquires from Godavari if the temple is her father and why she doesn't have a father at home then Godavari feels helpless and is unable to provide Sreeja a plausible and satisfactory answer. Godavari wants to shield Sreeja from the evils of the terrible, twisted, old Devadasi custom and taunts of the villagers and provide her a normal existence free from the stigma attached to her own self. And when she sees her father eyeing Sreeja as the next Devadasi, Godavari bursts out. Lashing out at him she forces him to leave her house forever. And when asked for reason behind such action of hers by Sreeja, Godavari's heart shouts loudly that "the distinctive piece of jewellery he'd brought for his loving, trusting grand daughter was the mark of the devadasi - the bastard wanted to dedicate her to the Goddess!". But her tongue remains silent and the only words that come out are "Someday you'll understand." Like a tigress protecting her cub from approaching dangers, Godavari

stands courageously before Sreeja whenever any problem nears her. Then how can she let her darling daughter fall into the same dark pit of exploitation where she herself was once? Without any education, friends, family and income, Godavari is completely alone with a daughter to fend for but the kind of strength and

perseverance she still displays to protect her daughter, that is really commendable.

Apart from Godavari's mother who committed suicide so that she can make Godavari inherit the house in her name, Godavari is helped and cared for by her sister Krishna. And when her distant relatives, two NRI girls Neeraja and Vanaja visit her, then the caged and secluded life which Godavari and Sreeja have led so far, starts developing few chinks of changes. Neeraja's and Vanaja's regular meetings with Godavari and Sreeja forces Godavari to rethink about her life and the

future security she wants to have for Sreeja from a new perspective. Earlier, Godavari tells Vanaja, in the hope of a better life "I tried selling my house. Without the sale, I wouldn't have enough money to survive elsewhere. I used to dream of putting my baby in a good school and living out my life as a widow in some big, anonymous town. That kind of respect is unimaginable for someone like me. But who would buy a house from a fallen woman?" And Vanaja suggests the non-governmental

organisations as a solution then she comes to know that they are far more interested in the welfare of women in worse off condition. Godavari, no longer stuck in the rut of Devadasi custom, at least had her own hut to live in and a daughter to look forward to.

Earlier Godavari had refused offers to move to an NGO hostel because the stigma would follow Sreeja and her. And, despite great pressure from the NGO, she had refused the free plot of land the government had assigned to her because it was in a devadasi-only community. But when an NGO lady Asha garu approaches Godavari with a proposal for Sreeja's adoption by a rich couple from

Hyderabad then attracted by the prospect of a stigma-free respectable life for Sreeja, where she can have good education, lots of friends and toys to play with, and enjoy a luxurious life, Godavari, with a heavy heart, finally agrees to give up all her rights on her daughter. The same daughter whom she had tried so far to shield from the hurtful eyes now readies to let her out free in the open world. As if she realises that now the time has come when the limitless sky has opened its gates for Sreeja to explore its vastness. The sole condition is the little bird will have to lose its touch with the ground to which Godavari has tried to fasten her so far in motherly affection. So much suffering for twenty-two year old Godavari.

Once Sreeja is gone, her memories and the lonely home haunt Godavari so much that she falls apart in her emotions and begins to lose her sanity. But the timely arrival of Krishna infuses in her a new strength and Godavari realises that she has the power to pick up the pieces of her shattered present and start her life afresh. She realises that "broken heart or not, her will to survive was intact." And on hearing about the progress Sreeja is making in school, with the support from NGO Godavari starts going to NGO school and learns computers in the hope that she would be reunited with her daughter and "it was her job to make sure that she met her daughter on equal terms."

But fate has altogether different plans in store for Godavari. Victimised all through her life for no fault of hers, even the purpose of getting education and seeing her Sreeja blossoming in her new, cultured life, seems to dissolve into oblivion when in spite of changing her life, learning computer skills, and working for a non-governmental organisation which helps to salvage the young girls from the life she has endured, Godavari discovers

that the girl Raji, a child rendered mute from the experiences of her life, whose case is entrusted with her to work upon, actually turns out to be her beloved daughter Sreeja. And here the story ends suddenly, leaving behind a silence to be interpreted by the readers in their own different ways.

Though the readers feel extremely shocked to see the devastation of the innocent Sreeja's life, yet they also feel a sense of relief on realising that at least now Sreeja has landed in the most safe and secure hands of her own mother Godavari who has by now not only courageously made a life for herself and is also so much self-equipped that she can raise her daughter too from the debris she is entangled in and provide her the wholesome life she had always desired for her. Taking the life of Godavari and her daughter Sreeja as an example, Rasana Atreya has made a successful pleading for the case of Devadasis and has raised consciousness on the issue. Hopefully this story becomes one of the many tools which help the people and social organisations in coming together to end this abuse of human life in the name of tradition, forever.

Works Cited:

Atreya, Rasana. *The Temple is Not My Father*. Kindle Edition, 2014. Print.

Aman Sharma

Masculinism in *Munnabhai MBBS*: Radical Comedy, Conservative Ideology

Masculinity can be defined as a set of ideas, beliefs and practices which come to be associated with men in a particular culture and thus distinguish them from women. Due to their reiteration, these ideas, beliefs and practices acquire a hegemonic position. Masculinity was once considered to be a fixed, stable and therefore natural gender construct. However, the feminist critique of gender as a discursive construction has contributed to a critical reassessment of masculinity as a problematic gender category. Like femininity, masculinity has now come to be regarded as a cultural and ideological phenomenon, subject to interrogation and revision. John Beynon argues in *Masculinities and Culture* that masculinity "is something into which [men] are acculturated and which is composed of social codes of behaviour which they learn to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways" (2). Masculinism, as an ideology, seeks to legitimize the patriarchal constructions of masculinity as given and unchallengeable. The masculinist ideology attempts to perpetuate the dominance of the masculine through a reinforcement of stereotypes.

This paper examines the way masculinism is built into the discourse of the film *Munnabhai MBBS* (2003). Directed by Rajkumar Hirani, *Munnabhai MBBS* has Sanjay Dutt, Sunil Dutt, Boman Irani, Arshad Warsi and Gracy Singh in the lead roles. The film represents masculinity through its integration with comedy, particularly satire. This relatively innovative mixing of comedy with

masculinity does not challenge the authority of masculinism in any way. The paper also considers how the film incorporates the elements of the gangster genre into a predominantly satirical narrative so as to reconstitute the ideology of masculinism.

Both tragedy and comedy are major forms of imitation having their roots in the ancient Greek literature. However, greater critical appreciation has been bestowed on tragedy apparently due to its intensity of tone and loftiness of purpose. As a literary genre, comedy has usually been regarded as inferior to tragedy. Comedy has been subjected to ridicule and denigration precisely because of its more 'popular' appeal. There seems to have been a class prejudice against comedy because it depicts the stories of ordinary masses while tragedy caters to the demands of the aristocratic classes. Aristotle, in *Poetics*, makes a distinction between tragedy and comedy vis-à-vis their objects of imitation. He says that tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious, complete and possesses magnitude while comedy "is an imitation of men worse than the average ..." (33). Andrew Scott perceives a certain disdain for comedy in Aristotle's views and argues that "comedy is an imitation of the ridiculous or unworthy aspects of human behaviour, where little of real significance passes on stage and 'inferiority' amounts to a failure to uphold moral virtues" (*Comedy* 19). Thus it can be inferred that the major reason for critical disapproval of comedy is its alleged antagonism to morality and social ideals. However, with the common masses gaining some power as a result of industrialization in the twentieth century, comedy has been accepted as a meaningful medium which calls for greater critical attention and keener academic interest. Consequently, comedy has been associated primarily with its social purpose and

significance. It is seen as an appropriate channel to comment on and thereby deride certain social conventions and practices. Satire proves to be the most suitable comic form for the said objective. Scott comments:

Satire aims to denounce folly and vice and urge ethical and political reform through the subjection of ideas to humorous analysis. In the best instances, it takes its subject matter from the heart of political life or cultural anxiety, reframing issues at an ironic distance that enables us to revisit fundamental questions that have been obscured by rhetoric, personal interests, or realpolitik. (103)

Munnabhai MBBS draws on satire as a form of comedy to communicate its message. The film critiques and parodies some social customs and practices, notions of human behaviour and procedural inflexibility in the medical profession. In his review, Shahid Khan has observed that *Munnabhai MBBS* genuinely tries to integrate humour into its narrative structure and does not merely indulge in comic patch work. Another reviewer adds that the film successfully blends comedy with pathos while it reflects on various social issues and problems. In his article, Ashaq Hussain Parray reads the film primarily as a stringent critique of the prevalent medical practices and methodology. However, critics and reviewers have not focussed on the way comedy, social satire and masculinism have been integrated almost effortlessly in the film.

Murli Prasad Sharma (Sanjay Dutt) is the protagonist of *Munnabhai MBBS*. He is a gangster and is popularly known as Munnabhai. Munnabhai's father wanted him to be a doctor, a wish Murna could not fulfill. Therefore, in order to please his parents (Sunil Dutt and Rohini

Hattangadi), he turns his house into a makeshift charitable hospital whenever they visit him in Mumbai and thus pretends to live as per their wish. One year, however, Munnabhai's plan goes awry when his father happens to meet an old acquaintance Asthana (Boman Irani) and the two decide to arrange a marriage of Munnabhai and Suman (Gracy Singh), Asthana's daughter, who is a doctor. In the meantime, Asthana comes to know from his maid that Murna is not really a doctor but a notorious gangster. A furious Asthana insults Munnabhai's parents. He calls them fools and accuses them of hiding the truth about their son. Shattered by the revelation, and heartbroken, the parents leave for their village.

Munnabhai feels extremely sad and guilty for having let his parents down. However, he resolves to become a doctor in order to regain his lost esteem and also take revenge upon Asthana for insulting his parents. Through manipulations, Munnabhai tops the medical entrance examination and gains admission in a leading medical college. Here, he again encounters Asthana who is the dean of the college. In his desire to settle scores with him, Munnabhai flouts the rules of the institution and does what he thinks to be right. He also develops a liking for Suman though he is ignorant about her being Asthana's daughter. Suman is also touched by Munnabhai's affectionate nature and his compassion for others. Soon Munnabhai earns the respect and admiration of everyone around him because of his innovative methods of cure.

Asthana feels insecure and uncomfortable due to Munnabhai's growing popularity. Unable to tolerate Munnabhai's behaviour any longer, he decides to expel him from the college. However, Asthana has to face stiff resistance from his colleagues and students. Therefore he

throws a challenge to Munnabhai that he will have to pass a test under his supervision. In the meantime, Munnabhai's friend Zaheer (Jimmy Shergill) dies of cancer. Munnabhai holds himself guilty for not being able to save his dying friend and decides to leave the college. Soon after his departure, Suman criticizes her father for having expelled Munnabhai. Eventually, Asthana realizes his fault. The film ends on a happy note as Munnabhai is reunited with his parents and Suman. Dr. Asthana undergoes a radical transformation. He is no more the heartless disciplinarian he used to be. Now he looks after Munnabhai's actual charitable hospital and treats his patients in a friendly and affable way.

As a comedy, *Munnabhai MBBS* utilizes the element of surprise to evoke laughter. The film breaks away from the formulaic generic conventions of the Hindi film by merging two completely divergent genres – the gangster and the comic. This unusual combination significantly enhances the comic appeal of the film. Much like a crime film, *Munnabhai MBBS* begins with the scene of abduction of a jogger early in the morning. As the man runs for help, Munnabhai's close companion Circuit (Arshad Warsi) follows him and fires gun shots. Munnabhai himself disguised as a taxi driver lays a trap for the terror stricken victim and leads him to his place. The strong feelings of suspense and thrill built up till the point fade away as soon as Circuit reveals that the bullets were fake and describes Munna and himself as 'social workers'. The gangster plot is suddenly fractured and exposed as comic. The conventions of the gangster genre are again defied when Munnabhai releases the abducted man as soon as he discovers that he is innocent. Instead, he rebukes the person who had hired him as an abductor:

Tune apun se wrong kaam karvaya. Apne babuji kehte hain, beimani karne ka nahin aur sehne ka nahin.
(You made me do a wrong thing. My father says, "Neither commit dishonesty nor tolerate it").

Normally, a gangster is supposed to be ruthless and inhuman. But Munnabhai is represented as rather humane and honest who swears by his father's moral teachings. Therefore, we begin with a perception of Munnabhai as a gangster who is quite unlike the typical criminal. The film thus seems to be subverting certain stereotypical and hegemonic notions of masculinity in the portrayal of its protagonist.

Munnabhai's masculine identity is defined primarily through the double lens of comedy and ethics. Despite being a criminal, he is extremely empathetic and sensitive towards the sufferings of other people. On his first day in the college, Munnabhai sees that a young boy, writhing in pain, is lying unattended in the hospital compound. The boy's mother is standing in a long queue to fill up the admission form. Munnabhai asks a doctor passing by to attend to the patient and the latter replies that he is off duty. Infuriated by the doctor's callous attitude, Munnabhai grabs him by the neck and threatens to kill him. Terrorized, the doctor instantly takes the patient under his supervision.

In a later scene, a doctor is shown explaining the case of a brain dead person (whom he calls 'subject') to the students. As the doctor shares his observations, Munnabhai objects and tells him to be kind to the man. The doctor asks him not to be emotional and continues with his remarks:

Ab aap hi bataiye, ek aisa insaan jo kabhi neend se jag hi nahin sakta, kya use dava dekar zinda rehna

theek hoga? Wo bhi apne jaise desh mein jahan hospitals ki itni kami hai. Wahan pichle baran saalon se 'subject' nein ek bed occupy kar rakha hai. (Now you tell me, is it wise to keep a man alive on medicines who can never wake up from sleep? That too in a country like ours where there is such a dearth of hospitals. Here 'subject' has been occupying a bed for the last twelve years).

Munnabhai angrily interrupts the doctor and asks him:

Tere ko bed ki padi hai. Tere ko kaise maloom ke jagne ki ummed nahin hai, haan?... Tu bhagwan to nahin naa. You are concerned about the bed! (How do you know there is no hope of recovery? You are not God, are you?).

After the altercation with the doctor, Munnabhai forcibly takes the 'subject' out of the room.

Aggression and compassion coexist in Munnabhai's words and gestures. The film does not separate these aspects of his character and thus suggests that Munnabhai's aggressive behaviour is aimed at the larger good of humanity. His aggression appears to be unsoiled by evil or immorality. As a masculine figure, Munnabhai is aggressive but not cruel or violent. The film reveals its masculinist inclinations in so far as it does not critique the patriarchal norms of masculinity.

Despite his portrayal as a highly aggressive character, Munnabhai still possesses a strong sense of empathy and concern for others. However, Asthana's character is more masculinist in the sense that he is an oppressively unemotional and hard-hearted individual. A number of masculine stereotypes are visible in Asthana's personality. For instance, he is very protective about his daughter

Suman. He takes due care to ensure that Munnabhai does not recognize Suman and keeps away from her. As the dean of the medical college, Asthana is highly authoritarian in his conduct. Like a strict disciplinarian, he insists on a total adherence to norms and is not ready to compromise under any circumstances. Therefore, he strongly opposes Munnabhai's attempts to tamper with the institutional procedures and methods. These facets of Asthana's character contribute to his construction as a stereotypical masculine figure.

In its major thematic thrust, *Munnabhai MBBS* underlines certain serious flaws in the medical profession. The above incidents also highlight the unethical behaviour of the doctors and their insensitivity towards patients. The film satirically examines and ridicules the excessively rigid and bureaucratic mode of administration in hospitals and a criminal disregard for the welfare of the patients. When, in the classroom, Munnabhai puts a question to Dean Asthana: *Form bharna zaroori hai kya?* (Is it mandatory to fill a form?), he is clearly referring to the unending formalities and ritualistic procedures which lead to a virtual denial of healthcare to the ailing and the distressed.

While he is represented as a gangster in the film, all evil and wickedness have been taken out of Munnabhai's character. The cinematic text therefore passes some of these traits onto the persona of Asthana who is the antithesis of what Munnabhai comes to signify in the narrative. The comic visual representation of Asthana's character in terms of his physical appearance and manner makes him look quite weird and bizarre. The establishing shot of Asthana captures his face in an extreme close-up as it shows him laughing in a grotesque manner. By arousing a sense of repulsion among the viewers, the film shapes their

perception about Asthana's role in the narrative. To a large extent, it is through Asthana's character that the film guides its satirical attack on the medical community. While compassion is a major mark of Munnabhai's masculinity, Asthana has been portrayed as a cold and dispassionate man. As a doctor, he is in favour of strictly distancing himself from the person he is supposed to treat. He clearly articulates his position in a scene where he meets the students newly admitted to the college. In the said scene, responding to Asthana's query as to who will make a good doctor a student says:

Sir, I love people. Mujhe lagta hai ki main patients ke dard ko khud mehsoos kar sakti hoon. Main ek dost ban kar unki madad karna chahti hoon.

Sir, I love people. I think that I can feel the patients' pain myself.

I want to help them as a friend.

A visibly displeased Asthana thus reacts to the student's views:

We are not here to make friends. Maine apne pachees saal ke career mein kisi patient se dosti nahin ki; kisi patient ka dard mehsoos nahin kiya; sirf us dard ka ilaaj kiya hai... I do not love my patients ... Patient se dosti, huddardi, lagaav ek doctor ki kamzorian hain... Doctor ke liye patient sirf ek bimar shareer hai, aur kuch nahin. We are not here to make friends. In my career spanning twenty five years, I have not made friends with a patient, neither have I felt a patient's pain; I have only cured that pain... I do not love my patients... Friendship, sympathy, attachment with a patient are the weaknesses of a doctor ... For a doctor, a patient is a sick body and nothing else.

Asthana's viewpoint assumes larger significance within the framework of the cinematic text. We cannot regard it merely as his personal and idiosyncratic belief since Asthana's character seems to represent the medical vocation whose members are shown as cold and hard-hearted. His eccentric, authoritarian and overbearing attitude makes him stand in sharp contrast to Munnabhai's compassionate demeanour. It is significant that their characters remain in perpetual conflict throughout the film on account of their disparate ways of thinking and acting.

The aforesaid clash between Munnabhai and Asthana carries symbolic overtones in that it is not merely a clash of two individuals but of two opposing ways of thinking and belief. Munnabhai wins the love and admiration of patients as well as employees of the medical college because of his seemingly fresh take on the methods of treatment whereby patients are cured through emotional expression, empathy and personal indulgence. Asthana, on the other hand, is a strict practitioner of the customary and traditional modes of treatment. This sharp contrast is observable in a number of scenes in the film. For instance, we can refer to the scene when Dr. Rustam's father is brought to the hospital in a very critical state. True to his temperament, Asthana asks the terribly upset son to behave himself. He almost ruins any chances of the patient's survival when he advises Rustam to accept the reality. However, Munnabhai does not share Asthana's opinion. He asks Circuit to arrange for a carron board (Munnabhai came to know of the old man's fondness for the game when he had forced Rustam to impersonate as Murali Prasad Sharma in the medical entrance examination). As Munnabhai and Circuit start playing the game right in the hospital ward, Rustam's father gets up from the bed and

walks towards them. He takes the striker and successfully hits the red disk (queen) into the pocket. The ward attendants and other patients are happily surprised by Munnabhai's almost miraculous act. An emotional Rustam hugs Munnabhai and expresses his gratitude: *Tum kuch bhi kar sakte ho. You are God, Munna* (You can do anything. You are God, Munna). One may argue that the film intends to highlight the medical fraternity's extreme sense of practicality and an over-dependence on the rule book. Even in the case of a brain dead person like 'subject', Munnabhai's conviction (against all the facts and principles of medical science) proves to be correct and the man gradually begins to blink his eyes and move his body. The irony of the situation is unmistakable when a criminal like Munnabhai is able to discern the possibilities of recovery where eminent doctors like Asthana and others can perceive none.

It is noteworthy that although Munnabhai's magic is shown to have worked in some cases as mentioned above, the film does not seem to endorse his brand of thought and behaviour as an alternative to the accepted and established practices of medical science. There is an incident in the film when a young man called Zaheer is diagnosed with stomach cancer and is told to get admitted to the hospital. The man is shattered to the core and articulates his emotions thus:

*Maire kabhi sharaab nahin pee; cigarette nahin pee;
kisi ladki ko haath tak nahin lagaya. Phir mujhe hi
kyon?... Socha tha abhi to sari zindagi padi hai.*

I never drank liquor; I never smoked; I did not even touch a girl ever. Why did it happen to me then?... I thought my whole life was still left with me.

Munnabhai senses the hidden cravings in Zaheer's heart for a life of pleasure and sensual gratification.

Therefore, he decides to provide some moments of happiness to the agonized soul and devises a plan for the purpose. One night, the usually silent and still hospital ward resonates with the sound of musical beats as Munnabhai's men bring in a cabaret dancer who tries to lure Zaheer with her seductive moves and a catchy song. Munnabhai's effort does bring a smile on Zaheer's face, but it proves to be momentary. One day, his condition suddenly deteriorates. When Munnabhai arrives, he finds Zaheer struggling for life. The moment Zaheer notices Munnabhai, he begins to plead him to save his life:

Mujhe bachalo Munna. Main marna nahin chahta hoon, Munna ... Koi aur nahin sirf tum Munna, sirf tum mujhe bacha sakte ho. Tum kisi ko bhi bacha sakte ho, Munna ... Tum Khuda ho, Munna, tum Khuda ho. Please save me Munna. I do not want to die, Munna ... Nobody else Munna but only you can save me. You can save anyone, Munna ... You are God, Munna, you are God.

Zaheer expects Munnabhai to perform some miracle again. But Munnabhai is helpless. He cannot save his friend from the clutches of death. Soon Zaheer breathes his last in Munnabhai's arms. At this point, the film reveals that one cannot cling to ideals forever. Munnabhai's radical idealism proves to be ineffective in the greatest moment of crisis. The film thus assumes the ideological position that beyond mere chance there may be no actual substitutes for the conventionally recognized modes of medical treatment. Alternatives are contingent and, ultimately unreliable. Therefore, the practices that have been established over time have to be accepted and prioritized over any option for radical change.

In spite of its unconventional fusion of the gangster genre with comedy and romance, *Munnabhai MBBS* remains essentially masculinist because the film does not undermine the hegemony of masculinism. The cinematic text effectively uses comedy to critique certain systemic flaws in the medical profession. It is also unsparing in its attack on the medical fraternity. However, the film proves to be extremely conservative since it makes no attempt at critiquing the masculinist discourse. Despite the radical combination of comedy and masculinity, the film does not challenge the patriarchal norms and thus exposes its ideological aspirations.

Works Cited :

Aristotle. *On the Art of Poetry*. Trans. Ingram Bywater. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print.

Beynon, John. *Masculinities and Culture*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002. Print.

Khan, Shahid. Rev. of *Munnabhai MBBS*, dir. Rajkumar Hirani. *Planet Bollywood* 19 Dec

2003: 1-3. Web. 27 March 2014 <[http://www.planetbollywood.com/Film/Munnabhai M.B.B.S/](http://www.planetbollywood.com/Film/Munnabhai%20M.B.B.S/)>

Parray, Ashaq Hussain. "Munna Bhai MBBS: A Parody of the Present Medical Practice." *Language in India* 13.5 (2013): 80-83. Print.

Rev. of *Munnabhai MBBS*. *Heroic Cinema* 19 Jan 2007: 1-2. Web. 27 March 2014. <<http://www.heroic-cinema.com/reviews/munnabhai-m-b-b-s-2003/>>

Scott, Andrew. *Comedy*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Print.

Shubha Tiwari

The Cultural and Literary Impact of Svetlana Alexievich

2015 saw the fourteenth woman writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. When the exalted prize was bestowed on Svetlana Alexievich, it was unique in many ways. Very less number of women has received this prize. Very less number of non-fiction writers has received this prize. The data suggests that male novelists are most likely to get this coveted prize. The case of Alexievich is strange in many ways. Her work is rooted in research and she has received the prize for literature. Her selection has in a sense widened the scope of the term 'literature'.

Alexievich writes what she knows. She has researched deeply and widely on female Russian soldiers who went to the battlefield in World War II. She has also studied in detail the aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear tragedy. 'By means of her extraordinary method - a carefully composed collage of human voices- Alexievich deepens our comprehension of an entire era.' (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.)

Being recognized for non-fiction is no small achievement in our times. No exaggeration to say that ours is a fiction-bitten generation. She is the first non-fiction writer to win this prize in about five decades. When we talk of Alexievich winning the Nobel Prize for Literature, we must remember that she is basically a journalist. In her case, the Swedish Academy has accorded journalism the high place of literature. Her work, emanating from fact-finding and research, has risen to somber and subtle heights of

literature. Alexievich has raised the status of journalism. Generally, everyone views journalism as a vehicle of information alone. She has taken her writing to aesthetic levels:

All that we know about Woman is best described by the word 'compassion'. There are other words too—sister, wife, friend and the noblest of all, mother. But isn't compassion a part of all these concepts, their very substance, their purpose and their ultimate meaning? A woman is the giver of life; she safeguards life, so 'Woman' and 'Life' are synonyms. But during the most terrible war (World War II) of the 20th century a woman had to become a soldier. She not only rescued and bandaged the wounded; she also fired a sniper's rifle, dropped bombs, blew up bridges, went reconnoitering and captured prisoners. A Woman killed. (War's *Unwomanly Face*: [Bigstory.ap.org>article](http://Bigstory.ap.org/article))

Her style is totally literary. Through facts, she sees the larger picture, the profound truth. She plays with the collective memory of mankind, that is, the World War and mixes it with personal memory to give us an aesthetic taste. The Nobel Committee called her work 'a monument to suffering and courage in our times'. Alexievich has broken many set norms. She is the first ever journalist to win a Nobel. Journalists today are known to manipulate power, leak information and play judges. But here we have Alexievich who records individual voices. She carefully records and systematically puts forward the voice of the voiceless. She goes with people who have suffered the worst of history of mankind. Victims of World War II, the Chernobyl disaster and the Soviet Afghan war fill her pages. She has questioned the collective conscience of mankind.

Getting into the world of Alexievich means shedding off prejudices and leaving polarities. Her method is unique. She says that soulless, purposeless journalism means nothing to her:

I'm not interested in information, information which serves more and more as the foundation for our civilization. I think information has discredited itself as a way of knowing human beings. What I'm interested in is human feelings and human turmoil, to be able to make some kind of a guess about what goes on inside of people, about what has meaning for them and causes them to suffer. (From speech: 2005 National Books Critic Circle Award for *Voices from Chernobyl*)

So here we have a journalist who says that she is not interested in information. And that's a pretty huge statement to make. Alexievich has always spoken against data journalism driven by technology. It shocks people when someone speaks against data and technology in today's world. But her point is valid. Humanness cannot be measured; should not be measured rather. It is only to be felt. Writers are quick to put their books in market right after a disaster. It is considered to be a hot commodity—a burning book on a burning topic. Alexievich presents an entirely different view. What really emerges from a disaster needs time, thought and assimilation.

Right after Chernobyl happened, when I was making my first trips to that region, I saw dozens, if not hundreds, of journalists there. And I said to myself, those guys are going to put their books out really fast, but the book I'm going to write is going to take years, and, indeed, I worked on the book for ten years.

And when I speak of these journalists who were going to put their books out quickly I'm talking about books that were filled with facts, information, medical information.. But the most important thing we needed to learn from that event took more time to emerge.' (From speech: 2005 National Books Critic Circle Award for *Voices from Chernobyl*)

To understand Alexievich's value and contribution, we have to realize that she has put her life to the study of the mind and feelings of the individual in the Soviet and post Soviet era. Her work can only be understood in a trail as a whole. Hers is a sustained effort through decades to study the changes in the thinking of the individual mind. Some of the scholars even say that Alexievich has evolved a new genre. She has been a journalist. She has focused on the impact of Soviet policies, regime and events. She has researched and investigated on and on. And yet her writing is poetic. Her reporting is literary. Through the history of events, she has presented the history of emotions. The chain and consistency in her work is her unique appeal. The world of Alexievich is an emotional world solidly based on real life events. Her research is extensive and deep. She has interviewed thousands of children, women and men. She has mapped the human soul. It is a new technique. It is a new genre, if you wish. The achievement of Alexievich is not just that of matter but of form as well. She packs so much in her work- years of research, journalistic zeal, editorial accuracy, analytical ability, literary sense, historical sensibility coupled with the most precious quality, that is, her human sensitivity. Her books present the voice of those, no one cares about. She has devoted her life to the depiction of the common life. Her books become communities of people bound by disaster and tragedy. She

makes sure that the world would not forget the unfortunate people.

It was amusing that no one knew about Svetlana Alexievich before her Nobel win. We can say that she has written history in a literary manner from below. It is obvious that the publishing industry has its own limitations. It cannot publish what is not keenly defined. The work of Alexievich has been called 'polyphonic' by the Swedish Academy. It is a very significant word. The work of Alexievich carries the beauty of fiction but it is based on non-fiction, that is, interviews, research, travel, interaction and so on. It is fiction as well as non-fiction. What is difficult to categorize is difficult to sell. The market is ridiculously simple. So this unconscious mixing of genres by Alexievich carves a special niche for her. The second assertion by the Swedish Academy is equally important. They have called her work, a monument of suffering. She documents the kind of pain which usually goes unnoticed. Her recognition has led to widespread attention to these voices which otherwise would have gone unheard. Many people feel that the choice of Svetlana Alexievich for the Nobel is a very bold and unconventional choice. They are not sure whether this choice matches with the ideals set by Alfred Nobel. Nobel has talked about 'ideal direction' in which the work of a writer should go. That the writer has to be great is not sufficient; his or her writing must lead us in the ideal, right direction. We can safely say that a writer is not awarded the Nobel for one work but for the tone and tenure of a body of work. It is the prevailing consciousness of a whole work which is awarded. The Nobel committee evaluates the impact a writer has made on important issues on mankind as a whole.

Alexievich experienced the World War II first hand as a child. We can see and understand her concern. She began her Nobel lecture this way:

'I do not stand alone at this podium.. There are voices around me, hundreds of voices. They have always been with me, since childhood. I grew up in the countryside. As children, we loved to play outdoors, but come evening, the voices of tired village women who gathered on the benches near their cottages drew us like magnets. None of them had husbands, fathers, or brothers. I don't remember men in our village after World War II: during the war, one out of four Belarusians perished, either fighting at the front or with the partisans. After the war, we children lived in a world of women. What I remember most, is that women talked about love, not death. They would tell stories about saying goodbye to the men they loved the day before they went to war, they would talk about waiting for them, and how they were still waiting. Years had passed, but they continued to wait: ' I don't care if he lost his arms or legs, I'll carry him'. No arms... no legs...I think I've known what love is since childhood.' (www.nobelprize.org)

This gives goose bumps. This is the power of Svetlana Alexievich. Poetry in hopeless scenes.. As a journalist, as a contemporary historian, Alexievich derives power from her divided, torn life experiences. Russia, Ukraine and Belarus- these three nations have been her territory. She closely inspects the past, observing the minute details, recording the unexpected and registering the mundane. Her literature has appropriately been called 'the literature of fact'. She stands as a strong antidote to any nostalgia of the Soviet era. She breaks all norms of so called nationhood

that might ever try to justify individual suffering and loss. The Soviet nation was an artificial construct, created to suit the dictators. Alexievich has recovered history from myth; experience from collective amnesia. Understandably, she is one of the most staunch critics of dictatorships in Belarus and Russia. Just to say that Alexievich was born in Soviet Ukraine in 1948 is oversimplifying reality. The region had been part of Poland under different dynasties. It came under Soviet rule only in 1939 and under Nazi rule in 1941. Every single Jew in the town of Stanislaviv was murdered. Many Poles and Ukrainians were deported or killed. So just to say that Alexievich was born in Soviet Ukraine would be wrong. Much more is needed to understand the background of her angst. The city of her symbolized suppression where everybody pretended to have forgotten the past.

'Activist' writing has been recognized. The impact of the prevailing consciousness of a whole body of work on mankind has been evaluated. Alexievich has spoken against 'collectivization'. 'Collectivization' is a necessary evil. Today in this small, interconnected world, we are still known by labels- woman, Belarusian, journalist etc. The grand labels work fine for speeches, look inspiring in times of war, do magic to invoke mass hysteria. But if we look closely, labels nullify individual struggles, identity and experiences. Broad labels also result in mass exploitation- Jews and refugees are examples of some such labels. The work of Alexievich sensitively unravels the falsity of such labels, popular folklore and myth-making factory. The oppressive Soviet regime was based on constant movement of population from one part to the other, the power of the linking language Russian and jingoistic propaganda by the state machinery. Alexievich questions everything. The shifting

of population from rural to urban areas is not the best thing according to her. It brings stress and disintegration of its own kind. Alexievich has seen ghost cities having been vacated by war and then being rehabilitated by mixed population from all over. Seeing war as was, seeing things as they are rather than as the government wishes people to see them- this is the specialty of Alexievich.

'War's Unwomanly Face' by Alexievich remains a pioneering work on the condition and psychology of female soldiers who have participated in war. Exposing falsities of all kinds is Alexievich's technique as well as achievement. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan proved fatal for the Soviet Union as well. Her book 'Zinky Boys' highlights the plight and trauma faced by soldiers and their families. It proves that war rhetoric is always wrong. Willful invasion of a sovereign country is also deadly for the invaders.

The writing of Alexievich provides a strange kind of solace. In psychological terms, we can say that her attitude is opposite to escapism. Instead of avoiding, forgetting or being ignorant, the approach of Alexievich is to directly confront reality as it is. She goes into every possible detail, the full length and depth of a tragedy and comes out of it. This is the voyage for an Alexievich reader. It is as though she has vowed to keep pain alive. She has fought collective amnesia. There are no easy routes in the verbal labyrinths created by Alexievich. The writer as well as the reader comes out strong after the literary exercise. This is literature which gives the reader the tools to live.

The Nobel Prize in literature has rarely been bestowed on those associated primarily with non-fiction. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Winston Churchill and the German historian Theodor Mommsen are the rare examples of this category.

These three writers have presented their own interpretation of historical events like the World Wars. They have tried to give readers eyes with which to see history. Alexievich, on the other hand, is blank. She does not give her own view. She does not have a view of her own. She simply records voices. The reader is left to decide. This is what makes Alexievich unique. She leaves the reader breathless, clueless. No explanation, no contextualizing, no forecasting- nothing; only voices; true, real voices; voices which cannot be ignored; voices of people who have been through havoc. These are bare voices of sufferers, human voices depicting human pain horrible magnitudes. The reader, after reading the work, is bound to speak against the official narrative full of jingoism, collectivization and forced grandeur. That's what makes Alexievich courageous. Many brave journalists who tried to see things as they were, were killed. Alexievich continued with her work of replacing myths with stark realities. She kept Chernobyl alive amidst all efforts to repress its memory by the official machinery. This is what makes Alexievich great.

Alexievich writes only in Russian. She identifies with Russians. She is clearly on the side of Russians trying to live a life of dignity. And yet, her honesty has cost her dearly:

'Alexievich has been unremembered in the country, Russia where her work has perhaps the most contemporary relevance. She writes only in Russian and her themes are those with which Russians, at least of her generation, could in principle identify. Her book on women in war sold two million copies in the Soviet Union, which suggests that it should now rest on a million or so bookshelves in Russia. This summer she was subjected to a press campaign in

Russian media in which she was branded as anti-Russian. The reason given for this claim was her criticism of Russia's war in Ukraine'. (Svetlana Alexievich: The Truth in Many Voices by Timothy Snider/NYR Daily/The New York Review of Books. www.nybooks.com/daily/2015/10/12/svetlana-alexievich-truth-many-voices)

With tear in her eyes, Alexievich has declared, 'It is hard to be an honest person in our times'. Alexievich has raised problems with Russian nationalism. The official pressure to defend the Russian world is often based on lies. Lies are lies and will be exposed. It is a tussle of ideas—a totalitarian world against a humanitarian, open, democratic world. Alexievich has stood against forces mightier than herself. It is people like her who keep the light alive in this world.

Works Cited :

Alexievich, Svetlana. *War's Unwomanly Face*. New York: Random House, 1985. Print.

... *Zinky Boys: The Record of a Lost Soviet Generation*. New York: Random House, 1992. Print.

... *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster*. New York: Random House, 2006. Print.

Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.

www.nybooks.com/daily/2015/10/12/svetlana-alexievich-truth-many-voices)

www.nobelprize.org

Anuradha Bhattacharyya

The Artist and the Commercial City in Rushdie's Novels

Salman Rushdie's novels have one thing in common: he portrays the artist as at the centre of major societal upheavals whose destiny is designed by all that he encounters in order to live a normal life. They are larger than life size portrayals where huge turmoil keeps them on the go instead of dumping them in oblivion. However, it is characteristic in Rushdie's compositions that the artist depends largely on the corporate world for one's personal well-being and the reception of one's art. It appears to be a phenomenon associated with the concept of the cosmopolite where diverse cultures meet. The cosmopolite atmosphere attracts people from all walks of life and from remote places like a neon light. The air breathes of the freedom of expression, the right to follow one's own instincts and cut a public figure without considering one's colour and creed as possible encumbrances. One expects that the only thing which will get projected is one's gifts. Thus every artist is a cosmopolitan at heart. One does not wish to be seen as a member of a sect or nation.

Rushdie's novels feature the artist as an aberration of her native self. She is not one who embraces all religions, a secular figure of great moral strength, but someone who has exempted herself from all moral as well as religious bindings. The artist in Rushdie abhors those who remind him of his creed and complexion. He finds the question of race as a fundamental nuisance, something which he tries to get rid of. It is not that a non-racist is respecting the

diversity of races, rather the bindings of culture and creed are viewed as hindrances to one's artistic pursuits and also the pursuit of the pleasures of the flesh. The artist moves towards the megacity after parting with one's place of birth that is in some remote corner of the country and rushes through some extreme conditions before emerging victorious as a successful artist.

Rushdie has also tackled the difficult question of being a Muslim and suffered banishment from his own country, but his boldness and his truth have won him praise from all other quarters. The question of marginalization that dogs a poor man, a truthful man and a man of courage has been considered a subject of sufficient literary merit. However, there is a difference between being a sufferer and being an artist who suffers. The artist suffers for his art in the three novels *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), *The Ground beneath her Feet* (1999), and *Fury* (2001) in particular.

Sex and the city are a common attribute of all the protagonists who conquer the platform of the world of art in Rushdie's novels. As residents of the cosmopolite city, they acquire this new identity of abandoned boundaries. All the characters move to the city by the commercial route. Like all truants, they live in voluptuous abundance and win the love of the crowd. The moneyed gents treat them as booty and sell their biographies, their legends as well as their art and lifestyles to the public and make more money. As a reward, the artists get their share of liberty, amusement and luxury. They have lost their integrity, are painfully aware of this loss and live hazardous, unstable relationships in the backdrop of hero worship. Their lives are full of psychological inconsistencies. A painful series of egoistic dilemma, amorous intrigues and deception are

the contents of the lives of Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama, the sufferings of Aurora Zogoiby and the fury of Malik Solanka.

In *The Moor's Last Sigh* Aurora's personal sufferings inspire her art and her art inspires her public life. Aurora Da Gama, the Indian Christian and Abraham Zogoiby, the Jew love each other. The first clash between Abraham and Aurora occurred when his mother insisted that he should give her their first son (MLS 111). Aurora resolved to abstain from sex altogether so that no child may be born. The result was a sequence of passionate creation in red clay for several months (MLS 115). Aurora, in her seventeenth year, turned to art in response to the self-imposed abstinence on account of her Jewish mother-in-law's inhuman demand for the first son. Having rendered her personal conflicts into art, Rushdie immediately transfers her to Bombay paying visits to a dealer in "contemporary Indian artists - not, at the time, (1941) a very lucrative field." This is as if art in Cochin, on the walls of Aurora's rooms, would have remained in oblivion if she had not made her political connections in Bombay. The power of her beauty went afoot with her art. "The maker of images became an image herself" (MLS 116).

Zogoiby, the faithful husband promotes her art. He provides her the luxury too that feeds her imagination. "From a strictly business point of view the move makes complete sense." Abraham declared when they moved from Cochin to Malabar Hill, Bombay (MLS 119), and regarding his wife's zeal, he added that the "locale will prove beneficial to your creative process".

In Bombay, while Aurora is the queen, Zogoiby is the slave, her servile guardian. Because he loves her, she is at

liberty to say anything to him in the face. He suffers all her humiliating remarks without protest, that too in public. (MLS 170) She thanks him for his love, but other attractions between them have ceased. Now she depends on him only for maintaining her lavishness. And later on she also discovers that he is unfaithful to her. Abraham Zogoiby is a dealer of illegal things. This is disclosed to the son. This explains the loss of his wife's love too (MLS 250). He has become a mafia, a smuggler of sex workers as well as narcotics, who secretly tastes his goods before exporting them. When Aurora comes to know about this, she is filled with distaste but swallows the bitter account pretending disinterest, because she loves him no more. The chasm between them reaches the lowest rung, when she suspects that her husband is the one who is after her life.

The story of Aurora and Abraham suggests that the artist needed sexual stimulus, a broken heart and a dependable husband to bring about a chain of artistic productions. There might be hundreds of minor artists who are trying to get an exposure for their art but failing in it because of financial or personal hindrances. Aurora's artistic creations get prominence because of her husband's financial support and that is why she never gives him up.

Similarly in *The Ground beneath Her Feet*, the saga of Vina Apsara and the unsteady ground beneath her feet is composed before the backdrop of the three highly commercial cities - Bombay, London and New York. Vina Apsara is a young girl with full of zest for music. Her partner, Omus Cama's career is staged by Mull Standish, a radio pirate. It is his commercial instinct that prompts him to present Ormie as an eighteen year old when he is actually thirty two. "Mr. John Mullens Standish XII, the radio pirate known as Mull", narrates Omus (GF 283) is "the first man

of genuine consequence to take me under his wing, an entrepreneur of real acumen." "What was he? A common buccaneer, a desperado, a man facing possible arrest at Heathrow Airport an hour or two after our meeting. This, however, troubled me not in the slightest. Quite the contrary. Ever since boyhood, I'd had a head full of criminals of the sea." Omus boasts that he knew "how to relish the seafaring criminals of our own childhood coastline" that is Bombay, "carrying who knows what booty to who knew where".

Mull Standish ran Radio Freddie and several other broadcasters on board his ships on the Thames. Later when Omus discovers that Standish had issued a false biography of his new star, the latter is unrepentant and rather assertive. He says, "The truth won't play..Sing the songs, sonny, and let Uncle Mull take care of business" (GF 320). This complements the maxim of a newspaper editor "If the facts don't fit the legend, print the legend." (GF 329). The role of Mull Standish as a promoter of the artists in England is contrasted with the role of Yul Singh in New York, who draws a contract with Vina and Omus to publish their music albums. Once they are in New York, Vina and Omus are trapped in Yul Singh's Empire. "At the heart of Sam's Pleasure Island is the court of the Yul King." (GF 413). They have signed to sing for Colchis Records. But the clauses of the agreement are such that the whole income goes into Yul Singh's coffers and the singers find themselves without funds even at the highest peak of their sales.

In the story, Vina and Omus are united after a long span of separation. They are brought together by Ormie's three year long coma after a motor accident and the subsequent premiere broadcast of his three year old composition, 'It Should Not Be Like This' which was suffused

with his longing for his beloved Vina. Vina heard the music and immediately reappeared beside Ormie's bed and he recovered from coma. This occasion would naturally ask for a celebration, a honeymoon which Yul Singh promptly offered them. But Rushdie's irony lies exactly at this point. Their extraordinary destiny is designed by a mortal, the seasoned commercialist, Yul Singh, the owner of a music recording company, who does not want them to be happy lest their music suffers. Thus in the story – "Yul Singh has arranged everything – documents, permissions, limousine – and has placed one of his country residences, for the purpose of 'decompression', of effecting a 'soft landing', at the disposal of the 'lovebirds'" (GF 390).

It is a house at Tempe Harbor and is meant to be a refuge for the couple. And Yul Singh suggests ironically that they can take their own sweet time before they start work. But their honeymoon ends in a disaster due to the presence of another pair of 'lovebirds', a newlywed couple named Wing, who tend to portray passion as vulgar and distasteful to the others by doing nothing but shrieking and fucking round the clock and uninhibitedly before them. Thus Rushdie characterizes Yul Singh as "a ruthless visionary, an amoral schemer. Might it not be a part of his grand design to throw cold water over Ormus and Vina's grand renewed passion, by offering them, in the form of Wing and Ifredis, an admonitory pair of Vargas caricatures of themselves? Happiness writes white, Montherlant said, and Yul Singh, an educated man for all his down-market posturing, is able to take a smart tip. Lovebirds bill and coo and don't get much work done. A little trouble in paradise might well be worth stirring up" (GF 394).

Thus in Rushdie, who is a magical realist, nothing is divine or fortunate and without cause. It is all designed by

characters, whom we tend to ignore, who are quietly weaving themselves into the network of our lives, the lives of the protagonists. Who knows when a friend would look forward to draw his own profits from our disasters? Mull Standish, the Englishman, a pirate in this story, happens to be the friend and Yul Singh, the Indian businessman cheats his countrymen, the singers. This is the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Rushdie's fictions. Except for the names, nothing in any of the major characters direct the reader to an understanding of a cultural type. Each character is unique in his principles and in his immorality.

In *Fury*, Malik Solanka, a professor, a historian of ideas, comes up with a brilliant product – a doll which he calls Little Brain. The doll was initially designed as a result of his reaction against museum items, which were lifeless dolls. First, he created a series of "Great Minds" dolls, often arranged in little tableaux, such as his favourite, "a two-faced, four-armed Galileo: one face muttered the truth under its breath, while one pair of arms, hidden in the folds of his garments, secreted a little model of the earth spinning around the sun; the other face, downcast and penitent under the stern gaze of the men in the red frocks, publicly recanted its knowledge, while a copy of the Bible was tightly, devoutly clutched by the second pair of arms" (*Fury* 16). These were succeeded by "the questing knowledge-seeker he created to be their television interrogator and the audience's surrogate, the female time-traveling doll Little Brain, who afterwards became a star and sold in large numbers around the world" (*Fury* 16-17). Little Brain was again succeeded by Akasz Kronos. But all these inventive ideas fail to invent for Solanka, an identity he might cherish. He is unable to banish his original identity from his mind and carries the shame around and hence each time his fury returns after a

short spell of glamour surrounding his inventions. Here, the cosmopolite is only a dream which is a lie in the face. Instead, the commercial world spoils the image.

Thus we conclude that the commercial world usurps both the artist and her bearings, that is, her personal instincts and the products of her instincts. It is not only the loss of religion and creed that makes the cosmopolite city the artists' ghetto but also the commercialization of art which affords this depersonalization. However, without a ground beneath one's feet, even a cosmopolite would not offer solace to the individual soul. This is the crux of Rushdie's fury.

Works Cited :

Rushdie, Salman: 1995, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Vintage (paperback, 1996) London. Print. Referred to as *MLS*.

GF - Rushdie, Salman: 1999, *The Ground beneath Her Feet*, Vintage (paperback, 2000) London. Print. Referred to as *GF*.

Rushdie, Salman: 2001, *Fury*, Vintage (paperback, 2002) London. Print. Referred to as *F*.

Ravindra Kumar

Racial Prejudice in William Faulkner's *Light in August*

In creative genius, in the ability to construct a world of imagination in which reality is more accessible than it is in the everyday actualities of life, William Faulkner has few peers. He can be called the central pillar upon which the edifice of American literature erects. During his literary career Faulkner published nineteen novels, more than seventy-five short stories and a few poetic collections. The quality and quantity of his works rank him as one of the greatest figures of the twentieth century literature. To measure his stature on the basis of any single work would be injustice to an author like Faulkner; to understand his genius properly one should have a sincere reading of all his works for each work unfolds a different aspect of his multi-layered mind. Each layer unfolds a different quality, a different dimension to be studied deeply.

Faulkner is a socially conscious author who deals with a number of issues in his novels. He grew up in a white society that exploited Negroes in all the possible ways. He tried to give voice to these voiceless Negroes through his works. A great explorer of human psyche, Faulkner consistently speaks against the injustice done to the Negroes by the whites. His notions about white-negro relations, about racial injustice and racial prejudice call for a careful and objective analysis. Race is certainly one of the most important subjects in Faulkner's fiction. It is a central theme in four of his novels, several of his short stories, and many of his non-fiction prose writings. In his

own essays, speeches and letters to editors of American news papers and magazines, Faulkner consistently spoke out against racial injustice and advocated the integration of segregated schools in the south. The aim of the present paper is bring out racial prejudice in *Light in August*, a masterpiece from the pen of Faulkner.

Light in August, published in 1932, is one of Faulkner's masterpieces and confirmed his reputation as one of the finest of modern novelists. The novel is a fine example of life-negating forces of which racial prejudice is the supreme example. This is also the first novel of Faulkner in which he deals directly with the racial problem. The title of the book was inspired by a particular type of light that illuminates Mississippi in the month of August and seems to come from the past. The light can also be read as a slang term for pregnancy. In a way, the light in August highlights the pregnancy and childbirth of Lena Grove, one of the protagonists of the novel. The original name of the novel was *Dark House*, which also became the working title for *Absalom, Absalom!*, another novel of Faulkner. Words go that one evening while sitting on a porch during a summer evening, Faulkner's wife remarked on the peculiar quality that light in the south had during the month of August. This was the moment when Faulkner got up from his chair, analyzed the manuscript, scratched out the original title, and named it *Light in August*.

A close reading of the text shows that the relations between the whites and the blacks in this novel are not at ease. The racial prejudice that we found in Thomas Sutpen of *Absalom, Absalom!* can be found here also in the minds of the people like Mr. Hines, Joe Christmas's grandfather. Race in *Light in August* is more a problem than any other thing. This is the first novel of Faulkner in which he deals

directly with racial prejudice. Uncle Doc is a clear example of racial prejudice who, in the beginning of the novel, rejected his daughter for she married a Negro. Moreover, he does not accept the child of this daughter and sends to an orphanage. This man may rightly be compared to Thomas Sutpen of *Absalom, Absalom!*, who under the impact of racial prejudice, rejects his son Charles Bon, his own blood. In the same way Uncle Doc acts and refuses everyone who has even a slight link with the black blood. In the novel when Doc Hines's daughter ran away with a Mexican circus hand, he not only killed the man but also left the baby on the steps of an orphanage after the death of his daughter in childbirth on the Christmas Eve. Later he took a job as janitor in the orphanage in order to make sure that this nigger grandson would never be allowed to contaminate anyone. The prejudice can further be witnessed when Joe is hit by Halliday and the same time Uncle Doc Hines comes up and begins to beat the nigger with his walking stick:

Halliday was hollering and holding him when the old man they call uncle Doc Hines came up and began to hit the nigger with his walking stick until at last two men had to hold uncle Doc quiet and took him home in a car. Nobody knew if he really did know the nigger or not. He just came hobbling up, screeching, 'Is his name Christmas?' and shaved up and took one look at the nigger and then began to beat him with the walking stick. He acted like he was hypnotized or something. (*Light in August*, 264)

The prejudice seems to be deeply rooted in the blood of Doc Hines. When he comes to the spot for the second time,

He was pure crazy by now, standing on the corner and yelling at whoever would pass calling them cowards because they wouldn't take the nigger out of jail and hang him right then and there, Jefferson or no Jefferson. He looked crazy in the face. Like somebody that had done slipped away from a crazy house and that knew he wouldn't have much time before they come and got him again. (64)

In the novel Faulkner has given us a story loaded with social significance. What the novel tries to depict is that the southern folks are shadowed by evils inherited from a pre-war social system and ideology. The book has four main characters who above all others are ridden with the ghosts of slavery days. Gail Hightower, one of the main characters, is a Presbyterian minister whose heart is less in the mysteries of faith than in the daredevil glories of the Civil War. In his childhood his imagination had been fed on stories of his grandfather, confederate officer, who had killed so many Yankees and himself been shot while robbing a hen roost in the course of a heroic raid on the military stores at Jefferson. To all intents and purposes he has grown up to be his grandfather; he has married his wife and pulled all wires to secure appointment to the church in Jefferson in order to identify himself with that heroic past. He is the one of the most strained obscure of all Faulkner's creations. Less dark in the significance, and better worked out in action is Joe Christmas, the white Negro the central character in the tragic story. He was the illegitimate son of a dark-skinned circus trouper who was supposed to be of black blood and a white girl named Milly Hines. His grandfather old "Doc Hines", is a combination in extremes of religious and race fanaticism, one who advocates the extermination of the Negroes in the interest of racial purity.

His way of dealing with miscegenation in his own family is to shoot the father of his grandchild, let the child be adopted by as great a hater of sin as himself, the pious cruel farmer McEachern. This man was extremely cruel to Joe Christmas and these very cruelties turned Christmas an almost subhuman being. But before this adaptation, Christmas was confined in an orphanage, where the other children called him nigger because of his curly black hair, and after he is grown and his own master, his life consists of a series of efforts to work out of his blood the sense of his racial inferiority. He has relations with many white women, invariably letting them know at some stage in the affair that he has Negro blood. Sometimes he is abused and beaten up; at other times he is all the more passionately received because of the strain of color. Last of these affairs is with the middle-aged woman, Miss Burden, living in the neighborhood of Jefferson, while Christmas occupies a cabin on the run down estate. Joe Christmas's life-long anguish is that he must but cannot identify himself as Negro or white. He cannot accept race as incidental to his individuality, to his humanity. He must know what he can never know, and his life becomes a process of self-crucifixion. Joe is basically raised in the south as a white southerner. He is therefore inheritor of the concept of racial division and of white supremacy. Faulkner repeatedly shows that actual relationships between Negro and white transcend racial barriers. But the concept exists apart from the actuality of human relationships. And whenever the issue is raised, the concept automatically takes precedence.

In relation to Joe Christmas, the problem of race can be put briefly through some questions which need clear answers. What is Christmas's attitude towards Negro? What about his attitude towards the white man? And most

importantly what is his attitude towards himself? A number of critics feel that in the end Joe dies as a Negro and as a conscious representative of Negro race. But the question again is in what sense? In order to answer the question whether Joe Christmas is really a Negro, we need to have a sincere reading of the text of *Light in August*. A careful reading suggests the unlikelihood of Joe's possessing any Negro genes. The evidence that he has even a trace of Negro blood rests on the assertion of Joe's grandfather, Eupheus Hines, a racially prejudiced man. Mrs Hines, Joe's grandmother is absolutely aware of the fact that her husband is an obsessed man and she herself doubts that Joe has any trace of Negro blood. It becomes very clear that Joe is not a negro by any biological inheritance but by the way in which society regards him a Negro. The way he is kept under observation in the orphanage is remarkable here:

He knew that he was never on the play ground for an instant that the man was not watching him..with a profound and unflagging attention. If the child had been older he would perhaps have thought. He hates me and fears me. So much so that he cannot let me out of his sight. With more vocabulary boy no more age he might have thought. That is why I am different from others; because he is watching me all the times. (210)

The question what Joe thinks of his Negro connection is very complicating. In his answer to Joanna Burden on the question of his Negro connection, he tells her that he doesn't know "except one of them was part nigger." (212) The fact is that Joe really does not know whether or not he has Negro blood. Incidentally, had old Doc Hines ever told him that his father was part Negro, Joe probably would

have said that his father was part nigger not that one of them was part nigger.

Miss Burden, another character of the novel, comes of New England Calvinists and nigger - lovers, and has spent her life helping and counseling the Negro women of the neighborhood. In her affair with Christmas animal passion merges with a sense of her inherited mission of raising the Negro to a level with the white man. Her brother and grandfather were killed in Jefferson by Colonel Sartoris, ex-slaveholder and confederate soldier, who resented the interference of nigger lovers in the affairs of the south. In her father's view, they were "murdered not by one white man but by the curse which God put on a whole race before your grandfather or your grand brother or me or you were even thought of. A race doomed and cursed to be forever and ever a part of the white race to doom and curse for its sins." (192) She told her father that she wanted to escape from these sinister involvements; but he assured her that that was impossible: "You must struggle, rise. But in order to rise, you must raise the shadow with you. But you can never lift it up to your level. I see that now, which I did not see until I came down here. But escape it you cannot. The curse of the black race is God's curse. But the curse of the white race is the black man who will be forever God's chosen one because He once cursed him." (193)

With the years Miss Burden's passion wears itself out and piety comes to flooding back. It is the attempt of a woman, now grown old, to force on Christmas the role of repentant sinner that drives him to the desperate fury in which he cuts her throat. It remains for him to be hunted and tried for murder. Something like peace descends on Christmas now; he has run through the whole cycle wiping out the Negro stain. But the fatal inclination of whites to

mate with blacks calls more violent forms of purgation than those provided by law. And it remains for an officer of the American Legion –Compensating himself, for his having missed service in the great war to shoot him down with his own automatic and mutilate the dying mulatto, so that “now he will let white women alone, even in the hell.” (225) Fiercest of all in stirring up the spirit of lynching against the white nigger is his grandfather, old Doc Hines, prodigious incarnation of all that is most unreasonable in fanaticism, whether religious or racial. After analyzing these characters it seems as if Faulkner was deliberately attacking a theme of wide social bearing. In *Hightower* we have the new south haunted by the ghosts of the confederacy, in *Miss Burden and Doc Hines* we have the perverse troubled conscience of the white race (north and south) haunted by the ghost of slavery, in *Christmas* we have the problem of race made flesh.

From the thematic point of view, *Light in August* is Faulkner’s most sustained confrontation of modern society. The book ends with a world irremediably split between the agony of Joe Christmas, a murderer murdered, and the composure of Lena Grove, a country girl whom evil cannot touch nor reflection trouble. The nub of the book is Faulkner’s counter position of white and Negro within the consciousness of one man, not as elements of blood or emotions of class, but as pure concepts of estrangement making life unbearable for a man who cannot even bear concepts. Seen this way, Joe Christmas becomes a summation of the predicament of Yoknapatawpha, his existence torn by the conflict of color as violently and wastefully as the land itself. But the tragedy of Christmas is not confined to the south, for in his mute resistance to being categorized as white or Negro perhaps it is really a mute insistence upon being allowed to live suspended

between the two, choosing whichever causes him most pain at a given moment- Joe Christmas is engaged in a torturous quest that goes far beyond the bounds of place or color.

Racial prejudice and obsession in *Light in August* can also be read in more strictly psychological terms. As mentioned earlier in this paper that the child, Joe Christmas, is the illegitimate son of Eupheus Hines’s daughter. The father of this child is supposed to be a Negro. And so the child is forced to come to an orphanage due to the racial prejudice of Doc Hines. And once he uncomprehendingly witnesses the love making of the dietician and an intern, he expects to be punished. But the dietician tries to buy his silence. His mad grandfather hovers at edge of his, something after the manner of Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*. Later, McEachern, on whose farm he lives and works, treats him severely. Thus Joe is denied a system of rules and sanctions administered with love. For the rest of his life he refuses to give affection or to receive it. Even though he could pass as a white man, Joe chooses to present himself as a Negro; he refuses to accept Negro status in a white society –and in the end this, in part, causes his break with Joanna, which leads to his killing her and to his being lynched.

Light in August is Faulkner’s longest work, his most varied in mood and character, and perhaps equaled only by *The Sound and the Fury* as a penetrating and compelling analysis of southern society of America. The book also has epic stature, a stature embodied in the ambivalence of Christmas who, like Homer’s Helen, is tragically forced to straddle two worlds- neither of which will accept him because of his relations to the other, neither of which he will accept because of his inherent ability to be singularly

defined. The novel is not only a realistic picture of racism; it also portrays the crippling clutch of abstract concepts upon the mind and soul of human beings. The very concept of racial superiority, with its fear and guilt, controls the individuals. Though the novel deals with some particular forces working in the south and its inhabitants, it is basically a study of the impacts of absolutist view that makes the human being its slave and victim.

To conclude we can say that the relations regarding race in *Light in August* are enveloped with prejudice, obsession and hatred. Faulkner witnessed American society very closely and scrutinized Black - White relations in order to present the facts before the readers. Though he does not provide any solution directly but the text clearly states that men should treat each other charitably without any discrimination of caste and color and to be tolerant of human weakness. If they fail to do so they invite the persecutions, the perversions, and the violence of which the novel is largely composed. The novel is very skillfully done. There are three story strands, and each is narrated in a way that illuminates the theme and creates a sense of great variety and multiplicity of life. The subject of the book is the crippling clutch of abstract concepts upon the mind and soul of the human being. These concepts imposed in childhood, enshroud the individual's attitude towards life, making him incapable of responding naturally to the full scope of human experience. The concept of racial superiority with its attendant fear and guilt, molds and controls the individual, just as the Calvinistic rooted religion with its emphasis upon sin and punishment, death and damnation, steers him away from life by directing his gaze toward death. Although the book seems to have come out of Faulkner's visceral life, and to exist as a breathing

, throbbing, tormented community of human beings, it exhibits a greater intellectual play and resonance than any of his other novels in which Faulkner relates Joe's tragic alienation to universal issues and to predicaments of the human spirit that transcends the agonies and frustrations of the American South and the special problems of our troubled 20th century. It may be his highest achievement as a novelist.

Works Cited :

- Core, Leland H. *William Faulkner: Critical Collection*. Gale Research Company, Detroit: Michigan, 1982. Print.
- Faulkner, William. *Light in August*. New York: Smith and Haas, 1932. Print.
- Howe, Irving. *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*. New York: Random House, 1952. Print.
- Thompson, Lawrence. *William Faulkner: An Introduction and Interpretation*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963. Print.

Prasenjit Panda

Breaking the Myth of Nation and Nationalism: Tagore's *The Home and the World*

The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-red clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred./
The naked passion of self-love of Nations, in its drunken delirium of greed, is dancing to the clash of steel and the howling verses of vengeance.

Tagore: *The Sunset of the Century*

To Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, nationalism is a kind of institutionalized concept which causes war, bloodshed, death, destruction, repression and divisiveness, rather than international harmony and unity, freedom. He never believes in the extreme politicized version of nation and nationalism rather, in his writings, he tries to decenter the myth of nationalism which to him is another type of colonization as it never helps to give freedom in totality. Tagore dreams for a humanitarian interference into present egocentric and cantankerous nationalism, through the introduction of a moral and transcendental dimension. Like Emerson, Tagore too insists us to shed away the oppressing history of us to rewrite a new future for ourselves that compliments human dignity and sees every individual and nation as equals. Tagore dreams to create one nation, one race and one world where there would be no binaries among the people and thus, though idealistic in vision, Tagore's concept of nationalism is still true as of today. Tagore adopts allegory to form his narrative as it allows him to illustrate in a didactic manner the *Idea* of Nationalism that so much troubles him at that particular

conjunction in the history of Bengal and India. He dreams of an expansive vision of a world.

Tagore was opposed to the idea of the nation and the then idea of nationalism. *Ghare Baire* and *Char Adhyay* are the critique on that. He was in the view that by following the western concept of Nationalism, India's history, culture and identity would be shadowed by the West. He warned:

We, in India, must make up our minds that we cannot borrow other people's history and that if we stifle our own we are committing suicide. When you borrow things that do not belong to your life, they only serve to crush your life I believe that it does India no good to compete with Western civilization in its own field.... India is no beggar of the West. (Soares 106)

In *The Home and the World*, Nikhil, Tagore's alter ego in the novel, who is patriotic but wouldn't place nation above truth and conscience says, "I am willing to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is far greater than country. To worship my country as a god is to bring curse upon it" (29). However, Nikhil's friend, Sandip, a charismatic but unconscionable nationalist, to whom any action in the name of the nation is right, no matter how far it may be from truth or justice, exclaims, "country's needs must be made into a god" (61), and one must "set aside ... conscience... by putting the country in its place" (224). Tagore saw this radical view of Sandip, in which the nation is apotheosized and placed above truth and conscience, as a recipe for disaster. It breeds exclusivism and dogmatism through the Hegelian dichotomous logic of self's fundamental hostility towards the other; thus every nation becomes narcissistic and considers the presence of another a threat to itself; waging war against other nations for its

self-fulfillment and self-aggrandizement becomes a justifiable and even "holy" act. Tagore explains in his book *Nationalism* (1976):

The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation, that all its precautions are against it, and any new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of a new peril. (17-18)

Throughout his life Tagore criticized religious bigotry, casteism, and parochialism and extreme nationalism. He dreams of a world where unity of race determines a nation. Like Tagore, Franz Fanon in the chapter *The Pitfalls of National Consciousness* of *The Wretched of the Earth* also does not see any positive outcome from so-called nationalist movement. He says:

HISTORY teaches us clearly that the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism. For a very long time the native devotes his energies to ending certain definite abuses: forced labour, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights, etc. This fight for democracy against the oppression of mankind will slowly leave the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge, sometimes laboriously, as a claim to nation-hood. It so happens that the unpreparedness of the educated classes, the lack of practical links between them and the mass of the people, their laziness, and, let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps. (148)

In the novel *The Home and the World* Tagore raises his voice against the then practice of violent acts in the name of Swadeshi Movement. Tagore realizes that the swadeshi movement is not at all grassroots movement rather its nature of action is more nearer to urban and bourgeois. The swadeshi movement refers to the banning of foreign goods and portrays an image of motherland in the form of mother Kaali-Hindu goddess. Nikhil does not like the concept of extreme nationalism colored by *Bande Mataram*. He knows that it will lead to nowhere. In the words of Nikhil: "I am not willing to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is far greater than my country. To worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it" (17). Swadeshi movement, according to Nikhil and his teacher, is nothing but a movement which is not accepted by the majority as it fails to involve the lower classes, lower castes and Muslims. He also does not like the practice of hegemonic propagation through otherization foreign goods. Sandip like extremist leader forces not only to abandon the foreign goods but also their business of foreign goods. They simply overlook the fact that the poor peasants don't have the luxury to do business with swadeshi goods as the swadeshi goods are very expensive. It becomes difficult to buy or sell them in the market. Thus, the poor Muslims traders become "resentful of wealthy Hindu landowners and politicians who could afford the luxury of idealism in the form of bonfires into which British goods were flung. (Desai-9). As a result of economic crises and mistrust, the poor Muslims do not cooperate in the Swadeshi movement and it leads to communal violence and disturbance. As Anita Desai writes, "Tagore was horrified to find that the movement that had been conceived to fight the communalist forces set free by the British had

itself become violently communal (Desai-9). Tagore's *Home and the World* is the critique of the concept of nationalism. The young students are being misled by the rhetoric of political leaders and have lost the human touch. Swadeshi movement soon becomes the metaphor for subjugation, victimization of the underprivileged members of the society in the name of nationalism. In this novel, Sandip who is an idealistic nationalist does not ever think before he orders his manager to sink the boat of Mirjan, a Muslim peasant who refuses to abandon to sell foreign goods. The destruction of Mirjan's boat, the burning of German shawls of a Muslim shopkeeper further aggravates communal violence.

Regarding Nationalism, Tagore seems to be close to Fanon's idea of nationalism as Fanon argues in *The Wretched of the Earth* that nationalism often fails at achieving emancipation across class boundaries because nationalism starts working as an ideology in favour of the colonized bourgeoisie—a privileged middle class who wants to defeat the existing colonial rule only to seize its place of dominance and surveillance over the working-class "lumpenproletariat." In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon blames the failings of nationalism on the "intellectual laziness of the middle class" (149). Fanon clearly states that how the bourgeoisie middle class misuses the idea of nationalism in order to create another centre of domination and colonization. The very process of decolonization never starts with nationalism.

The national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case it is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes

to replace. In its narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country. But that same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country. (149)

The idea of nationalism is narrowed down by the extreme swadeshi movement. In the novel men like Harish Kundu and Chakravatis who treat the underprivileged as "slaves by nature" and rule "with an iron hand" become heroes in the mind of the young students. Not only this, the students also think that: "if anybody can save our country it is these Kundus and Chakravartis and their officials" (141). Nikhil understands that the attitudes of the young students are nothing but the outcome of the colonial rule. They have internalized the colonial psyche which believes in subjugation, exploitation, and domination so much that they themselves start practicing the same with the underprivileged class. In Nikhil's words:

The slavery that has entered into our very bones is breaking out, at this opportunity, as ghastly tyranny. You have so used to submit to domination through fear; you have come to believe that to make others submit is a kind of religion. My fight shall be against this weakness, this atrocious cruelty! (142).

Sandip considers himself as a realist though in reality, we know that he is not. He criticizes Nikhil for how "he delights in a misty vision of this world" (57). Sandip describes those who share his views as "iconoclasts of metre" (57). He also says that Nikhil and his fellow iconoclasts are "the flesh-eaters of the world; we have teeth and nails; we

pursue and grab and tear" (47). For Sandip, the end justifies the means, and he argues that virtually any human action can be excused if the stakes are sufficiently high. This is the only fundamental principle of existence. "Nature surrenders herself," he indicates, "but only to the robber. For she delights in this forceful desire" (45).

Nikhil and Sandip share the same objective: decolonization of India. But they nourish different definitions for Freedom and Nation. Nikhil does not like the idea of extreme nationalist ideology. As he says: "To tyrannize for the country," he says, "is to tyrannize over the country" (109). Sandip stops at nothing to achieve his ends, as he stresses passionately that "Whenever an individual or nation becomes incapable of perpetrating injustice it is swept into the dust-bin of the world" (79). There is no value of moral standards in his ruthless metaphoric world as it is evident from his relationship with everyone in the novel, including Bimala, whom he manages to steal for him from her husband and thus makes her a rebel. Sandip finds justification for his actions in history. Life, he says, is "indefinite—a bundle of contradictions," and humankind's aim is to "strive to give it a particular shape" (79). In Sandip's world, there is no place for religious idealism, and there are no higher purposes than that humankind creates. Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* defends violence against the colonizer by the colonized as a justified means of protest and self defence. Fanon's absolute violence might be seen in the character of Tagore's Sandip who stands contrary to Tagore's idea of cosmopolitanism and universalism.

Bimala stands at the center of the tale. She represents INDIA at a crossroad: through her Tagore allegorizes the conflict of the nation and nationalism. Nikhil tries to

introduce Westernized ideas on the role of women in society by bringing her out of purdah into the world. He wants her to achieve her independent self. And very soon Nikhil realizes that Bimala does not love him. Nikhil acknowledges: "Bimala has only come into my house, not into my life. I had magnified her so, leaving her such a large place, that when I lost her, my whole way of life became narrow and confined" (92). Being hegemonized by the extreme nationalist ideology of Sandip, Bimala starts seeing the outside World in a very illusionary way which gives her an unreal world of infertility and self-destruction and romanticized violence. She has been carried out by the fire of passion, enthusiasm and romanticized version of nationalism without analyzing the changes it invites. Ignorance of inclusive knowledge and the inability to analyse the ideological Swadeshi movement cause turmoil and moral corruption in the woman, Bimala or Mother India. She is uprooted from family and thrown into the nothingness; she gets lost in the World. Lukacs criticised Tagore as "a wholly insignificant figure. . . [Who] survives by sticking scraps of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita into his works amid the sluggish flow of his tediousness" (Desai 7). Lawrence also criticised that Tagore was a "horribly decadent [figure] reverting to all forms of barbarism in all sorts of ugly ways." Lawrence further said, creating the same us/them, West/East hierarchical binary, which Tagore had found disagreeable in Kipling's imagination, "our European civilization stands [far higher] than the East, India, or Persia ever dreamed of" (Kripalani 278). Though the critics have termed Tagore as an antinationalist or called his idea as "lofty and far-fetched", but in Indian perspective, even in recent time, it is impossible to practice nationalism in the very strictest

sense as there are diverse cultures, religions and ethnicity. To Tagore, nationalism is itself a weak ideology which tends to divide the people instead of uniting, instead of creating a fraternity; it creates a new hierarchy and hegemony within its structure, and exposes the fracture between its rhetoric and reality. In the words of Fanon:

National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people [becomes] a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been [when] the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state" (156). Tagore nourishes the view that unity and plurality of consciousness could be achieved only through proper education of the people and the abolition of poverty. Freedom does not only mean decolonization from the oppressor rather it seeks a total liberation from the curses of ignorance, class struggle, political hegemony and religious fanaticism. Nationalism should aim at the freedom of mind with the wild imagination to understand the truth. We may say that Tagore's Nationalism cannot be defined neither by the center nor by the boundary; neither by religion nor by race. He dreams of a world with no border. We may end with John Lennon's song: "Imagine there's no countries/ It isn't hard to do/Nothing to kill or die for/ And no religion too/Imagine all the people/Living life in peace..."

Work Cited:

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. 170-75. Print

Chatterjee, Kalyan K. "Lukacs on Tagore: Ideology and Literary Criticism." *Indian Literature* 31.3 (1988): 153-60.

Pham, Chi. "Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World*: Story of the Failure of the Nationalist Project". *ASIATIC Journal*, 7.2 (Dec 2013): 2-20. Print

Desai, Anita. "Introduction." *The Home and the World*. 1915. Trans. Surendranath Tagore. London: Penguin, 1985. Print

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched Of The Earth*. New York : Grove Press, ©1963. Print.

Kripalani, Krishna. *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962. Penguin, 1985. 7-14. Print

-. *Nationalism*. 1916. London: Macmillan, 1976. Print

Soares, Anthony X, ed. *Rabindranath Tagore: Lecture and Addresses*. London: Macmillan, 1970. Web

Tagore, Rabindranath. [1915] *The Home and the World*. Trans. Surendranath Tagore. London : Penguin, 1985. Print

<http://tagoreweb.in/Render/ShowContent.aspx?ct=Essays&bi=72EE92F5-BE50-40D7-8E6E-0F7410664DA3&ti=72EE92F5-BE50-4A47-3E6E-0F7410664DA3>

Navjot Khosla

**Traversing Voids:
Cross-Civilizational Clash in Saul Bellow's
*Henderson the Rain King***

The twentieth century has perhaps been one of the most eventful centuries of the past millennium. On the one hand, man has made rapid progress in the fields of science and technology which have certainly helped make our lives easier. On the other hand, he has also been a witness to the utter devastation and destruction caused by various conflicts, especially the two World Wars. These factors, among others, have been largely responsible for the gradual breakdown of family values and the subsequent spiritual barrenness.

Saul Bellow, as a twentieth century American novelist, was a representative of the modern times who observed the utter moral decrepitude that had seeped into the lives of the fellow Americans. Gloria L. Cronin writes, about Bellow, "Saul Bellow is perhaps the fore-most among a handful of postwar novelists to have successfully thrown over the preoccupation of the moderns with cultural and religious dissolution, metaphysical loneliness, romantic agony, and estrangement" (191).

Bellow's genius lies in the fact that he somehow "...maintains both his old-world heritage and complex new-world fate without constraint to his vision" (Hassan 266). And therefore it comes as no surprise when "The conflicts of class, the tensions of race, the tacit discriminations of power." find place in Bellow's work (Hassan 268). The recurrent theme is that of total chaos in the multi-faceted

aspects of American life – be it physical, emotional, spiritual, mental, moral or psychological. Bellow observed with disgust what Americans were doing to their society in the name of openness and liberalism. As a result, many of the characters in his novels are spiritual wrecks who seek salvation, not through religion, but through the rejuvenation of their inner conscience.

Though the word 'civilizational', used here as an adjective, comes from the word 'civilization, the term 'Cross-Civilizational' means two civilizations that cut across the globe and are situated in the 'New World' of America and the 'Dark Continent' of Africa. Samuel P. Huntington, political scientist and Professor at the Harvard University, defined civilization as "a cultural entity" (23). And in his famous article, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', he unerringly predicted a future where the reasons for the clash of civilizations will be "cultural" and that "The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics... Conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world" (Huntington 22).

Such is the case in Saul Bellow's 1959 novel, *Henderson the Rain King*. The story is about the protagonist's chaotic search for inner peace and wisdom as he traverses through these two continents and their respective civilizations. This paper aims to explore the 'clash', the differences and the void between the modern (American) civilization and the primitive (African) civilization as "Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion... These differences are the product of centuries" (Huntington 25).

It would not be amiss to claim that the American civilization is synonymous with progress. Developments in the fields of science and technology are constantly gaining greater heights. The people who belong here have thus invariably become symbols of a civilized society in which order, reason and logic prevail. Instinct has perhaps given way to rational thinking. But despite the efflorescence of science and technology in this 'civilized' world, somewhere and somehow man has lost connection with his inner voice. Leading a rather mechanical and mundane life, he appears to be without an anchor. And, the constant running-after materialistic comforts in the vain hope that they would provide him with inner peace only add to his perplexity and alienation. In the end, peace still proves elusive, just as a mirage.

The people of the African civilization, on the other hand, are still living a primordial life. These are tribals who are closer to nature since the advancement of science and technology or even its awareness has not yet reached here. And since these people are backward, there appears little need for law as beliefs in superstitions, sorcery and witchcraft are still intact.

Eugene Henderson is the fifty five year old protagonist in *Henderson the Rain King*. He is introduced as a bungling and eccentric American millionaire who has everything money can buy and more. Yet, he is restless. He admits that there exists, "a ceaseless voice in my heart that said, *I want, I want, I want, oh, I want ...*" (12). And in order to pacify this voice, Henderson continues to experiment - from joining the army to being a hog farmer - and everything in between.

His inner voice soon guides him to the Dark Continent of Africa which is "... a journey into prehistory" (Newman 17). The inner voice continues to plague him throughout the novel until the realization dawns upon him that all his life he has only been running after earthly things, leaving his soul famished.

And so, listening to his inner voice, Henderson, with his trusted aide Romilayu, sets forth into the interiors of Africa to seek whatever it is that his soul craves. It is from here on out that the cross-civilizational clash begins to vividly appear. His first destination is the land of the cattle-loving Arnewi. The people of Arnewi love their cattle "practically as if they were cousins" (106). Compare this attitude to that of Henderson, who was once a hog farmer, when he remarks, "a pig is basically a career animal" (56). Thus, from early on in the narrative the fact that modern civilization is not close to nature becomes apparent. The element of commercialization has crept into the very fibre of the 'new' world whereas for the Arnewi, livestock is more than just a source of livelihood.

The differences in the traditions of the two civilizations come to the fore when Henderson defeats Itelo in a wrestling match. In Arnewi, the Prince, Itelo, reveals that, "When stranger guest comes we allways make acquaintance by wrestle. Invariable... . New arrival, got to wrestle. Always" (63). This custom of greeting could also be taken as a way of assessing the physical strength of the guest. Moreover, even though Itelo loses the match, he displays a characteristic graciousness which is, perhaps, typical of his people. In fact, Henderson himself remarks, "Far from looking hangdog or grudging, the prince himself participated in the ovation, pointing at me and smiling" (71). For a culture where a show of physical strength in a

man has deep connotations, it is surprising how good-naturedly Itelo accepts his defeat.

A raincoat, an Austrian lighter and a compass with small binoculars are products of Henderson's scientifically-advanced society which are given as tributes to the Arnewi Queen Willatale, her fat sister Mtalba and the Queen's nephew, Itelo respectively. These are things which the Arnewi have never seen before. And touched by the warm reception and the hospitality he receives, Henderson takes it upon himself to rid the Arnewi cistern of the frogs and the pollywogs. Since these frogs and pollywogs plague the only source of drinking water in Arnewi, the people are thus understandably superstitious of the vermin. With good intentions and an optimistic attitude, Henderson makes use of scientific principles and creates a makeshift bomb. The bomb does go off. However, the plan backfires. Henderson once again manages to destroy what he meant to fix, all due to his sheer impulsiveness.

Perhaps the Arnewi were better off without the scientific application of Henderson's expertise. At least they had a source of drinking water. Now, the superstitious Arnewi people see him as an ill-omen. And thus, a repentant Henderson is asked by Itelo to leave Arnewi.

The rest of the story unfolds with the Wariri, another African tribe. As Henderson enters into King Dahfu's private apartment, we glimpse a lifestyle totally different from the one Henderson belongs to. Civilized society follows monogamy, but here the King is surrounded by many naked and "volupté" women (153). It is customary for the King to have a harem not just for the perpetuation of the family line but also to beget a stronger progeny. When the King's sexual strength weakens, these very women would report

him to the High Priest; and Dahfu, like his forefathers, would be strangulated.

The traditional belief among the Wariri is that once the weak king is killed by the High Priest, his dead body metamorphosizes into that of a lion cub. The cub is then freed into the jungles and it is duty of the new king to capture the very same animal. The young lion is to be brought back and kept at the lower levels of the palace. The principle behind this practice is two-fold. One, it signifies that the new king has the blessings of his ancestral kings, for, the ancestors bring to the Wariri good fortune and fertility. And secondly, it indicates the fact that the new royal now rules with the power and authority of the 'King of the Jungle'. Though such beliefs and superstitions might be commonplace in the bush, but they are almost unheard of in the Western civilization.

Perhaps as a means of keeping his ancestors close to him, the Wariri King has "a large wooden bowl" with "couple of human skulls" in his room (154). Henderson observes this as he approaches Dahfu. Possibly, the presence of the bowl constantly reminds the king of the impermanence of time. After all, Dahfu is just one of the many in the line of Wariri Kings. Compare this to the early sections of *Henderson the Rain King*, where we find Henderson learning to play his father's violin solely to connect with him: "Oh, Father, Pa. Do you recognize the sounds? This is me, Gene, on your violin, trying to reach you" (30). This yearning to 'reach' is, in the words of Daniel Fuchs, "a symbol of infinite longing and the desire to be united with his distinguished father" (102). Be as it may, modern society does not seem to be as well connected to their ancestry as the primitive one here does.

Civilized or modern man believes that God has distantiated Himself from him. But that is not the case in the wilds of Africa. Here we find King Dahfu invoking his ancestors and propitiating the gods to bless Wariri with rain. This kind of belief comes only from infinite faith in the gods that they will deliver. All the tribal rituals culminate in the rain dance which is primordial man's uninhibited communion with nature. The gathering of clouds in the sky, the thunderclaps and then the rain – all point to the unshakable faith of uncivilized man in the gods.

After Henderson is made The Rain King, Dahfu, Sungo Henderson's guru/friend, encourages him to picture himself as a real lion. Dahfu says, "We must hear your voice. It tends to be rather choked. I told you the tendency of your conscious is to isolate self... . Be the beast!" (267). The bewildered Henderson begins to roar and much to his astonishment, feels as if, "... all my sorrow came out in the roaring...the note came from my soul..the last thing of all was my human longing" (267). Dahfu further points out to him, "You must try to make more of a lion of yourself... . Your roaring still is choked. Of course it is natural, as you have such a lot to purge" (274). The lion represents the leonine qualities of power, bravery, strength, vitality, valor, agility, limberness and the spirit of adventure. Dahfu here cleverly hints at the innumerable layers of civilized etiquette deeply ingrained in the West. These layers create inhibitions which invariably repress the individual's inner voice. And it becomes second nature for him to put up barriers. Thus, Dahfu insists that Henderson must give vent to all his pent up frustrations in order to begin afresh. Henderson explains his initial inability to 'roar' as: "But what the king called pathos was actually (I couldn't help

myself) a cry which summarized my entire course on this earth, from birth to Africa; and certain words crept into my roars, like "God," "Help," "Lord have mercy"... . (274)

Only these words came out in garbled form. The two men and the beast (Atti) would sit in the den while Henderson would 'roar'. The roaring symbolically rids him of his inner demons and his anxieties. He confesses to feeling "better ... [and] lighter" (274). But his tumultuous emotions would not allow him to feel calmer. Dahfu proclaims that, "I see you are laboring with a lifetime accumulation" (275). These frustrations and anxieties allude to the repressed desires of the 'Id' which do not give the individual a moment's peace.

It is only when Henderson sheds the last vestiges of civilization that he begins to truly understand and appreciate the spiritual truth. Molly Stark Weiting claims, "As his clothes are stripped from him, he loses the last remnant of civilization" (88). He seems to realize the fact that the satisfaction his soul craved for was knowledge of all worlds. Henderson says, "Well, maybe every guy has his own Africa" (275). Bellow makes use of metaphors to emphasize that we should each allow our own Africa to re-surface. Our inner voice need not be repressed. The soul must be fed and the thirst for knowledge must be quenched.

Each human being must identify his inner calling and take action to pacify it. The clash of the civilizations once again comes to the fore when Henderson tells Romilayu:

Millions of Americans have gone forth since the war to re-deem the present and discover the future... there are guys like me in India and in China and South America and all over the place... . And it's the destiny

of my generation of Americans to go out in the world and try to find the wisdom of life. (277)

Henderson universalizes himself and his quest for knowledge when he remarks, "*she* wants, *he* wants, *they* want" (286). He claims that it is not just his inner voice which called to him, since millions of other Americans too have listened to their inner calling and found solace in different parts of the globe. It dawns on Henderson that the "incessant voice..is not a unique personal problem but the manifestation of spiritual yearning which is indicative of his humanity" (Weiting 89).

The Wariri King is akin to Tiresias as he has seen both civilizations. As a medical student, he has encountered science and medicine; and as the head of the Wariri, he has immersed himself in the absurd tribal rituals and superstitions even though he realized, "They are living in the old universe" (292). Yet, it is Dahfu who attempts to bring about a change in his tribe, even at the cost of his life, for he tried to: "overturn the religion of the whole tribe" (276). Henderson recognizes Dahfu's attempt to change the way his people think, "Don't get me wrong. The human race needs guys like this king more than ever. Change must be possible! If not, it's too damn bad" (276). Thus, Dahfu symbolizes a fusion of tradition and science.

Towards the close of the novel, Henderson carries back with him the lion cub as a "souvenir of a very dear friend" (333). The cub, aptly named Dahfu, is a symbol of Henderson's new found identity. So is the Persian orphan who becomes a "symbol perhaps of his [Henderson's] restored soul" (Cronin 197). He is in fact carrying a little of the primitive civilization into his modern civilization. But he has not yet given up his impulsiveness. Henderson

steals the cub from the Wariri, leaving the tribe as orphans. Perhaps his journey to spiritual fulfillment is not quite over yet. Nevertheless, we find his act of stealing the cub as representative of an amalgamation of the two civilizations.

In the end, it seems as if Bellow, through *Henderson the Rain King*, expresses what Edward Said later reiterated through his views on Orientalism. The West is shown as a superior and advanced society whereas Africa is shown as a traditional and primitive one. The narrative almost seems to allude to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as Henderson embarks upon a journey into the wilds of Africa since he finds himself "... discontinuous with civilization" (333). And even though "Henderson's journey culminates in his awareness of man's nobility, largeness of heart, and power of mind", Bellow's writing invariably becomes a 'white' man's writing about the backward people of the bush (Chavkin 71). These backward people are never provided the opportunity to tell their part of the story.

One must pause to ponder upon the burning question - if there really is a need for this *clash* of civilizations at all? Even though the dissemblance has been in-the-making for centuries, nevertheless, *one* cannot exist exclusively without the *other*. A reconciliation of the New World with the Old would surely go a long way in yoking this yawning chasm. But there needs to be "...an effort to identify elements of commonality between Western and other civilizations" and even though there might never be a "universal civilization", yet, each and every one of these progressive as well as traditional civilizations "will have to learn to coexist with the others" (Huntington 49). Only then can the world become a better place to live in, minus the wars, the genocide and the ensuing violence. Henderson

himself puts it most artfully, "... this will be one of those mutual-aid deals; where the Arnewi are irrational I'll help them, and where I'm irrational they'll help me" (87). Thus, the need of the hour now, just as it was previously, is a counterbalancing between the West and the East wherein individuals can look past their differences to work towards the amelioration of humankind.

Works Cited :

Bellow, Saul. *Henderson the Rain King*. New York: Penguin Books, 1996. Print. Further quotations are from this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

Chavkin, Allan. "Bellow and English Romanticism." *Saul Bellow in the 1980s: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Gloria L. Cronin & Goldman, L.H. New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Pvt. Ltd., 1992. 67-79. Print.

"Civilization." Def. 1b. *Merriam-Webster.com*, Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 24 March 2016.

Cronin, Gloria. "Henderson the Rain King: A Parodic Exposé of the Modern Novel." *Saul Bellow in the 1980s: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Gloria L. Cronin & Goldman, L.H. New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Pvt. Ltd., 1992. 191-99. Print.

Fuchs, Daniel. *Saul Bellow: Vision and Revision*. New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Pvt. Ltd., 1992. Print.

Hassan, Ihab. "Saul Bellow." *The Antioch Review*. 40.3 (1982): 266-273. *JSTOR*. Web. 4 May 2009.

Huntington, Samuel. P. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*. 72.3 (1993): 22-49. *JSTOR*. Web. 6 May 2009.

Newman, Judie. "Saul Bellow's Sixth Sense." *Saul Bellow in the 1980s: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Gloria L. Cronin and L.H. Goldman. New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Pvt. Ltd., 1992. 11-25. Print.

Weiting, Molly Stark. "The Pastoral in Saul Bellow's Novels." *Saul Bellow in the 1980s: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Gloria L. Cronin & Goldman, L.H. New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Pvt. Ltd., 1992. 81-93. Print.

Whitman, Walt. "A Passage to India." *PoemHunter.Com*. Poem Hunter. 31 Dec. 2002. Web. 24 Mar. 2016.

Archana Bhatnagar

**The Labyrinths of the Human Mind:
Gauzing Trials and Tribulation of Women in
the Fiction of Anita Desai**

Literature, language and society seem to be timelessly interlinked. One results into another in a kind of chain reaction and together they define human experiences and expressions prevailing in a particular time- frame. Seen in this light the novels of Anita Desai successfully explores the psyche of her traumatized protagonists - traumatized particularly in maintaining a balance in their marital relationships. Her characters seem to reflect no sense of contentment at all. In this struggle to maintain an equilibrium in marital life – the man-woman relationship, her characters shift from the external world to the internal world, particularly the female characters. The language employed by the writer becomes a language of loneliness, alienation and pessimism. Hence, there is dislocation of normal life, the inevitable distortion of personality and the self, caught in the web of existential problems and predicaments. Once the marital rift is created even the day-to-day existence becomes a challenge. With the dislocation of normal life there is also the shattering of personality and the self. Maya of *Cry the Peacock*, (1963), Sarah of *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), Sita of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), Nanda Kaul of *Fire On The Mountain* (1978) or Sarla and Lotte of *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988) reveal an uncomfortable gap and sadness.

The works of Anita Desai are an aperture to the probable causes and their effects as a consequence of

marital rift between the partners. All her characters particularly the female protagonists are marked by a typical uniqueness. They want to exercise their freedom, opt for a choice but refuse to conform or compromise in search of an authentic existence. The causes of their rifts may be varied but the effects surely result in disasters, intolerance and receding of healthy relationships. According to Anita, Desai marital rifts though not desirable seem to have become an inseparable part of married life. A relationship where conjugal bliss and understanding should prevail is ultimately enveloped by marital conflicts where the partners gradually drift apart in their mutual love, care and respect. The entire writings of Anita Desai focuses on personal struggles and problems of contemporary life that her characters must cope with. She insists on the incredible power of family and society and the relationship between family members, particularly the partners in matrimony emphasizing the trials and tribulations of women and their estranged marital relationships. "Her novels are engaged in exposing the deep labyrinths of the human mind and in indicating the ways to psychological fulfilment" (George125).

Different estrangements are an outcome of different causes. Maya - the protagonist of *Cry the Peacock* is one of the finest specimen of Anglo-Indian literature for the female characters and the alienation of the middle-class women in India. It details the morbid dread, neurotic descent and suicide of Maya, a young Delhi housewife who is trapped in a loveless, arranged marriage to the much older Gautam, a misogynistic lawyer. Maya is like a child- bride to Gautam, her husband. She had longed for love, a living contact, a relationship or communion enveloping her romantic dreams but Gautam as his very name suggests was symbolic of

detachment. The two partners have temperamental incompatibility and hence they drift apart. Lack of dialogue and communication between the partners are factors which convert them into strangers. Maya is hypersensitive and suffers from the drawbacks of father-fixation, too much delving with the past associations of the albino prophecies with overlapping mental pressures which turns Maya into a patient of schizophrenia. Her childlessness also characterizes her vast emptiness.

Maya as a young child is obsessed with a childhood prophecy of disaster which according to her cannot be avoided. She doesn't grow out of her childhood even after four years of marriage and shirks to take up adult responsibilities.

If Maya had accepted the albino astrologer's advice asking her to seek God's blessings instead of getting worked up over the prediction, she might have averted the agony of hallucinations and terrifying fears. If, she had shared her thoughts with a friend like Pom and sought her advice, the tragedy might not have occurred. But then, any tragedy is almost invariably caused by the 'ifs' that are ignored." (George125)

Maya's fear-psychosis arising from the childhood albino prophecy coupled with her state of being childless loneliness drifts her towards an acute pessimism. Maya's neurosis can be studied in three phases : growth, development and crisis. Anita Desai in Maya has drawn the character of a wife who is highly sensitive. Her lonely struggle against fate drives her to homicide, insanity and finally to suicide. To a great extent her problems seem to be self-invited. She doesn't come out of her circle of inner broodings and associations with the past. Living under the

canopy of father-fixation and the life under its shelter she now suffers from the sense of alienation. Her partner proved compatible to her their marital life and personalities would not have distorted but would have been a life of mutual bliss but Gautam also proves out to be just a father-figure to her.

Being childless, she is extremely attached to her pet - Toto whose death further shatters her. There is with this emotional starvation, a physical detachment as well which draws her to solitude and silence while Gautam is more than double her age, a professionally busy lawyer. Their marriage provides only a physical presence in the household devoid of sexual satisfaction. Hardly out of her teenage Maya is the pampered and motherless child to her aristocratic father. In the eyes of Gautam, his wife is a neurotic and a spoilt child. As the age demands she wishes her husband to admire her beauty, but Gautam as his very name suggests is a detached individual, pragmatic, realistic and insensitive. One single word 'incompatibility' is enough to define their life i.e. incompatibility of age, attitude and emotions. Hence, both the partners feel uncomfortable in each other's company. Maya "an introverted favourite daughter of a wealthy aristocratic father wants to remain aloof from Gautam while Gautam is satisfied and absorbed in his own world .What Maya likes Gautam clearly dislikes" (Pathak 20).

Maya had experienced a pampered childhood whereas Gautam is very unfeeling and insensitive towards her which turns her into a victim of loneliness : "Maya's tragedy is that there is no one to share her feelings. Childless with uncaring husband she is lonely and loneliness is the bane and burden of her psyche. And to cap it all she is not even sexually satisfied" (Srivastava 84).

Hence, Maya and Gautam appear before the readers as an example of ill-adjusted couple. Another example of this rift in marriage exists in the form of Nila - who is Maya's sister-in-law and has been left by her husband even after a decade of married life. Maya's friend - Pom also suffers pangs of disharmony and marital estrangement due to attitudinal differences within the family of her in-laws. But her way of accepting the facts is completely different from that of Maya. Pom is a character who spreads sunshine, gaiety and laughter among all those who are around her. She never puts the thrust of her disturbed marital life upon fate but tries to interact with life and its gestures cheerfully.

'*Voices in the City*', the second novel by Anita Desai is also a glaring example of marital rift between the parents due to which all the three siblings of the family are affected in some or the other way. On the one hand is the mother - beautiful, sophisticated and a lady of elite taste and manners whereas on the other end is the father with malicious intentions, indolent and a thoroughly idle man. Hence, apparently a happy household, it suffers from the rift of marital and familial bonding. All the three siblings suffer in greater or lesser way. Nirode, the eldest son is seriously hurt at the treachery of his own mother and is the worst affected of the three offsprings particularly when he compares himself to the other son i.e. Arun - his younger brother. Nirode feels neglected at the hands of both- his father as well as his mother. In his father's eyes he had always observed a greater liking for his younger brother whom his father always showered with money, further studies and a secure future. This inclined attitude of the father towards the younger son proves detrimental to both his emotional and mental health and Nirode bents towards his mother as an emotional recourse. He adored his mother

and had always admired her intensely but her second marriage with Mr. Chadha had shattered his psyche. The "mother fixation" is shattered to a lasting detachment.

Monisha, the second sibling of the 'Ray' family is a victim of ill-matched wedlock. There is temperamental incongruity between the two partners : "Her relationship with her husband is characterized only by loneliness and lack of communication" (Pathak 25).

In the character of Monisha Desai has presented a hyper sensitive, dissatisfied woman - who is also a victim of ill-matched matrimony. But unlike Maya of *Cry, The Peacock*, the suffering of Monisha is her own creation. With a dull husband from a middle class family she finds it difficult to identify herself with her in-laws. Torn between the mental turmoil and in-communication with her life partner Monisha commits suicide by putting herself to fire. Her incompatibility with her husband -Jiban is marked only by loneliness and incommunication. She is childless and therefore complexed too. she is estranged from both her families - her mother's as well as her husband's. Domestic duties, personal and social responsibilities overlap each other and reduces her to an utterly confused and distorted psyche. Monish's withdrawal is not simply detachment or suffering ; it is in fact a foreboding - a death-like stillness, the calm before the storm. It is an existential alienation and despair of her characters which creates in them a persistent longing for death as a release from her external as well as internal world by setting herself to fire in her own room.

Amla - the younger daughter of the Ray family is of an artistic temperament, full of hopes and aspirations with which she enters the city of Calcutta. She comes to realize

the harsh existential crisis of this city. *Voices in the City* reminds the reader of the three words "Anguish, abandonment and despair" (Sartre 350-57). The strain of disharmony, destruction and death reverberates throughout the novel. In the city of Calcutta Amla amidst all existential predicaments is attracted towards Dharma but seeing his cold behaviour towards his own daughter she feels insecure for her own self too and breaks away from him. Had it not been for the estrangements in marital life due to the factors of mal-adjusted partners, ill-matched couples, sense of alienation, psychological neurosis, disparity in wishes and desires and their achievements the fate of the 'Ray' family would have ended on a melodious note.

Bye-Bye Blackbird is Anita Desai's first foray in the world of fiction in a country beyond India. Desai here portrays the intense xenophobia and prejudice that manifested in England during the influx of commonwealth immigration in the 1950's and 1960's. *Bye-Bye Blackbird* traces the causes of marital rift in cross-cultural differences. Estrangement between Sarah and Adit Sen is traceable in the problems of adjustment as immigrants. It presents the psychological and the emotional prison in which the married partners find themselves. Sarah's longing for a Christian marriage to her Indian husband - Adit Sen explicitly indicates non-belongingness and instability in her marriage. Sarah was always searching for her roots, her identity. For her the domestic turmoil in married life is the result of a cultural shock, the east-west encounter. "It was her English self that was receding, fading and dying, she knew it was her English self to which she must say good-bye" (Desai 225).

Sarah's love for Adit unlike Monisha or Maya is real, intense and one of willing adoration. Her's has been a greater sacrifice for the word *blackbird* stands for both the *temptation* and the *gloom* it can create. She has problem in wearing the sari and jewellery. The rituals and beliefs of one means nothing to the other. These differences affect their day-to-day life. She has a great fear of being labelled as an Indian and here lies the crux of her personality and dilemma. Infact, she tries to escape from her own identification as the Indian's wife. The tension between pretension and reality is always there resulting in schizophrenia. Though highly enamoured of the oriental culture and its richness the domestic turmoil in married life is the result of a cultural shock - the *East-West encounter*. Consequently she becomes the divided self: she is left inadequate for her own British society and Indian culture is insufficient in her eyes. In the case of Adit and Sarah, each one of them is fighting their own battle. Infact, they voice the dilemma of all immigrants across the globe. Anita Desai beautifully delineates the cultural differences and the east-west encounter of Adit Sen and Sarah in creating marital estrangement in their lives.

Where Shall We Go This Summer? is a tale of unwantedness, neglect and disappointment for Sita - the main protagonist of the novel. Hers is a loveless marriage with Raman. Hence, she feels lonely and temperamentally incompatible. Sita chooses a world of fantasy whereas Raman is a down-to-earth character. There is no affinity between her and her busy, over-occupied husband. The crux of the distortion of her personality lies in identifying too much with the past. The past becomes a residue. Here also Anita Desai presents a schizophrenic character - Sita who fails to adjust to her duties as a wife and mother. Her's

is a loveless marriage with Raman. She feels lonely, alienated and temperamentally incompatible. Sita chooses a world of fantasy whereas her husband- Raman is a down-to-earth individual. He is rational and logical. Sita's frenzy about the fifth pregnancy and Raman's lack of understanding affects Sita psychologically and she starts loving loneliness. There is no affinity between her and her busy husband. Hence, Sita wishes to escape in time and space instead of facing the circumstances boldly and pragmatically. Desai's characters often adopt escapist ways to cope with the mundane everyday life or the world outside comfortable living in search of newness. Thus, the novel shows the want of understanding, an absence of concern for each others likes and dislikes which generates the sentiments of unwantedness, neglect and disappointment in Sita and her distorted self.

Fire on the Mountain as all other novels of Anita Desai reveals the position and psyche of women in male-dominated society. This novel about Nanda Kaul - the main protagonist is a study on the effects of old age on the elderly Indian woman or the mental fatigue which prompts her to move away from the world of duty and responsibility. She is the neglected wife of a high official- the Vice-chancellor but is sick with life and role of a dedicated wife. She desperately yearns for a space of her own even at the cost of widowhood. There could not be a greater example of a frustrated life than that of hers despite of living in a high-profile society and herself being the mistress of a dignified personality. She is over-burdened with her marital duties but despite her dedication to all her roles as a mother, a wife, a housewife and a charming hostess she becomes victim of her husband's neglect and is embittered at his extra-marital relationship. She could never consider

his house as *hers*. Under such circumstances Nanda Kaul starts considering marriage as the worst form of slavery and wishes to become a recluse. She simply groans: "Have I not done and had enough? I want no more. I want nothing. Can I be left with nothing?" (Anita 22).

This leads Nanda Kaul's retiring to a secluded countryside home - 'Carignano' in Kasauli where she shuts herself off from all relations, family or acquaintances and withdraws into her own shell. She suffers from a sense of mental fatigue. Both Nanda Kaul and her great granddaughter, Raka are a case of "emotional deprivation." (Scott 369). This distortion of personality is clearly evident in the character of Raka when she sets the whole forest on fire. The fire in this novel of Anita Desai is symbolic of the fire which burns in the heart of Nanda Kaul. The incongruous marital estrangement of Raka - her great grand daughter's parents culminates in the child's emotional and mental estrangement from them.

In Custody reveals the story of the married partners - Deven and Sarla, the two partners locked in the bond of matrimony but having nothing in common, neither love nor understanding. Here also the husband-wife alienation is due to the attitudinal or temperamental incompatibility. Deven shies away from the duties as a husband and as a father as well. Their marital drifting from each other results in Deven's rebellion - throwing dishes, tearing clothes and such violent acts. It explains the helplessness of a housewife and her hopeless, shattered aspirations. Deven is an unimpressive, simple lecturer of Hindi and Sarla is an insipid wife. The aspirations of both are shattered due to the hard and harsh facts of life. Both Deven and Sarla are unable to experience the joy of companionship between

them due to the economically unstable background that gives a different dimension to their search for self-fulfillment and happiness coupled with severe psychological and sociological pressures. Sarla faces the financial helplessness of a housewife waiting ceaselessly for something new and promising to happen in her life. She faces shattered aspirations, dull routine life of labour, scarcity and the continuous absence of hope.

Baumgartner's Bombay the last novel under the scope of this research paper is the first novel of Anita Desai to feature a non-Indian protagonist. The novel recounts the tragic life and violent death of Hugo Baumgartner, a Jew who had emigrated to India in the late 1930s from Nazi Germany. In spite of living in India for nearly five decades, Hugo never feels a sense of belonging to this soil. He gets Indian citizenship but is not accepted as an Indian and perpetually is yearning for his country suffering from a sense of alienation and rootlessness. He develops a permanent fear-psychosis of being a dark-coloured alien in Germany and a fair complexioned 'firanghi' in India. His happiness was linked to a single fact - his mother and uncertainty about her fate caused him acute despair. This intense bonding with his mother an outcome of Hugo's being a witness to the marital disparity and ensuing estrangement between his parents. Both the mother and son are like prisoners with the husband and the father respectively who keeps imposing upon them.

Another significant character of the novel, highlighting the fact of marital estrangement in Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* is of Lotte who projects the agony and mental laceration of a 'kept'. Like Hugo, she reaches Calcutta from Germany to avoid detention in the camp.

Once in Calcutta she starts earning her livelihood by dancing in a hotel. After a lapse of time she marries an Indian businessman - Kanti Lal Sethia in order to ensure emotional and social security and also to avoid camp-detention. Lotte gets everything from Kanti Sethi - love, sex and money but not the identity of a legal wife. After Kanti's death her survival becomes all the more difficult as his sons throw her on the street and deprives her of his property. It is here that Desai suggests the significance of the institution of marriage.

The causes of marital rift might be any but Anita Desai here wishes to perhaps assert that over-deliberation and over-sensitivity ends in a disastrous and fatal climax in the form of psychological disorders, developing intolerance and the final rift in married life, at times distorted dimensions of personality taking recourse to suicidal tendencies as a path of escapism. The entire writings of Anita Desai focuses on personal struggles and problems of contemporary life that her characters must cope with. She insists on the incredible power of family and society and the relationship between family members, particularly the partners in matrimony emphasizing the trials and tribulations of women and their estranged marital relationships. Her novels are engaged in exposing the labyrinths of the human mind.

Works Cited :

George, C.V. "Alienation of Women Characters in Anita Desai's Novels" Mamohan K. Bhatnagar (ed.) *Indian Writings In English* Vol. III. New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 1999. Print.

Pathak, R.S. "The Alienated Self In The Novels Of Anita Desai", R.K. Dhawan (ed.). *The Fiction of Anita Desai*. New Delhi: Bahri Publication, 1989. Print.

Srivastava, Ramesh K. *Perspectives on Anita Desai*. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1984. Print.

Sartre, Jean Paul. "Existentialism is a Humanism." *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. New Delhi: St. Martin's Press, 1975. Print.

Desai, Anita. *Voices in the City*. New Delhi : Orient Paperbacks, 2006. 225.Print.

Scott , H. Lealand . *Child Development* . New York : Rinehart and Winston, 1967. Print.

Ashima Shrawan

Understanding the Meaning of a Text: Indian Theory of *Dhvani* and Western Theory of Deconstruction:

There are many critical issues associated with meaning of the language of literature. These issues include: What is the nature of literary meaning? Is the meaning of a text controlled or generated by the author's intended meaning? Or, the literary meaning a construct of the reader? Or, is the literary meaning autonomous of the author and the reader and constructed purely by the discourse? And there is the still more fundamental problem- is the literary meaning determinable at all? Would it be determinable if it is constructed by the language of the text? Or is this meaning open-ended, constantly deferred or shifted as a result of the very nature of signification? There has been a conspicuous awareness of these issues in both Indian and Western traditions.

The Indian thinkers consider them from three points of view: in terms of the source from where the meaning is drawn-philosophy, worldly life, earlier compositions-and structuring of the meaning, in what mode it is expressed, figurative or literal and how it appeals to the audience. The Western theory considers this in terms of whose meaning it is-the author's, the society's the reader's or God.

The present paper aims at exploring a significant area of intersection between the ,nadavardhana's theory of *dhvani* and the Western theory of Deconstruction i.e. their

views on meaning of the language of literature, with a view to revealing affinities and parallelisms between the two. The basis of the intersection includes the development, the privileging of speech over writing and vice versa, the signifier and signified, the levels and stages of meaning, the role of author and the reader, the role of emotions and the category of texts.

,nanadavardhana (9thC), under the influence of *Vedānta* propounded his theory of *dhvani* as a great philosopher after Bharata, Bhāṣya, Udayana and Vāmana who had given importance to the external appearance of poetry. ,nandavardhana found inner content of literature missing in the aesthetic formulations of his predecessors as they could not comprehend how language acquired meaning. However, the traditional Indian theories of meaning developed by Mīmāṃsākas and the Buddhists agreed that words had two sorts of semantic power: the power of direct denotation (*abhidhā*) and *lakṣaṇā* (secondary meaning). In addition to these two powers, the school of ritualists founded by Kumārila held that there existed a third power which furnished a 'final meaning' to the sentence as a whole. They called this the *tīrtīyārth*. But ,nandavardhana was the first to recognize and emphasise on *dhvani* or meaning or suggestion which furnishes the predominant meaning of a sentence. ,nandavardhana states directly the purpose of his book is "knowledge of the nature of *dhvani*" and the purpose of attaining this purpose is "to delight the hearts of sensitive readers".

As far as deconstruction is concerned, it is a method of philosophy, founded by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida and then followed by his American disciples- Paul

de Man, Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman and Barbara Johnson. Deconstruction has roots in Martin Heidegger's concept of 'destruktion' which is closely related to *abbau* or dismantling. It was in the 1970s that deconstruction emerged as a serious challenge to structuralism, which began in France in the 1950s as an intellectual movement which talks about order and stability of meanings. Challenging the premises of this development, deconstruction focuses on the suspension of meaning based on the decentering of the logos. Deconstruction is not a theory unified by any set of rules or procedures. It is a way of challenging interpretations of texts based upon the notions of stability of the human self and of language and meaning.

Both- the theory of *dhvani* and deconstruction approach meaning from the point of view of privileging speech over writing and vice versa. Derrida questions the metaphysical assumptions of Western Philosophy which since Plato locates authoritative meaning in speech rather than writing. According to these assumptions, writing is considered merely 'a supplement to speech' and is characterized by absence and secondariness. This privilege of speech over writing is logocentrism, expressing desire for centre. But deconstruction denies the concept of centre. Derrida calls the coupling of 'writing' and 'speech' an example of 'violent hierarchy' and says that this hierarchy can be undone and reversed. This reversal is the first stage of deconstruction. He opines that both speech and writing are signifying processes which lack presence. He argues that writing is in fact the precondition of language and must be conceived as prior to speech. Writing, for him, is the 'free play' or element of undecidability within every system of communication. Writing is the endless displacement of meaning which both governs language and places

it for ever beyond the reach of a stable, self-authenticating knowledge. Derrida's questioning of the distinction between speech and writing is paralleled by his interrogation of those between the literal and the figurative meaning. He discovers that 'literal' language is 'figurative' language whose figuration has been forgotten. However, the concept of the 'literal' is not thereby eliminated but only deconstructed. It remains in effect, but 'under erasure'.

For Indian thinkers, language was primarily *vāk* (the spoken word or speaking itself). Indian philosophy has been even more emphatic than Western thought with regard to the priority of the oral over the written. The tradition in both Hindu and Buddhist philosophy has been to correct the written text with the oral. It is the oral word, carefully memorized, guarded by the discipline of the *ṛtīṅkhyas*, and passed down from teacher to student through succeeding generations that has remained authoritative in India. Scribes in India have had a low status and the texts they write are judged to be very unreliable. The written is valued only as a teaching aid for those too dull to remember. In fact, the very act of writing was held to be ritually polluting in a late Vedic text – the *Aitareyabṛāhmya* 5.5.3 states that a pupil should not recite the Veda after eating meat, seeing blood or a dead body, having intercourse or engaging in writing. Clearly the *śāstra* schools of Indian philosophy (with the exception of the Grammarian school) largely share the same logocentric biases towards Being and Speech and against writing as those located by Derrida in Western metaphysics. Nor do the *naiṣṭhika* schools escape Derrida's net. Jainism strongly shares in the soul/matter dialectic and, like Buddhism, agrees that language is merely conventional and cannot touch the real. The theory of *dhvani* proposes that it is

speech which is capable of conveying the intended sense. Ānandavardhana says that the suggested meaning is found in the 'speech' of great poets, different from the literal meaning. Ānandavardhana declares that "the Goddess of Speech, *Sarasvatī*, herself will provide the desired ideas of a good poet...". Here 'the desired idea' is *dhvani*.

Both the traditions work on the view of the plurality of meanings. In this context, Derrida in his essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the discourse of Human Sciences" holds that there is no original or 'transcendental signified'. And this absence of transcendental signified "extends domain and play of signification infinitely". Derrida wishes to question and disturb notions of a fixed and definitive goal or meaning in a text. He says that a text can be read as saying something quite different from what it appears to be saying and it carries a plurality of meanings or contradictory to a single 'stable' meaning. He suggests that the language of any discourse is capable of being read as yet another language. In this way the reader may envisage an endless regression of dialectical interpretations and readings without any stable, essential meaning. Deconstruction is devoted to the task of dismantling a concept of 'structure' that serves to immobilize the play of meaning in a text. In deconstruction the point of vantage is that "there is nothing outside of the text" which suggests that 'there is nothing outside context'. Or, even more: 'there is nothing but context'. 'Context' here can be 'speech, text, language, life, the world, the real, history etc. Meaning is context-bound. The deconstructionists believe that the text's meanings can never be limited. New systems of meaning can always be brought to bear on it. It says that text is found to deconstruct itself rather than to provide a stable identifiable meaning. They view text as subversively

undermining an apparent or surface meaning, and it denies any final explication or statement of meaning. Derrida, questioning the unity of language itself, and putting metaphor under erasure, radically opens up textuality. He says that the text has no stable identity, no stable origin and no stable end. It is rather the field of *freepplay*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions in the closure of a finite ensemble. The practitioners of deconstruction celebrate the text's self-destruction, as a never ending free play of language. Instead of discovering one ultimate meaning of a text, as *dhvani* promises, deconstruction describes the text as always in a state of change furnishing only provisional meanings. All texts are thus open ended constructs, and sign and signification are only arbitrary relationships. Meaning can only point to an indefinite number of other meanings. Geoffrey Hartman's view is that critical reading should aim not to produce consistent meaning but to reveal 'contradictions and equivocations' in order to make the language 'interpretable by making it less readable'. Barbara Johnson, another deconstructionist, views that language is infinitely plural and opens to the free play of signifiers and difference, unconstrained by decidable, totalised and unified meaning. Thus Deconstruction has no fixed endpoint or goal. It is always an on-going process because the constantly shifting nature of language means that no final meaning or interpretation of a text is possible.

,nandavardhana's theory of *dhvani* is a system of meaning in which the signifier is fixed, but its corresponding signifieds are theoretically infinite because the *sahādaya* (reader) is not fully satisfied with the expressed meaning. It is the un-satisfaction of the *sahādaya* that leads him to infinite imagination and thus meaning is acquired. His

theory of *dhvani* is based upon the view what we may call the literary ultimate is essentially incommunicable and can at best be only suggested. It does not remain confined within the narrow limit imposed by the expression and the expressed. It transcends the limits and hints at the implicit of inexplicable charm. In order to deal with the meaning or suggestive potentiality of the language of literature, he sees the language and its meaning in general at two levels— the explicit and the implicit—and concentrates his attention on the implicit meaning which forms the real essence of literature. ,nandavardhana was the first to recognize and put emphasis on meaning or suggestion, considering it to be "काव्यस्यात्माध्वनिरिति" (the soul of literature).

In his theory of *dhvani*, ,nandavardhana seems to anticipate Derrida in postulating the infinite suggested meaning over and above the expressed literal meaning though the admission of any definite literal meaning itself goes against the deconstructive approach. He says that in attempting to understand the world, one can no longer use literal meaning. Derrida maintains that total understanding of a meaning is an illusion. All linguistic communication is characterised by radical uncertainty. Language cannot communicate truth positively and thus they place the referential or conventional meaning under erasure. Derrida argues that the full meaning of an expression is deferred indefinitely and never fully realised. His well-known essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the discourse of human sciences" suggests that literary signs are empty. Meaning is non-originary. It is decentred which means a text cannot be directed onto a literal meaning or textual reference. And thus deconstruction is a discourse. It is an effort to liberate the literary work from theology.

Another important point of focus is the levels of meaning of the language made in both the thinking. ,nandavardhana's theory of *dhvani* has broadly three levels of meaning based on three *¶abda¶akti* (word-powers): *v¹cy¹rtha* or *abhidhey¹rtha* or *abhidh¹* (primary or conventional meaning), *lak-a^{a1}* or *lakcy¹rtha* (metaphorical meaning or indication) and *vya;gy¹rtha* or *vyanjan¹* (suggestion). Abhinavagupta states that it is *v¹cy¹rtha* that conveys *abhidh¹¶akti* and is the *hetu* of *vya;gy¹rtha*. It is the first conveying sense of a word and serves as the gateway to the suggested sense. Abhinavagupta in his *Locana* suggests that

to describe the true nature of *dhvani*, which is none other than the implied meaning, one takes as groundwork the literal meaning, which is undeniable and known to everyone, because the implied meaning will be more clearly noticed when placed beside it. Its being placed here on the same level with the literal meaning is in order to convey the fact that it also is undeniable.

The word always conveys its conventional meaning through the power of *abhidh¹* and *vya;gy¹rtha* does not directly proceed to convey an additional meaning without *v¹cy¹rtha*. It is opined that it is through the medium of *abhidh¹* alone that the *vyanjan¹* is conveyed. ,nandavardhana (9th century) believes that the knowledge of *vyanjan¹* is got at only through the medium of the explicit sense.

“यथा पदार्थद्वारेण काव्यार्थः सम्प्रतीयते ।
वाच्यार्थपूर्विका तद्वत्प्रतिपत्तस्य वस्तुनः ॥”

(Just as the purport of a sentence is grasped through the meaning of individual words, the knowledge of

that sense is got at only through the medium of the explicit sense.)

Thus *abhidh¹* or *abhidhey¹rtha* and *lak-a^{a1}* or *lak-y¹rtha* are ways and *vyanjan¹* or *vya;gy¹rtha* is the end. Here *abhidh¹* and *lak-a^{a1}*, being the ways, have a number of varieties of *dhvani* that reflect the creative nature of suggestion and the subject of poetic art. Let us have a graph of the varieties of *dhvani*. Broadly, they can be divided as *avivak-itav¹cya* or *lak-a^{a1}-born-dhvani* (suggestion through secondary meaning or suggestion with unintended literal import) and *vivak-itav¹cya* or *abhidh¹-born-dhvani* (suggestion through primary meaning or suggestion with intended literal import). *Avivak-itav¹cya* acts at two levels: at the level of *arth¹ntarasa,kramitav¹cya* (partial transformation of meaning) and at the level of *atyantatiraskÅtav¹cya* (complete transformation of meaning). In *abhidh¹-born-dhvani* or *vivak-itav¹cya*, the *v¹cy¹rtha* is desired in its original form. *Vivak-itav¹cya* acts at two levels: *Sa,lak-yakrama-vya;gya* or *kramadyotita* is based on *anudhvaniparampar¹*. It bears two kinds of *dhvani*: *vastu-dhvani* (suggestion based on idea) and *ala,k¹radhvani* (suggestion based on poetic figures). Like *sa,lak-yakrama-vya;gya*, *asa,lak-yakrama-vya;gya* is also of two kinds: *rasadhvani* (suggestion based on aesthetic sentiments) and *bh¹vadhvani* (suggestion based on transient emotions).

The Deconstructionists do not make a systematic and comprehensive attempt to treat the meaning of language of literature at various levels. Deconstruction is more individualistic. However, the stages are being described to show that meaning is not 'univocal'. The terms 'supplement', 'difference', 'trace', 'aporia', 'erasure' and 'tropes' suggest the free play of meanings. 'Supplement' is a term used by Rousseau. But Derrida transforms the term

'supplement'. He (1967) says that "the supplement is an addition that comes to make up for a deficiency... to compensate for a primordial non-self-presence". He uses the term supplement to denote the unstable or undecidable relationship between speech and writing. He views that the supplement is neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither an accident nor an essence. Derrida's deconstruction involves the key distinction of 'différance' and 'difference', which concerns the principle of the continuous and endless postponement or deferral of meaning. He rejects the belief that texts have identifiable centres of meaning. He sees texts in terms of their undecidability or *aporia* which cannot conform to either polarity of a dichotomy (eg. present/absent, cure/poison, and inside/outside). In *aporia*, the text remains beyond the reach of the text's own logic. It betrays itself and compels the reader to enter into an endless process of deconstruction. Derrida considers this endless process of deconstruction as the infinite interplay of signifiers, or "differences". Derrida's *différance* unites the senses of 'to differ' and 'to defer'. 'To differ' is a spatial concept: the sign emerges from a system of differences which are spaced out within the system. 'To defer' is temporal: signifiers enforce an endless postponement of meanings. *Différance* involves the splitting, the differing and deferring of presence and identity. Derrida contends that meaning is always delayed or deferred. It is another name for the open-ended chain of "non-synonymic substitutions". The next term dealt by Derrida to show that meaning is infinite is 'trace'. He says that any appearance of a determinate meaning is only a derivation from the trace, which is indefinite. According to Derrida, it is only the mental trace left behind by the signifiers that

we take to be the meaning. And that trace is made of differences by which we make a word. Only because we distinguish between words, we associate a particular meaning with a particular word. Here trace means only indications, impressions, imprints, footprints of the object i.e. word. The trace for Derrida is the always already absent present understood to be essential to thought and experience. The trace is that which inhabits our language before we use it. Trace as used by Derrida in the original French carries with it notions of track, footprint imprint. The trace then is the absent presence of imprints on our words and their meanings before we speak or write them. The striking point here is the parallel between the suggestive function of language as given by *nandavardhana* and the concept of 'trace' as conceived by Derrida. Regarding the suggestive function of language *nandavardhana* (9th century) holds that "there may be some instance of words being employed without any specific suggestiveness. Even in such cases, these words do possess it. Words fall into an incessant flow and do retain the sediments of their previous usage due to habit". In *Allegories of Reading*, Paul de Man develops a 'rhetorical' type of deconstruction. He is concerned with the theory of 'tropes'. 'Figures of speech' (tropes) allow the writers to say one thing but mean something else: to substitute one sign for another (metaphor), to displace meaning from one sign in a chain to another (metonymy), and so on. Tropes pervade language, exerting a force which destabilizes logic, and thereby denies the possibility of a straightforwardly literal or referential use of language. He grounds his theory in close reading of specific texts, and considers that it is the effects of language and rhetoric that prevent a direct representation of the real. De Man thus believes that

language is figurative and not referential or expressive; there is no original unrhetorical language. This means that 'reference' is always contaminated with figurality. His critical procedure does not involve an actual denial of language's referential function (reference is placed 'under erasure'). Geoffrey Hartman's view is that critical reading should aim not to produce consistent meaning but to reveal 'contradictions and equivocations' in order to make the language 'interpretable by making it less readable'.

Regarding the role of author in constituting meaning of the language of literature, both the theories differ in their opinions. The theory of *dhvani* recognizes authorial intention as the key to interpretation of texts, as is evidenced by .nandavardhana's attempt to find out the ultimate meaning of epics like *R¹m¹yana* and *Mah¹bh¹rata*. .nandavardhana also opines that *dhvani* is characterised as the touch-stone of *vya^ajan¹vy¹p¹ra* based on the literary genius. If there is sufficient genius in a writer, he will succeed in infusing variety and fresh charm by his *vya^ajan¹vy¹p¹ra* into his composition even while handling such subjects as have become hackneyed and trite. What has been said already by an ancient writer may yet be made to look new and interesting provided there is the gift of *pratibh¹* resulting into *vya^ajan¹vy¹p¹ra*. .nandavardhana discovers the working of *pratibh¹* in a writer's discovering objects 'steeped in beauty' or having an underlying higher reality. This literary perception; different from a scientific perception which observes objects as they are, perceives objects with their underlying reality. Abhinavagupta gives another name to the author as "Ananda" (bliss). Bliss hints at the primary goal of the author, of the poet, and of the reader.

In "The Death of the Author," Roland Barthes opines that the author is displaced as absolute authority. He states that once the author is dead, texts become plural, and the interpretation of texts becomes a collaborative process between author and audience. Derrida rejecting this view of Barthes gives importance of what the author means or is trying to say. He is in fact absolutely obsessed with the life of the author. He is fascinated by the enigmatic nature of autobiography, by the question of survival or 'living on'. However, Derrida (1967) stresses in *Of Grammatology*: "an author can always be understood to be saying 'more, less, or something other than what he [or she] would mean". No author can ever fully control the ways in which their text might be read. There are always differences, tensions, paradoxes between what a text says (or what an author wants to say, or thinks s/he is saying) and what a text does. For the mirage of traditional interpretation, which vainly undertakes to determine what an author meant, Derrida proposes the alternative that we deliver ourselves over to free participation in the infinite free-play of signification opened out by the signs of a text. He elevates the author just to a status as one more mark among other marks, placed at the head or the end of a text or set of texts, which are denominated as bodies of work identified according to the proper name of a signature. He coins a term 'iterability' which means repeatable. It must be possible for a mark to be repeated and still be readable, even if the author of the mark is dead. It is always possible that a person will die before his friend gets round to reading his email message, for example, but his message would still be readable. Paul de Man also entails a deconstructive logic in which the moments of greatest authorial insight are characteristically termed as moments of blindness, or

vice versa. Hillis Miller also excludes by his elected premises any control or limitation of signification by reference to the uses of a word or phrase that are current at the time an author writes, or to an author's intention, or to the verbal or generic context in which a word occurs. Deconstruction's denial of an authorial text as the receptacle of all possible interpretations is fought with some difficulties since interpretation is always with reference to a given text, even when its meaning is indefinite. Abolishing the authorial intentions altogether blurs the distinction between one text and another and also the difference between great and trivial works.

Like author, *sahĀdaya* (reader) has been assigned an important place in the theory of *dhvani*. ,nandavardhana subscribes to a theory of 'like-heartedness' between the poet and the responsive reader. ,nandavardhana clearly states that appreciation of the language of literature is essentially the same as creating it. The aesthetic emotion is transferred only when there is an ideal reawakening of it in the reader. The reader's appreciation is always related to poetic meaning. The readers have to imagine a proper context to grasp the intended *vya^agyⁱrtha*. He declares that the central meaning of poetry has nothing to do with the laborious learning, and that it can be grasped only by a *sahĀdaya* gifted with taste. He holds that the meaning which is revealed to the *sahĀdaya* is according to his capacity. Here the *sahĀdaya* plays an active part in the creation of meaning as he identifies himself with the poet. The suggested meaning is explored imaginatively by a *sahĀdaya* who is not fully satisfied with the expressed content of literature alone. It is the un-satisfaction of the *sahĀdaya* that leads him to infinite imagination and thus meaning is acquired. This state comes only after the

liquefaction of *citta* that takes place when *rajas* and *taṃas* getting subdued for the time being, afford scope for the *sattva* to inundate the inner consciousness. As a result there is a realization of a universal rhythm in both the poet and the *sahĀdaya*. The realization of a universal rhythm enables the poet to heighten the common experience of life to the level of aesthetic experience in his composition and the *sahĀdaya* experiences Brahma or *mahⁱrasa* in the form of aesthetic pleasure resulting in sublimity. And in as much as a poetic composition is *mⁱnasvyⁱpⁱra* (business of mind) the *sahĀdaya* is moved by poetic portrayals in a manner and depth as seldom characterizes life's practical experiences. It is this speciality of the poetic culture that absorbs and overwhelms the mind or inner self of *sahĀdaya* for the time being. He might become forgetful, as well, of all the exterior objects or concerns of life. Here, the reader attains the *Brahmatattva* (higher reality) due to his *tarmayibhⁱva* (identification with the characters). This is the state of *sattvodreka* (internal luminosity) in which the mind experience Brahma or *maharasa*.

Deconstruction says that the reader opens the textuality of a text but also opines that a reader can never have complete command or mastery over what s/he writes. The deconstructive reader exposes the grammatological structure of the text; that its "origin" and its "end" are given over to language in general, by locating the moment in the text which harbours the unbalancing of the equation, the sleight of hand at the limit of a text which cannot be dis-missed simply as a contradiction. In the act of reading, meaning is comprehended by the reader, that is, meaning is generated by the play and interplay of language in the very process of reading. The reader constructs a text drawing on the cultural milieu he is raised in. Deconstruc-

tion helps us to get to know the undecidability of the text, and the complex ideologies the text is composed of. The undecidability of the text suggests that it has an array of possible, conflicting meanings, and in the traditional sense of an unchanging meaning, it has none. Undecidability implies that the reader and the text are both caught in a maze; both are inextricably bound to each other within language which is always slippery. A deconstructive reader sets out to show that conflicting forces within the text itself serve to dissipate the seeming definiteness of its structure and meanings into an indefinite array of incompatible and undecidable possibilities. A deconstructive close reader undertakes to show that a text lacks a totalized boundary that makes it an entity, much less an organic unity; also that the text, by a play of internal counterforces, disseminates into an indefinite range of self-conflicting significations. A deconstructive reader looks for meanings in the text that stand in conflict with what is held as the main theme in traditional interpretations. He seeks to find, by this process of retracting, the element in the system studied which is a logical, the thread in the text in question which will unravel it all, or the loose stone which will pull down the whole building. Miller also says that the competent readers exploited the possibilities of language to say something determinate. Reading is never the objective identifying of a sense but the important in of meaning into a text which has no meaning in itself. Whenever and by whomever and in whatever context a printed word is used, therefore, the limits of what it can be said to mean in that use are set only by what the interpreter can find in historical and etymological dictionaries, supplemented by any further information that the interpreter's erudition can provide. Barbara Johnson

in *The Critical Difference* shows that texts set up a network of differences into which the reader is lured with a promise of comprehension. De Man opines that reading is necessarily misreading. And a correct misreading is achieved when the reader succeeds in colluding with text's own processes. He believes that literary texts are self-destructing.

The next comparison to be dealt is the role of emotions in producing meaning. Deconstruction refutes the idea that literature is meant only for aesthetic purposes. Paul de Man's late writings target the theme of 'aesthetic ideology' which is also called into question by Derrida's dialogical re-staging of the issue between Kant and his various counter enlightenment critics.

On the contrary, the theory of *dhvani* is responsible for developing the concept of *rasa* as the central criterion of poetic semantics. According to him all great works are patterned on the basis of a principal *rasa* permeating all the segments of the literary work. ,nandavardhana distinctly says that his object is not merely to establish the doctrine of *dhvani* but also to harmonise it with the theory of *rasa*. The theory of *dhvani* subsumes *rasa* and defines it as one of the types of *dhvani*- *rasadhvani*. *Rasadhvani* is that suggestive power in which *rasa* needs to have a strong sense of *dhvani* and capacity to produce various meanings. Here, *rasa* is the intuitive poetic experience and *dhvani* is the suggestive expression of that experience. *Rasa* is the *prakāṣa* (poetic content) and *dhvani*, the *vimarṣa* (poetic expression). *Prakāṣa* is defined as self-evident truth which can never be explained without *vimarṣa*. That concludes that *rasa* cannot be defined in absence of *dhvani*. And the unity of *prakāṣa* and *vimarṣa* creates *rasadhvani*. The theory

of *dhvani* looks upon the literary piece as an organic whole permeated by the enlivening presence of *rasa*.

To conclude, Ānandavardhana's theory of *dhvani* and the Western theory of deconstruction have affinities and parallelisms at various points. Both of them accept that a certain indirect meaning is the most distinguishing characteristic of the language of literature. They treat a literary work as a self-contained or systematic entity, or as a part of a larger 'textual' structure. They tend to be impersonal and a-historical in their approach. But in spite of these affinities, there is no one to one correspondence between these two theories. The theory of *dhvani* is far more comprehensive and convincing than the assertions of deconstruction. It is a sound aesthetic principle to explain beauty not only in literature whose raw-material is language, but also in other arts like music, painting and sculpture". It looks upon the literary piece as an organic whole, permeated by the enlivening presence of an aesthetic emotion. It helps establish some organic cohesion that great works of art achieve. By taking due cognizance of the reader's reaction to a piece of literature and by basing his theoretical edifice on the firm foundation of poetic genius, Ānandavardhana has been able to give a more plausible account of linguistic creativity and the nature and role of suggestion in literature. Thus, he could think of dealing with meaning from the 'productive' as well as the 'receptive' side: from the point of view of the writer and the reader who must note the context, including the personality of the author and finally on his own sensibility for the interpretation of meaning. He postulates a text with a definite literal meaning. His *dhvani*, being impregnated with the purpose of *ānanda* (bliss) and *nirvṛti* (delight) which is just like the existence of *Brahmatattva*,

confirms that it is not just built around the text, author, reader and context. Rather it is built around compositional practices to explain how the verbal compositions are put together to mean what they variously mean to different readers. It explains how meaning is constructed and achieved. Although Ānandavardhana's theory does not have modern terminology of criticism, its formulations on meaning of the language of literature are seminal. As far as deconstruction is concerned, it mainly focuses on the 'free-play of meanings and puts forth that the centre does not hold, thereby calling itself a discourse. Through deconstruction, we come to the notions of the text that is empty with no meaning of subjective constructions. This emptiness comes out of the different terms which define the infinite meanings: 'trace', 'supplement', *différance*, 'erasure', 'tropes', absence, presence, transcendental signified etc. Deconstruction appears rather superficial when placed beside Ānandavardhana's theory of *dhvani*. It suffers from theoretical limitations. It does not define meaning in order to find it. It only demonstrates the difficulties that define meaning in a univocal way: as what an author intends, what conventions determine, what a reader experiences. Meaning, according to deconstruction appears to be the creation of the man who is bare and naked and does not want to recognize his own and existential consciousness with no faith in evolution. Derrida tries to empty the language and make it "a pure mathematico-logical differential or an a-centered algebra". In a word, despite all the affinities and parallelisms, both the theories of *dhvani* and deconstruction help understanding the meaning of a text.

Works Cited:

Krishnamoorthy, K, ed. *Dhvany¹loka of ,nandavardhana*. Dharwar: Karnatak University, 1974. Print.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Image-Music-Text*. Hill and Wang, 1978. Print.

Belsey, Catherine. *Critical Practice*. London: Methuen, 1981. Print.

Cuddon, J.A. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. New Delhi: Maya Blackwell Doaba House, 1998. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1967. Print.

-. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences". *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. New Delhi: Pearson Education, 2003. Print.

-. "Différance". Web. 10 Feb. 2016. <<http://projectlamar.com/media/Derrida-Differance.pdf>>.

-. "Signature Event Context". *Limited Inc*. United States of America: North Western University Press, 1972. Print.

-. *Positions*. Trans. Alan Bass. USA: University of Chicago Press, 1982. Web.10 Feb.2016

Ingalls, Daniel and Masson, Jeffrey and Patwardhan, M.V, trans. *The Dhvany¹loka of ,nandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavahgupta*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990. Print.

Kapoor, Kapil. *Comparative Literary Theory: An Overview*. New Delhi: DK Printworld, 2014. Print.

Krishnamoorthy, K. *Indian Literary Theories: A Reappraisal* (Foreword by V.K. Gokak). Delhi: Meharchand Lachmandas Publications, 1985. Print.

Norris, Christopher. *Derrida*. London: Fontana, 1987. Print.

Rajendran, C. *A Transcultural Approach to Sanskrit Poetics*. Feroke, 1994. Print.

Royle, Nicholas, ed. *Deconstruction: A User's Guide*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000. Print.

Singh, Gurbhagat. *Western Poetics and Eastern Thought*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1984. Print.

Anita Arora

Art and Artificiality: A Study of Nissim Ezekiel's Three Plays

Skill and urge to translate spontaneously an emotion felt while perceiving with uncommon sensitivity of commonly possessed senses and inspired and guided by imagination into creativity is art. Art, entirely a creative process, has been defined as a vehicle for the expression of emotions or communication of ideas, a means for exploring and appreciating common objects for their own sake, and as mimeses or representation. Art as an imitation of life has deep roots in the philosophy of Aristotle bringing theorists and critics from ancient times to more modern times into an inexhaustible contention. 'All art is feeling' says Leo Tolstoy in his provocative book *What is Art* and identifies it as a use of indirect means to communicate from one person to another. The varied receptive capability of perceiving the ever changing realities of the world determines the intensity that triggers the flight of imagination which imitates life through a medium—words, colours, stones, rhythm, moments, gestures, sounds and lines designating the person as writer, painter, sculptor, singer, dancer, actor, and artist. The unifying drive behind all creative art is imagination and Ragini Ramchandra aptly brings out the basis of all creativity, "It is this shaping spirit of imagination, *apurva vastu nimana*, that unites arts as varied as poetry painting and sculpture in kinship." (Literary Criterion 34)

Art is creativity which comes into existence when the artist is transported to another world leaving behind this material world which obstructs the uninhibited flight

of the imagination. Artists are not from this planet—they are the inhabitants of their fantasized world which is totally under their control. It is this sensitive sensory perception of things around one and the capability and skill to express these emotions passing through the myriad mysterious lanes of imagination which moulds an artist. S.C. Malik in his essay *Autonomy and Wholeness—Thinking About Creativity and Self-expression* truly says, "Each one of us has the innate nature to be creative" and again says, "the true measure of creativity is its effortlessness, albeit the basic mastery of the technique is essential; almost as if creativity is out of "nothingness" (Literary Criterion, 75). An artist becomes master of his art by continuous whetting of his skill and practice conditioned by his inner and outer strength and thus produces everlasting pieces of art which in return reward him with immortality, thus, making the paradox perennial that artist and objects of art perish with the passage of time but both—the name of the artist and characters/objects with their emotions expressed through any medium remain forever in the world as Shakespeare with his plays, Keats with his Odes, Robert Browning with his dramatic monologues, and Leonardo da Vinci with his *Mona Lisa* are still alive and will remain till eternity so will remain every artist and his art. Here lies the greatness of art and artist.

Man is exhibiting his skill as an artist ever since his senses started working and since he found a medium to give an outlet to his deeply felt emotions and Nissim Ezekiel is not an exception. Ezekiel, basically enjoying the reputation of a poet, is applauded for and fascinated by many arts especially painting, drama, advertisement interest for which was created in him by the renowned theatre personality Abraham Alkazi. He has worked winning

credentials as an art critic also for The Times of India and it sharpened his skill to understand it to its depth by delving deep into the heart of things. Nissim Ezekiel, a versatile artist par excellence, is revered and credited by many generations of poets and artists for his selfless guidance in grooming them in a better way. He taught them the right way to sharpen their sensibility for sensory perception capable enough to trigger their emotions which activate imagination to translate them into an art through any medium of their choice. And for a genuine artist well experienced with the art/process of creation it becomes unavoidable to relive again and again those rare moments of creativity in his creative works also. Artificiality and hypocrisy saddeningly rampant in the world of art, jeopardising the very existence of art has moved Nissim in such a way that he ruthlessly removes the beguiling veil from the face of real art. His *The Three Plays* which include *Nalini*, *Marriage Poem* and *The Sleepwalkers* provides testimonial study material to justify these facts.

Nalini portrays the desperation of a young budding artist Nalini to establish herself as a painter and how her hopes were dashed to the ground by the two hypocrite, mean and immoral youth of urban middle class, unaware and unmindful of the aesthetic values and envious dignity of genuine art and artist. She with a plan to hold an exhibition of her paintings meets the two advertising executives- Bharat and Raj who are nothing more than a blot on the name of this prestigious art. Raj arranges the meeting between the two- Nalini and Bharat who after the formal salutation start discussing the things pertaining to exhibition then art then creativity and Nalini finds the act of creativity a very personal experience: '...something happens to me when I'm painting, a sort of release, almost

an outburst,' and again tries to relive the moment, 'I painted for several years and enjoyed learning how to do it. Gradually I began to understand that what I did to colour and form and composition was also being done to myself. Every time I created a painting I created myself. I could not remain what I was. I had to change...' (Nalini,40) R. L. Kapur in his paper *Creativity: a Psychological Analysis* explains the process of creation similarly, 'in art, there is an emotional experience of identification, pity, admiration, awe and wonder, collectively called participatory emotions and the individual transcends the self to become a part of something larger' (Literary Criterion,41).

Creativity is an unusual experience which Nalini experiences and she assumes the role of the author who is in the habit of grooming the upcoming artists especially poets and here he makes Nalini express in words the turmoil of the process of creation felt within by an artist: "... I increased the speed of my brush strokes and the painting began to change before my eyes. It became very different from anything I had in mind for it, for a time I thought, it was ruined. There was nothing but chaos before me. But soon the chaos was clarified; the forms emerged distinct and transparent. I saw in the paintings what my eyes had never seen in life or in art" (41). Nissim makes Nalini experience what Ragini Ramachandra tries to make clear in her essay *Literature And Painting: What Have The Two In Common*, "both must capture what lies behind the visual, the physical, sight must be stressed by insight without which the work would be hollow and ephemeral." (Lit. Cri-36)

After this she realised the joy and its meaning which is beyond words. She also felt terror and throes because she had experienced herself dividing into two persons,

'one person was the woman I am, the other person was... another person, seemed to be mad' and "she saw the world in a different way, not with my eyes, I think, no, definitely not with my eyes but with the eyes of God' and Nalini realized that 'she suffered from some unimaginable upheaval within her. She was alone separated from humanity... I was afraid for her, I also envied her, she trembled, she wept, she laughed, she shook with the tragedy and comedy of life as I could never do. In that condition of madness, she had to create, not merely to paint but to create the future" (Nalini, 42). This reveals the conflict within the mind of an artist and R. Rao connects the creative process with alienation and states, "more pathetic is the plight of artist and "thinking men doomed to a similar fate. The painter Nalini sees herself as being divided, 'into two persons, ... The 'first' described the condition of the 'second' as one of madness". Freud was right, the artist is insane but talent seems to be bestowed on him as compensation not only for insanity but also for the hermitical mistake in which he finds himself.' (Nalini, 85)

This process of creativity finds similar echo in another play by entitled *Marriage Poem* though the play deals with domesticity Ezekiel could not suppress in voicing forth his ideas about creativity- a recurring feature almost all the plays taken for the project. Naresh, the protagonist of the play, though not a practising artist, also passes through the similar emotional upheaval: "... I am alone. It has taken me a long time to learn how to be alone. I've also learnt how to value the condition. The whole world is recreated when one achieves it. All art, poetry, music everything that is true and beautiful is for the single man" (*Marriage Poem*, 74).

As stated earlier every creature is blessed with five senses but these are only human beings who are endowed with the divine blessings of imagination, reasoning and insight as it is enduringly explicated by William Wordsworth also. Man blessed with intuitive power, experiencing the bliss of loneliness, and understanding the value of condition is capable of creation. Man creates and makes a humble effort to be the counterpart of god—the supreme creator. God creates and man recreates and Naresh becomes the mouthpiece of the dramatist in voicing forth his views on the theory of art:

Even nature exists only when a man sees her alone. Only when he is alone does she undress for him. Every tree, every patch of grass, every bunch of flowers is born again within the individual mind. He makes it real. He breathes life into it, like a god. In this sense and this only, human beings are gods. Only as gods we do enjoy freedom. We improvise from day to day and this improvisation is our existence. (*Marriage Poem*, 74)

What is outpoured by Nalini and Naresh is reminder of the exuberant illustrations of great theorists of lore and of recent times who find perception, passion, emotion and imagination playing a vital role in creativity. Sitakant Mahapatra furnishes the same point: 'passions and feelings play a vital role in act of creativity, ... knowledge that comes from passion that fires the imagination, activates, changes our way of looking at reality and strengthens refines the instinct giving an access to the unconscious. This is knowledge which comes like buds opening their eyes silently on a bough, or stars lighting up in darkened sky.' (31)

Creator enjoys liberty and Ezekiel opines that a man is bound by social norms but an artist is free to create

what he wants in the world of his imagination in which creation is supreme and he enjoys liberty. R. L. Kapur explains it further: "the studies indicate that the creative person has an intellectual freedom which is not bound, controlled or channelled, but is rather devoted to the search of the 'unknown' and 'confusing'. Cognitive characteristics are, therefore, complexity, flexibility, and perceptual openness. Personality attributes include self confidence, aggression, independence, curiosity, persistence and high energy level. Creative people have better access to unconscious experiences. They have superior ego strength a strong sense of identity, and a high regard for the values of both truth and beauty.' (Lit. Cri., 43-44)

When perception and insight collide- chaos results as is named by Nalini and out of this chaos art germinates. What is chaos for Nalini is confusion for Naresh as he utters; "Confusion is the material. Poetry is the product," (74) and Nalini states '... the way god created himself and the world out of nothing' (42).

After an attempt to know about art and creative process Nissim dejectedly brings out the artificiality rampant in the world of art. As it has already been noticed that Ezekiel who had passion and interest for various arts got chance to work for many organisations and it gave him an opportunity to encounter the grim realities of their related worlds rendering them weak and ridiculous. *Three Plays* brings to light this distressing artificiality which diminishes the shine of sublimity of art. Indian society suffered subordination under various foreign forces but its culture and values survived. But it is really disheartening to notice that after independence decadence in society is eating into the vitals of the society infecting every field of Indian culture including the sublime sphere of art. Twentieth

century is a witness to the fact that in the name of modernity various deadening forces are at work for the deteriorating plight of art which is struggling hard to keep its sanctity and dignity intact. Glamour attached with this world and easy access to means have lured people irrespective of their class, caste, and gender whether interested in art or not. The previous mythical image of an artist - a middle aged man, suffering acute penury, working hard for his survival and desperate to save the dignity of his art was in never ending search for the genuine supporter, lover and buyer of his art. Now art is a glittering world alluring people to present themselves as artists whether they are genuinely blessed by Muse or are themselves self-declared Muse. Nissim painfully asserts that now art is not a sacred thing but has become a profession begetting affluence, not an outlet for the unconscious but a conscious effort, not spontaneous overflow of emotions but a pounded performance to achieve pretended perfection. Nissim ruthlessly unearths the inner shabbiness, hollowness, pretensions and muddy thinking of Bharat and Raj-the two advertising executives who are in the profession not because of their interest in the related art but to enjoy the proximity of the artists especially women artists.

Acting as a genuine professional Bharat makes an attempt to impress the audience by asking Raj about the painting of Nalini if they were good and worth exhibiting, but the answer of Raj- a man from the Art world, gives a shock to the audience by his irresponsible answer:

RAJ: Does that matter? They are paintings, canvases with colour on them, plenty of colours in various forms. They don't represent anything, I guess. They are just the paintings. They express Nalini's feelings.

May be they have what Christopher Fry calls "significant form".

BHARAT: Roger Fry, not Christopher Fry.

RAJ: Well, some Fry or other (Nalini, 11).

It makes no difference for Raj but it reveals his superfluous knowledge and the audience is left pondering over the grim situation in which art has to survive. Bharat surpasses Raj as he not only tries to impress Nalini presenting himself as a pseudo but also tries to seduce her:

BHARAT: You're influenced by Picasso aren't you?

Nalini: Picasso? You see the influence of Picasso in these pictures?

BHARAT: If it isn't Picasso it's Matisse or Manet. It doesn't matter. (32)

Bharat with his basically base instincts betrays the dark side of this world. His sensuality becomes conspicuous when he tries to hypnotise Nalini with the charm of his connotative words: "The time to act is always now. We must learn not to postpone living. You are young and beautiful. To paint well, to be an artist, you must flick aside your inhibitions (he flicks off the palav across her shoulder) (28) and tries to win her over completely: '...You are beautiful, you are utterly beautiful. Your young body is more beautiful than the greatest art in the world' and in this regard Chetan Karnani comments that 'Ezekiel finds that life is superior to art.'

Promotion for the art has become a necessitated urgency and a vogue of the day establishing this world as an industry comprising of various employers and events

for the progress of the industry. Nissim is well acquainted with these promotional events and as he has worked with an advertising agency and with an art gallery also realistically reproduces their inherent exploitation and artificiality in his poetic and dramatic world. The following testimonial words of Bharat bear a resemblance to the page three news items of newspapers and they abound in the news of parties thrown to the celebrities and socialites by the artists to promote their art—dramatics, paintings, films, releasing of a book etc and usually these promotional events reveal the artificiality permeated in every talk and every relation:

BHARAT: You'll have to do exactly what the other do. You'll invite a big shot to open the exhibition. He'll make a speech praising your paintings. You'll arrange to have him garlanded. You'll socialise with the journalists who attend. What's there the others do that you won't do? (Nalini, 31)

Conscious and experienced as Nissim is of the common practices of these promotional events expresses the same feelings once again in his poem '*Advice to a Painter*':

Buy lots of paints, I'll send you some from here /
Plan a trip abroad, all the artists do.

Plan publicity, all the artists do. / A woman has her hopes and dreams.

Announce yours to Eve's weekly and feel fulfilled.
(205)

But Nalini is a true artist and not vulnerable to play 'cheap' for the promotion of her art and retorts, "I am trying to see my way forward in this, what to do and how to do it, without playing false to myself and others." (29)

These two executives represent the youth who are in this profession not because of their interest but because it is a tag of modernity and a status symbol and it gives them a chance to know celebrities and to appear in electronic and print media. During his discussion with Nalini he admits shamelessly: 'I'm sincere enough to tell you now that I don't understand painting, least of all modern painting' and that he chose this field as 'there is prestige in art, intellectual respectability and all that.' Irony makes the picture all the more grim when he speaks to real Nalini, 'I can't understand art but I can understand artists. I could understand you if you gave me a chance' and this frivolous and licentious talk devalues diminishes the dignity of both real art and real artist and indignantly violates the sanctity of the statement of C. D. Narasimhaiah, '...the arts are said to be the storehouse of values by which we live.'

Nalini visits Bharat as suggested by Raj to discuss in detail the planning regarding the holding of exhibition. Nissim, a master of dramatic art, presents two Nalinis in the play -*Nalini* as fancied by Bharat and the real Nalini. The interaction between Bharat and Nalini of his fantasy openly brings out the openness of the people who inhabit the world of art and who shamelessly disrobe the ethics assumed to be the real worth and value of art. Ezekiel, a skilled and alert artist, knows that loose conduct of the real artist may generate a feeling of aversion in the reader/ audience who would not accept any immorality or artificiality on his part so he uses dream sequence to uncover the faces of these masqueraders. Nissim deserves the real accolades for this as he does not want to hurt the feelings of genuine art lovers.

The Sleepwalkers unearthes the vanity of Indian writers, their childish and thoughtless fascination for

mercenary Americans, their double standard, loss of moral and cultural values and present the real picture of the mask wearing and slumbering intellectuals of the world, name and fame being their sole motto. Mr. Morris, an American publisher and editor, is in India to promote his magazine 'Blank' and Mr. West arranges his meeting with a number of people so called intellectuals who include Prof. Shah- a poet who writes in Gujrati but at present writes criticism, Mr. Raman - a journalist and writer in English as he studied journalism in NewYork, Mr. Morris- an editor, Mr. Varma- a short story writer writing in Hindi, Miss Ganguly- a Bengali playwright. This group contributes nothing respectable and valuable to their respective fields except self fulfilment and in doing so expose the hollowness of their intellectuality and servility to everything that is American.

Absence of reciprocity between the doer and the deed makes artist and his art suffer the loss of appreciation and applause which are their rights and priceless rewards. These artists are not the aborigins of their world but inhabit it under diverse existential compulsions or under the illusion that art is the easiest way to get name and fame, power and pelf. These pseudo artists belong to the clan of of the dramatis personae of Nalini who are in the world of art not because of their innate love for art or their interest but because it earns for them a living apart from a respectable status in society. While introducing himself to Mr. Morris, Mr. Varma switches in the very second sentence over to boasting of his being a writer who ironically evaluates his own calibre not on the basis of quality but of quantity and he speaks: 'one hundred and eighty seven short stories in Hindi. Also four hundred and seventeen poems. In Hindi I am one of the well- known writers.' (85)

As it is well-known that Nissim who himself is an accomplished and adept writer is intolerant of such bragging writers. Apart from being a poet who is a severe critic also and he criticises not for the sake of criticism but with an objective to shape the things rightly. He himself writes in his article, *The Creative Writer as Critic*: 'They never hesitate to mention their reputation or their contribution as if it is perfectly in order for them to do so. Many a writer has introduced himself to me personally or in a letter, in innocently self-flattering terms. "I am a well-known (or even the well known) Marathi (or Hindi) writer," adding "and many critics say I am one of the most eminent of my gentlemen." (Anklesaria- 206)

Mr. Shaw, like Nalini, is desperate to get his stories published, and pleadingly he requests Mr. Morris, a foreign publisher, to do him a favour by giving place to his poems in his magazine and speaks highly of him of his having influence which matters in India also. He is so enchanted by foreign element that his reasoning is still and unable to grasp the superfluity of the matter when Mr. Morris explains the nature of his magazine 'Blank' a book without thought bringing irony to the fore of the stark realities of this world. What would be more agonising related to art when the innate objective and attribute of art is assassinated by the phoney and ingenuine artists. The literary magazine 'Blank' denigrates 'thought' and 'laughter' on the logic that thinking in particular and laughing at others create conflicts. Art is characterised with the capability of stirring the latent emotions to get awakened and to be able to feel, to experience, to live the inner truth of things. It endows people with the inner insight to be innovative and constructing and to be of something valuable for culture and traditions which work for the betterment of society.

But 'Blank' betrays the truth that genuine art exists but rarely. True art demands responsive sensibilities from the onlooker or reader. But Mr. Morris's main purpose is only the wider circulation of his magazine and to achieve intended monetary results. To lure wider readership the magazine is studded with pictures which catch only eyes and relegate thinking and for neutralising thought he provides remedy also, "In the modern world we have marvellous technological means for neutralising thought. My magazine is merely a humble effort to further that cause' (*The Sleepwalkers*, 92). It is sheer artificiality marring the true essence of art. Mr. Vama is almost falling prostrate before Mr. Morris and his boastful self appraisal of his poems as being without thought just deprives his art of its real worth and virtues and presents a grim picture of the scenerio: 'My stories are perfectly suitable for your magazine, Mr. Morris. My critics say that they are totally without thought' (90), and pleads for his obligation, '...a world from you will make all the difference. Your great influence is there. Influence is counting in India also, Mr. Morris' (88).

Nissim in his own article criticises writers: "I take up the theme of creative writer as self-critic. It is one that obsesses me, because in my Indian experience it is so rarely satisfying. Most of the Indian writers I had met, even when they are critical of other writers, are curiously blind to the limitations of their own work. Many of them are given to bragging about it' (Anklesaria 206). Mr. Morris asks Miss Ganguly about the thematic and qualitative achievement of her plays. In plain words she replies that she writes plays for the village folk who do not like them and clarifies her position, "It is not my fault. I'm commissioned to write plays by the government of India. The themes are supplied

by the government.' (93). These words uttered by Ms. Ganguly present a precarious plight of Art which is regarded to be spontaneous expression but here it is to be generated on demand as if it is a mechanic process. She is asked to produce art with a purpose to make villagers aware of Family Planning and thereby controlling the political issues. The mechanics of this type of art may be prone to the destruction of the aesthetic value of art.

Braggarts now play petty politics in the world of art as it is noted that artists are not confident of the merits of their art and are afraid of their creation not being capable of passing the acid test and being characterised with the innate virtue of art that is universal appeal. Apprehensive of their success they try hard to get recommendations from foreigners irrespective of his field of interest and expertise. These not so confident artists are under the impression that recommendations from a foreign personality are a guarantee of the success of their art. Nalini gets excited and stimulated to hold an exhibition of her paintings when a foreigner who himself is neither an adept artist nor a connoisseur praises her art. Giving his own opinions Raj Rao writes: 'Whites are generally regarded as superior to blacks, browns and yellows. So in Nalini the fact that white (an American has told Nalini that he liked her paintings is enough for her (and Raj and Bharat) to believe that they are worth an exhibition' and Rao is eager to know the answer, 'what credentials of this American are is a question that is never asked?'

Promotion of art in today's world is not a routine event but a big and grand show with all superfluities and the bigger the party with big celebrities the bigger promotion (is expected). Nissim who was in the advertising

also was well acquainted with the showy show biz and as he is a conscious and sensitive artist his experiences are inevitable to appear in his creative world and they are genuinely documented in his plays. It should not be assumed that Nissim is all criticism for the world of art or presenting the things objectively. It cannot be so because Nissim is the name of a person who is a skilled artist and much experienced in the process of creation artist and who does not mind devoting his time to grooming the writers and for this he is credited by the generations of poets and artists.

Works Cited:

Ezekiel, Nissim. *Three Plays*. Calcutta: A Writers Workshop Bluebird Book, 1969. Print.

Ezekiel, Nissim. *Collected poems*. "Introduction". John Thieme. Preface, Leela Gandhi. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2nd Ed., 2005. Print.

Anklesaria, Havovi. Ed. *Nissim Ezekiel Remembered*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2008. Print.

Mahapatra, Sitakant. *Poetry and Passion: The Search for the Other Voice*. Samvatsar Lecture. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1995. Print.

Narasimhahiah, C. D. Ed. *The Literary Criterion* (Bengalore) Vol. xxviii No. 4 (1993). Print.

Rao, Raj. *Nissim Ezekiel: The Authorised Biography*. New Delhi: Viking, 2000. Print.

Kiran Sharma

Dynamics of Discord in the Poetry of Kamala Das

Kamala Das, as a writer, is gifted with extraordinary ability and skill to discuss the sensitive and private matter of sex with special reference to man-woman relationship. For unmasking the reality of this relationship, she has been considered as a poet of sexual acrobatics. She has been criticized for advocating the free play of sex in life. But a careful attention given to her poems helps understand the location of Kamala Das as a poet and woman. It helps us understand that she, like any sensitive person, feels and heaves, acts and reacts, desiring for human love and human intimacy which complete the cycle of happiness and failing which there is a fall within and without. The gap between what is and what ought to be in love and sex relationship or in husband and wife relationship or in male and female relationship generates a kind of discord in human life. The present paper is a modest attempt to hatch a graph of this discord as expressed in the poetry of Kamala Das. Keeping the limited compass of the scope of the paper, the attempt focuses on the following poems "An Introduction", "The Old Playhouse", "Convicts", "The Prisoner", "Maggots" "With its Quiet Tongue", ("Death Brings No Loss", "In Love" "The Looking Glass") and "Sunshine Cat" in which she explains the sinister design of relationship between male and female and "Radha" in which she explains the kind of love required between them.

Kamala Das's poems are expressions of those who have known pain, inadequacy, despair, dissatisfaction, unfulfilled

desires, who are the victims of "the sad life of ... unending lust" (Paul 14). K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar sees her poetry as an expression of "love crucified in sex and sex defiles itself again and again" (Iyengar 44) Her poems are based on the stories of all those who want sacredness in human love relationship. She herself accepts: "I needed security, I needed permanence, and I needed two strong arms thrown around my shoulders and a soft voice in my ears" (Das 199).. To achieve this, she experiments herself with sexual adventures but in vain as they give her neither tranquility nor peace of mind. His autobiography, *My Story* has several illustrations of the failure of love both within and without the orbit of marriage. She says, "I knew then that of love was what I had looked for in marriage, I would have to look for it outside its legal orbit. I wanted to be given an identity that was lovable" (Das 99).

Most of her poems move through this borderline between the fulfillment and unfulfillment of love. What she demands in her poetry is love in life which is missing. Her quest for love and meaningful existence ends in disaster, growing within her the sense of unfulfillment and alienation. She says:

I met a man, loved him call
Him not by any name, he is every man
Who wants a woman, just as I am every woman
who seeks love,
In him ... the hungry haste
Of rivers, in me ... the oceans
Tireless waiting.

"An Introduction"

Kamala Das wants probably to enter into the relationship with man without any avert feeling of guilt

simply because her husband has done nothing to sustain either her loyalty or her respect. She holds that the gradual deterioration of the marriage also induces a suicidal frenzy in woman, the influence of which drives her to write: "Wipe out the paints, un mould the clay, / Let nothing remain of that yesterday...." She again says that

....love is Narcissus at the water's edge, aunted
By its own lovely face, and yet it must seek at last
An end, a pure, total freedom, it must will the
mirrors

To shatter and the kind night to erase the water.

("The Old Playhouse")

Marriage comes as a disappointment to her because there seems to be only crudeness and violence. This failure to get love within the framework of marriage leads her to seek it outside wedlock. It is important to note that after trials and tribulations, she also realizes that love is missing even outside wedlock. She goes from one lover to another in search of ideal love, but she finds that everyone wants her body, nothing else. She tells us rather cynically what her experience of love turned out to be. She is disillusioned by her partner whose inner self is in his own small world that her feminine self attempts to celebrate love outside marriage. Her experience in love and marriage became traumatic which only intensifies the identity crisis in her feminine self. The "Sunshine Cat" invokes a vision of this self:

... her husband shut her
In, every morning: locked her in a room of books
With a streak of sunshine lying near the door, like
A yellow cat, to keep her company, but soon
Winter came and one day while locking her in, he

Noticed the cat of sunshine was only a
Lone, a hair-thin line, and in the evening when
He returned to take her out, she was a cold and
Half dead woman, now of no use at all to me.

("Sunshine Cat")

The 'cat', her feminine self, realises that she is nothing but an object of mistrust and humiliation at the hands of her own man. This deep-rooted anguish of her self surfaces in the poem, "With its Quiet Tongue", in she holds: "My heart the wretched being is today cold, / Like those pale green mirrors one sees in corridors..." She continues the same expression in another poem:

Each night when darkness turns
Me blind, I think of death
Understanding it to
Be like night fall, just a
Temporary phase, which
Brings no loss, for what was
Here before sun-down will
Be here tomorrow when
Light shall reveal it"

("Death Brings No Loss")

Kamala Das finds the remedy of love outside wedlock even worse than the disease. All men behave in the same way. "They said each of them, I do not love, I cannot love, it is not in my nature to love, but I can be kind to you..." They only toy with her body, take her only for their amusement but does not fulfill the thirst of her inner being. In her poem "Convicts" she says:

That was the only kind of love,
This hacking at each other's parts,

Like convicts hacking breaking clods,
At noon.

("Convicts")

A woman does not need kindness but love. Reliance on body cannot carry a woman far enough and it is just like a trap which prevents her from experiencing true love. She gives expression to these feeling in the following lines:

As the convict studies
His prison's geography
I study the trappings
Of your body, dear love
For I must some day find
An escape from its snare.

("The Prisoner")

Kamala Das discovers that the search for true love in this world is a futile exercise. So she turns to the mythical world of Krishna and Vrindavan to seek lasting love and fulfillment. She imagines herself as Radha and finds comfort in the arms of imaginary Krishna. Contrary to her husband's lustful love which cribs and confines her, Krishna promises total freedom. The sweet image of Krishna becomes inseparable. She remembers him on her bridal night and when she is pregnant and also while playing with her son. During one of the bunts of her illness, she has a mystical experience. While the fear of death grips her heart, "she hears a low whistling../ that sounded like the playing of a flute... (Ram 01).

In marriage she searches for *tadatma*, a kind of dialogue of two human hearts, a kind of total merger of man and woman, a kind of total merger of husband and wife but in vain. He is upset to see that "each time [man's] lust was quietened/and he turned his back on me..."

Kamala Das finds solace in Krishna's embrace as expressed in her poem "Radha":

Everything in me
Is melting, even the hardness at core
O Krishna, I am melting, melting, melting
Nothing remains but
You... .

("Radha")

Thus Krishna has a deep effect on poet's life. She considers Krishna as her "mate" who comes to her in "myriad forms" and to whom "In many shapes shall I surrender...I shall be fondled by him" (Das 208).

Here one should not conclude that Kamala Das's sex implies a "deep and intense relationship" based on devotion; still there is thirst for human concern in love and sex. As soon as Kamala Das realises this, she comes back from the romantic flight of the mythical world and finds herself again at a place where there is no love but watch, a sinister watch for woman to play mutely in the embrace of man.

At the sunset, on the river banks, Krishna
Loved her for the last time and left....
That night in her husband's arms,
Radha left
So dead that he asked, what is wrong
Do you mind my kisses love? And she said,
No, not at all, but thought, what is
It to the corpse if the maggots nip?

("Maggots")

Kamala Das versifies this feeling of discord again in the following lines:

These men who call me
 Beautiful not seeing
 Me with eyes but hands
 And, even...even...love.
 Of what does the burning mouth
 Of sun, burning in today's
 Sky, remind me.. oh, yes, his
 Mouth and his limbs like pale and
 Carnivorous plants reaching
 Out for me, and the sad lie
 Of my unending lust.

(“In Love”)

His poem “Looking Glass” brings to the fore her realization of the uselessness of her love-pranks. Here she gives “a clinical analysis of the different stages of falling in love, the Machiavellian strategies to hold that love and the inevitable decline and fall of heart’s empire. The poem does not merely celebrate the passions of love, it simultaneously views the climax and anti-climax through a bifocal vision” (Sharma 23-24). Presenting the true realistic image of the lustful relationship between man and woman, the poet says that it is easy for a woman to get a man for physical gratification: “Getting a man to love you is easy / Only be honest about your wants as / Woman.” But it is irony that there she has to satisfy the male ego by admiring his masculinity and accepting her own feminine weakness:

Notice the perfection
 Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
 Shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
 Dropping towels and the jerky way he urinates.

(“The Looking Glass”)

The same sense of discord pervades the poem “Substitute”, when “[she] was thinking, lying beside him/ That [she] loved and much loved”, the reaction of her lover shocks her feminine self: “It is physical thing, he said suddenly / End it, I cried, end it, and let us be free.” Such an experience of being a woman compels her to ask stunning questions as in “Conflagration,” “Woman, is this happiness, this lying buries / Beneath a man? It’s time again to come alive, / The world extends a lot beyond his six-foot frame”. In her poem, “The Invitation” she builds up a kind of discord in a woman’s feminine self. She says that she is subjected to be between the two modes of death, the one cool and the other warm, with burning head or between throbbing suns,

Warm hollows where human sounds
 Never echoed, seas that whip the craggy
 Shores and mountains where darkness
 grows like ferns,
 To hide, to hide and save what remains of
 Pride.

Keeping the above account into view, it can be said that the poetry of Kamala Das is an illustration of the dynamics of discord within and without. She makes no effort to distort the facts of either the personality or our culture rather expresses it honestly. She categorically holds that a woman is caught in the flux of desire, frustration and insecurity on the one hand and social fear, hypocrisy and injustice on the other. Her poems help understand that a woman like any sensitive person feels and heaves, acts and reacts, desiring for human love, human concern, human dialogue which complete the cycle of happiness and failing which there is a fall within and without. She honestly versifies the gap between what is and what ought to be in

love and sex relationship or in husband and wife relationship or in male and female relationship which generates a kind of discord in human life.

Works Cited

Das, Kamala *My Story*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1976. Print.

Iyengar, K.R.S. *Indian Writing In English*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1987. Print.

Paul, Rajinder. Ed. *Summer in Calcutta* (New Delhi: 1965. Print.

Ram, Atma. "An Interview with Kamala Das", *The Book Makers* No.6 (June, 1978. Print.

Sharma, M.L. Patiala Directorate of Correspondence Courses, 23-24.

Anjo Rani

Magic Realism in the Short Stories of Manoj Das

Magic realism or magical realism is an artistic genre in which magical elements or illogical scenarios appear in an otherwise realistic or even normal setting. Magical Realism has gained currency as an artistic genre. The chief practitioners of this genre are Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Ben Okri, Alejo Carpentier, Tony Morrison and Salman Rushdie who have created milestones in world literature by the application of the devices of magical realism in their fictional works. Magical realism, though a product of western literature, is understood as a universal theory which interprets truth with a new vision. The adaptability of western theories is likely to generate protest and spiritual challenge since it involves the presentation of the regional subjects in a contemporary setting. It has been widely used in literature, art and film. Today, the term is used in broadly descriptive contexts rather than critically rigorous ones. The writer or the artist who uses magic realism does not create a new world but suggests the magical in the real world.

As far as Manoj Das is concerned, his short stories are impregnated with the devices of magic realism, with the help of which he exposes shades of Indian life. He presents the shades of Indian life without any distortions by imparting a universal appeal to them. P.Raja writes: "Manoj Das' short stories are internationally acclaimed, published in noted magazines and anthologies in the West and praised by distinguished writers like Graham Greene,

H.R.F. Keating and A. Russell" (Raja 1). Manoj Das's corpus of writings include more than twenty collections of short stories both in Oriya and English, (*Song for Sunday and Other Stories* (1967), *Short Stories* (1969), *The Crocodile's Lady* (1975) and *Fables and Fantasies for Adults* (1977) of his early period and *The Submerged Valley and Other Stories* (1986), *Bulldozers and Fables and Fantasies for Adults* (1990), *The Miracle and Other Stories* (1993) and *Farewell to a Ghost* (1994) of his later period) all present a tapestry of various aspects of Indian life and society, including the change of human condition due to urbanization and industrialization, by using magic realism in one way or the other. Das uses character, setting, atmosphere and narrative technique to transform the common and the everyday reality into the awesome and the unreal with a view to reaching beyond the confines of realism while maintaining a strong social relevance. His strong faith in the miraculous and supernatural happenings prompts him to convey to his readers through strange characters and situations, the fantastic features of reality. He introduces elements of the mythological and the fantastical into the contemporary settings. The present paper is a modest attempt to gauge how his short stories embody a vision of complex reality of our everyday, physical reality and the unfamiliar dimensions of a hyper reality existing beyond the physical reality. Keeping the limited compass of the study, the paper focuses on the representative short stories which include "The Submerged Valley", "The Man Who Lifted the Mountain", "The Night the Tiger Came", "The Crocodile's Lady" "Farewell to a Ghost" and "The Tree".

Manoj Das's the title story "The Submerged Valley" is a representative story in the present context. In this

story, Das exploits the elements of folk lore, and superstition in order to project his own childhood memories. The story deals with three major dimensions as recollected by the narrator. These dimensions are the peaceful village life with a communion with nature in which the narrator himself is a participant; the ominous presence of the lame crow and the Harijan boy indicating the superstition of the people; and the progress of life symbolized by the role assigned to Abolkara by the narrator. The story starts with a narration of the writer's boyhood when he was a small boy, studying in class three, and when he became conscious of his village as his mother and realized that the trees near the school had lived and sympathized with the students. While narrating the different features of his village, the writer speaks about so many things, the chief among them being, the lame crow, the Harijan boy and Abolkara. The writer calls: "Abolkara, literally, the disobedient, the funny hero of and series of folk tales popular in our region" Abolkara is a traditional character but with a difference. In traditional stoics Abolkara always follows his master at the time of tour and travel to different parts of the country. In such cases Abolkara is subservient who is to carry not all the orders of his master. But Das's Abolkara stands as a lover of nature and nativity. He is a patriot and son of the soil. Once he disappeared for five years. On his reappearance it was believed that he was lived beneath the water for five years .

"The Man Who Lifted the Mountain" can be taken as a case in point to analysis the idea of magic realism. Once the prince a king falls ill and does not recover despite the attempts of the best doctor of the Kingdom. The king declares that if anyone helps recover the princess one shall be the second powerful man next to the king. In the

dream the soul of the mountain appears and tells the king that one who can lift the mountain, can treat her daughter successfully. Then the mountain asks a Thieffou, living there to take the earth lying beneath it and besmear the same in the body of the princess so that she shall recover. The mountain also assures him to be as light as jasmine for an hour so that he can collect the earth. Being overjoyed, Thieffou goes to the king and convinces him of the princess recovery. A day is appointed. Many people including the king and his officers gather to see the mountain to be lifted by the thief. The people get stupefied and stunned to see the miraculous lift. But the earth lying beneath Luvurva could not be collected because of Thieffou's ambition and attitude of revenge. Sometimes he thought to throw the mountain upon the king and became the king himself. Sometimes he thought to kill the policemen by throwing the mountain upon them and avenge the torture they had inflicted upon him for his crime. Thus, when he was negotiating with his varied selfish thoughts the limited time span offered by the mountain expired and it returned to its normal position. But Luvurva could not retain its original shape. It got a little bend because the thief had been pressed under its heavy weight. The spirit of the mountain disappeared. The writer's dream vanished. He relapsed into consciousness and understood the reason why there was a bend in the mountain. He understands the truth of his dream vision. When human reason fails to explore the truth it is the dream, the irrational, may reveal the truth. The mystery behind the bending mountain is revealed in the dream.

The story is a satire on human greed and covetousness, Thief is symbol of greed, avarice, pride and so on. He is comparable to Subbiah, the protagonist of R.K. Narayan's

"Half-a-Rupee Worth". Subbiah takes recourse to hoarding profiteering, black-marketing, blackmailing and bribery. He brought about his own annihilation for half-a-rupee Thieffou on the other hand gets the same consequence for his own greed. He is a middle aged hunch-back who lives on stealing. He lives in a hut on the other side of the mountain. He hides his stole property under the bushes of the mountain. The mountain advises Thieffou to give up theft. Thieffou's agreement with the mountain not to steal is neutralized when he falls a prey to greed and avarice forgetting the words of the mountain. His desire to become the king or the Deputy superintendent of police and amass wealth brought his own death.

"The Night the Tiger Came" is a social comedy in which a dying or dead tiger floating down the river becomes the case of a critical study of the minds of so many self-important officers each seeing the vision of his dream tiger. The story presents a river, a small industrial town near it and a colony where officers and workers live together. In a rainy season a dead tiger is found floating on the water of the swollen river. A peon informs the Chief Engineer and other officers rush to the river bank. Seeing the tiger floating, the Chief orders the chief security officer to fetch his gun. The chief fires two shots aiming at the tiger's head but tiger is nowhere seen. The officers are not sure if the tiger is dead. The tiger appears in their dream at night. The tiger is approaching towards his bungalow. He gets scared, so shrieks, but in reality, it is the wife of the chief in a night gown having strided in it.

Mrs. Chief rings to the Deputy Chief, Mr. Samapat and tells him that a tiger is heading towards his compound gate. The Deputy Chief informs the Chief Security Officer,

Mr. Bonbon that a tiger has entered his compound. Mr. Bonbon tells the labour leader Mr. Shawoo over telephone that the tiger has entered the latter's compound. The labour leader announces in a loudspeaker informing the workers not to come out on the wake of a wandering tiger moving in the compound. In the morning the peon informs the chief that the tiger which was floating on the river had been dead. But the tiger which came in the night was different being without any wounds. Here by using magic realism, the writer criticizes the vainglorious and self-important officers and their way of functioning. The vanity parade of the bureaucrats and the fuss over nothing as realized at the end, are fine examples of genial humour. Here Das's originality as a short writer lies in the presentation of an Indian scene with all its naturalness in the typical Indian way.

In Das's short stories there is a conspicuous feature of mystic rural environment which eludes the sense of time and space. In "The Crocodile's Lady", Das manages to transport us, along with Dr. Batson, "the real Sahib" (Das 18), to a land far away as though in a fairy tale – a land where "miles and miles of marshland and sand tracks" (Das 17) eludes the sense of time and space. The writer narrates: "This was before our villages suffered the intrusion of huge red triangles, glorifying birth control, politicians preaching patriotism, and billboards on virtues of small savings and cigarettes, not to speak of loudspeakers blaring from community centres" (Das 17).

The appearance of the real Sahib has inspired the awe of the rustics who cannot stop gaping wide-eyed at him. But the awe-inspiring "Sahib" is himself captured into the mysterious environment created by the villagers and he cannot resist himself from falling a prey to their fantasies

by asking, "do all these people believe in ghosts?" (Das 18). And definitely, the answer leaves the Sahib spell-bound, who can only utter the word "Fantastic". Similarly, the story narrated by the old woman transports us into a mystical world where all reality is temporarily suspended. Like any good folk lore it captures our imagination, a world which can be fathomed by heart and rationality. The writer states: "Years later, the professor wrote to me from his city of skyscrapers: 'Often I pass into a reverie remembering the days and nights I spent in your village. Surely, I was under the spell of a mantra (who uttered it?) for a brief time. Fantastic!'" (Das 25).

Das shows this mysterious rural environment both bewitching and fatal. It bewitches our hearts, but can prove to be fatal, to all those who disregard it. In the short story "The Owl" the landlord's only son who disregards the mysterious rural environment, has to sacrifice his life. Here owl is like the deity of the village, omnipresent, whose seniority cannot be questioned and anybody who disregards him will be annihilated. The superstition which weaves into the minds of the people through a series of events, becomes more pronounced after have seen the death of the landlord's son. Reposing his faith in this mysterious rural environment, the "senior-most resident of the village" (Das 27) behaves as a strict disciplinarian and punishes severely if the slightest he sees a slip in one's conduct. The "fearful possibilities" (Das 26) of such an uncalculated step are enough to waver the logical reasoning and sound judgement of the young boy like the son of a landlord, who is a graduate in law. Obviously, the poor man cannot afford to challenge, he is scared to death. P. Raja writes: "Any day can be the day of death for any one and no

extraordinary disease or situation is necessary for that" (Das7).

There is another important story "Farewell to a Ghost" in which a ghost of a girl treated as is an important member of the village. "No feast in the village, be it due to a birth or marriage or death, passed without the girl's share being duly offered to her" (Das 103). In the course of time, this very ghost becomes the protector of the village. The villagers arrange for her an alternate dwelling place, in a palm tree when the government decides to demolish the villa where the ghost was believed to live.

A typical presentation of rural environment is further predominantly noticed in the short story "The Tree" in which two important objects of nature are the pivot of the story. Here the villagers are emotionally attached to a tree which has become a part of their daily life. This tree is ancient and legendary, and the villagers hold on to it as the reminiscent of the bygone era, the "Era of Truth"; it is "the oldest institution in the village" (Das 58). The villagers treat it as a god to them. Once a river, a living pet of the villagers, suddenly loses all control of itself and "The villagers felt scandalized every time the familiar tame river expanded and grew alien. It shocked them; as if a docile domestic animal suddenly had gone crazy, behaving wildly and not responding to any amount of endearment..." (Das). At this juncture the tree is about to be engulfed by the otherwise "tame river" and the villagers wish to save it. Various schemes are plotted by the elders of the village. When the tree finally gives way, the villagers consider this to be a conscious decision made by the tree. As is often found in folk-lore of India, death or the leaving of the mortal world is a conscious and pre-planned decision, undertaken by the enlightened soul. This tree too follows

the path. The villagers believe that the tree has borne their sins for these many centuries, but now the burden is too much for it. Like the river Ganges, which can cleanse one's soul from all impurities and stain, this tree, they consider, also purify the life of all those who are connected to it, especially the villagers. Finally it is Bishu who is possessed by the spirit of the tree and consoles the weeping villagers by assuring them that it would be reborn again: "I will be born again - again!... I will be born as a thousand trees - here, there, everywhere!" (Das 65).

To conclude, Manoj Das's short stories embody a vision of complex reality which shows faithfulness to our everyday, physical reality as well as to the unfamiliar dimensions of a hyper reality existing beyond the physical reality. He projects this complex reality by mingling the mundane with the fantastic, both in terms of themes and techniques. In his short stories, he deals with Indian life by the use of various magical realist devices like coincidences, supernatural powers, prophecies, omens, premonitions and superstitions. His stories are artistically drawn on fables, fantasy, history, mythology and contemporary incidents in which he shows the secret or mysterious power of nature over events, human imagination or will. His characters which include supernatural characters like ghosts, Tree, River, common animal and birds like crow, owl, tiger, crocodile etc, and typical human personas like saints, chanters and such other practitioners play their respective roles to evoke a sense of magic in the happening in everyday situations of India in general and North Oriya in particular. In fact, the shifting patterns of ordinary events, narration of fantastic mysterious and dreamlike elements from myth and fairytales in his stories expose the

complexities and contradictions of postmodern and postcolonial life.

Works Cited:

Das, Manoj. *Selected Fiction*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2001. Print.

Raja, P. *Many Worlds of Manoj Das*. New Delhi: D.K. Publishers Distributors (P) Ltd, 1993. Print.

Contributors

M.S. Kushwaha, formerly Professor of English, Lucknow University, Lucknow (U.P.)

Uned Singh, Department of English, Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa (Haryana)

Shakuntala Kunwar, Department of English, H.N.B. Garhwal Central University, Srinagar, Garhwal (Uttarakhand)

Charu Sharma, Mumbai (Maharashtra)

Aman Sharma, Department of English, University College, Chunni Kalan (A Constituent College of Punjabi University, Patiala) Distt. Fatehgarh Sahib (Pb.)

Shubha Tiwari, Department of English, APS University, Rewa (MP)

Anuradha Bhattacharyya, Department of English, P.G. Government College, Sector-11 Chandigarh

Ravindra Kumar, Department of English, CCS University, Meerut (U.P.)

Prasenjit Panda, Department of English & Foreign Languages, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur (CG)

Navjot Khosla, Department of English, Punjabi University, Patiala (Pb.)

Archana Bhatnagar, Dept of Basic Science, S.V.P. Uni. of Agri. & Tech., Meerut (UP)

Ashima Shrawan Guest Faculty, Department of English, Gurukul Kangri University, Haridwar (Uttarakhand)

Anita Arora, Department of English, Government College, Sirsa (Haryana)

Kiran Sharma, Department of English, SMJN (PG) College, Haridwar (Uttarakhand)

Anjo Rani, Department of English, V.M.K (P.G.) College, Mangalore, Uttarakhand (Uttarakhand)